

unsatisfied demand for foodgrains is a achronism. Policy makers should grow out of their market theology and address the issue head-long. In any other country, such a situation would have exploded into a revolution. Exporting of a small quantity of high-value branded commodity like basmati rice is certainly welcome, but massive exports of 10 to 12 million tonnes of ordinary quality rice and wheat is totally unwarranted. Our exports of foodgrains are highly subsidized. The price realized on rice exports has been generally lower than the issue prices of rice provided to families below the poverty line. This is taking the 'export optimism' to its absurd heights. Food policy has thus become a bundle of contradictions. We need all the cereals we produce for domestic consumption and infact, the rate of production of cereals needs to be accelerated. Infact the thrust for growth of agriculture and allied activities should receive greater prominence in the redrafted agenda.

**Reaching Food to the Poor :** The tragedy of Indian planning is that, over the years, we have developed the technology and the institutional framework to produce adequate quantities of foodgrains or cereals at any rate, but we simply do not know how to reach the foodgrains so produced to the needy. Food security in a meaningful sense is ensured not merely by producing adequate quantum of foodgrains but also by reaching the food to the needy. The latter task is inextricably interwoven with the livelihood or employment, because a majority of the poor is not only asset-less but also without any assured or continuous employment. The current backlog of unemployment is around 9 percent or equivalent to 35 million persons. This is on top of the large underemployment or disguised unemployment.

Employment expansion is an ideal way by which the poor would be empowered to have access to foodgrains. This method needs to be supplemented by other modalities to achieve the objective in the immediate run: linking of rural development works like micro watershed development programmes to utilization of foodgrains, instituting 'Grain Loans Facility' for all institutions involved in financing rural development programmes like rural co-operatives, RRBs and NGOs. There is also the need to activate the mid-day meal schemes to provide children in government and government assisted primary schools with prepared meals. This scheme confers multiple benefits to the economy. Infact universal and nutritious mid-day meals would be a great leap forward towards the realization of right to food. This would lead to productive utilization of all the foodgrain domestically and not thorough exports – should be the dominant objective of development policy subsuming all other objectives.

The founding fathers of the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics had in their wisdom inscribed in the Society's Logo "Let there be surpluses of wealth and foodgrains". We have achieved this objective because our foreign exchange reserves have soared to the unprecedented level of beyond \$ 100 billion and we have been living with the so-called foodgrains surpluses. The redrafting of the agenda for agricultural development has therefore become imperative. We are now to pursue food security in the holistic sense. It is not enough to produce adequate quantities of foodgrains: it is also necessary to ensure that foodgrains so produced reach all the needy. If this extended concept of food security is to be achieved, agricultural development itself assumes different connotations. Employment must be expanded not only in agricultural but also in allied sectors like livestock. Empowering the rural poor through employment expansion, both wage-paid and self-employment, so as to enable them to access foodgrains should constitute an integral part of agriculture development strategy.