

INDIA'S FOOD SECURITY APPROACH AND INNOVATIONS WERE WIDELY APPRECIATED IN THE WTO SEMINAR ON FOOD SECURITY

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: World Trade, WTO and issues involved

India's food security approach and innovations that reflect the Government of India's concern and sensitivity towards poor and vulnerable sections of society were widely appreciated by participants in the WTO seminar from across the globe.

The WTO high-level seminar on Food Security was held in Geneva on 26th April 2022 to facilitate dialogue on trade and food security among Geneva-based trade officials, policymakers, experts from international organizations and think tanks, etc.

Joint Secretary, Department of Food and Public Distribution, S. Jagannathan, who represented India in the WTO Seminar, highlighted India's outstanding experience in successfully ensuring dignified & foolproof access to adequate food grains to the most vulnerable people in the country, especially during COVID, through a series of bold technology-based reforms and landmark innovations in the Public Distribution System. He made a detailed presentation on the Indian perspective in the panel on 'National and Regional Experiences' at the 'WTO high-level seminar'.

He also highlighted the Government's efforts to forge inter-departmental data sharing to deepen the outreach of mass citizen-centric government programmes across the country.



S. Jagannathan, Joint Secretary, Department of Food and Public Distribution (second

from right) making a presentation on India's food security interventions at WTO High Level Seminar on Food Security, Geneva, on 26 April 2022

In recent times, as India's food security response to the COVID-19 crisis is being hailed as a shining example for its unparalleled speed, scale & transparency, and rightful targeting, S. Jagannathan explained these successful strategies adopted by the Government of India for ensuring the Availability, Affordability, and Accessibility of both normal and free food grains at all times.

He highlighted the crucial role played by Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PM-GKAY) in ensuring additional food security for around 800 million beneficiaries in the country during the COVID period and how the scheme continues to cushion them against supply shocks and rising inflation during the period of recovery, with an additional food subsidy outlay of nearly USD 45 billion apart from the regular food subsidy of nearly USD 22 billion.

Further, he highlighted how India's food security measures in the PDS, ICDS and PM Poshan, and PMGKAY directly contribute to the attainment of some of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the field of Women and Child nutrition, health, education, and food security, being the foundational indicators of Human Development as well.

He highlighted the landmark technology-based innovation One Nation One Ration Card Plan that allows all NFSA beneficiaries, particularly migrant beneficiaries, to claim either full or part foodgrains from any of the 0.5 million Fair Price Shops (FPS) in the country through existing ration card with biometric/Aadhaar authentication in a seamless manner. The system also allows their family members back home, if any, to claim the balance of food grains on same the ration card. Speedy implementation of ONORC during COVID has enabled beneficiaries to avail of nearly USD 5 billion of food subsidy through nearly 580 million portable transactions and around 650 million portable transactions since the beginning.

National experiences from different countries and world regions were shared & discussed in the Seminar with a focus on the relationship between trade and the multiple dimensions of food security, including access, availability, stability, and use, in the light of existing and future challenges.

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