

Missing Link between Nutrition and Agriculture in India

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Although undernutrition is getting attention, it remains in India. Studies show that agriculture plays an important role in the improvement of nutritional level. But malnutrition among children, high infant mortality rate and prevalence of men and women with low body mass index (BMI) raise doubts on the connection between agriculture and nutrition. In this backdrop, the present study seeks to identify the linkage between agriculture and nutrition in India using the UNICEF framework. Its findings are based on correlation and multiple regression analysis, using cross section data collected from secondary sources. It indicates that agricultural diversification, household amenities and child-care practices have a significant impact on nutrition and emphasis should be laid on increasing farmers' income.

Introduction

Food and nutrition security are important elements of poverty alleviation programme in India. Even after more than twenty-five years of liberalisation, people face a severe challenge relating to food insecurity and malnutrition. It was expected that the market mechanism will reduce poverty and improve food security. Unfortunately, we do not see much improvement in the case of nutrition. Recent global reports on food security and hunger reflect on the emerging depressing scenario in this regard. Food security, reflected through Global Food Security Index (2017) and Global Hunger Index (2017) presents a gloomy picture, where India stands along with the African countries in terms of all indicators used to measure food security, hunger or malnutrition. The situation of food security and nutrition is also not the same across the states. Food insecurity is severe in states like Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Assam where poverty and dependence on agriculture are more [Pandey 2015]. The blockage of pathway¹ between agriculture and nutrition that passes through the production of crops and livestock and livelihood diversification has been seen as a major cause of malnutrition in the states (Kadiyala, *et. al.* 2014). Recent changes laying emphasis on commercialisation with unequal distribution of land

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