

Way Forward to End Hunger and Malnutrition
&
Fructify Coarse Cereal Agenda
South Zone Consultation on the National Food Security Bill
17th Feb 2012

Organized by Accion Fraterna, Centre for Environment Concerns & Centre for World Solidarity

With support from ICCO, Oxfam India, Food and Water Security Coalition, India & Wada Na Todo Abhiyan

Background

Livelihood Thematic Action Group of Wada Na Todo Abhiyan along with Food and Water Security Coalition India and Oxfam India, are attempting to bring CSOs, various campaigns, academicians and experts on food related issues to hold in-depth discussions on the National Food Security Bill. In June 2009, the Government of India announced for a comprehensive legislation to be enacted as “The National Food Security Act” which will focus on the right to food. Currently the bill has been introduced in the Lok Sabha. The Bill has been drafted without any wider consultation with important stakeholders and suffers from a number of shortcomings including minimal reach, reduced entitlements, lack of commitment to vulnerable groups, and intends to do away with double subsidy provided on the TDPS by various states, to name a few. We feel that the pressing need of the hour is to present the concerns of various stakeholders in a comprehensive manner. We hope that the discussions will lead to a common understanding so that a collective civil society force can emerge for advocacy with government.

To take this process forward, multi-stakeholder Regional Consultations across five zones as well as one National Consultation (involving academics, scientists, political persons) in New Delhi is being organized. Each Regional consultation will be a day and a half long with a participation of 50-60 people and will be organized by local partner organizations of WNTA.

- East Zone: Patna (Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Orissa and Chattisgarh) on 30th-31st January, 2012
- West Zone: Ahmedabad(Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra) on 7th-8th February,2012
- South Zone: Anantpur (Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu) on 17th- 18th February , 2012
- North Zone: Dehradun(HP, J&K, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Uttarakhand) on 1st and 2nd March, 2012
- North East: Guwahati,(Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Agartala, Nagaland) on 4th-5th March, 2012
- National Consultation- New Delhi on 20th-21st March 2012

Purpose of Consultations

The purpose of organizing these consultations is to get various actors from different backgrounds to discuss/critique the proposed Food Security Bill in detail, and to develop a Charter of Demand which will be used as an advocacy tool for the government and policy makers.

Objectives

- Educate, sensitize, motivate and mobilize people at large
- Develop and publish critiques of the food security bill The consultations will also have special sessions which will specially focus on the following chapters of the bill in order to ensure Last Mile Delivery and Citizens' Engagement:
 1. Chapter II: Provisions of Food Security
 2. Chapter IV: Persons Living in Starvation
 3. Chapter IX: Grievance Redressal Mechanisms and
 4. Chapter XIII: Transparency and Accountability
- Develop a Charter of Demands (have with sharp and prioritized recommendations)
- Advocacy with Government and other policy makers in the interest of common people

South Zone Consultation

South zone consultation on the National Food Security Bill was held in Anantpur, Andhra Pradesh on the 17th of February at the campus of the host organization, Accion Fraterna. Participants from southern states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh attended the consultation. Civil society activists and individuals as well as retired government servants working on agricultural and food security related issues participated in the meeting. The objective of the consultation was not just to offer a detailed reading of the National Food Security Bill but also to provide value addition to the draft Bill by putting forth the perspective of southern regions where large part of agriculture remains rain fed. Thus coarse grains like millets comprise an important portion of the agricultural produce of the southern states. The meeting was an attempt to strengthen the inclusion of coarse grain agenda in the proposed Bill as way of fortifying both nutritional as well as food production aspects enclosed the Bill.



Divergent Perspectives- Voices of the Stakeholders

Inaugural Plenary

1. Mr. **Malla Reddy** of the host organization welcomed everybody to the consultation. He felt that the meeting was critical as often discussions on food security issues remained confined to a few and the meeting thus provided a good platform to look at concerns of the grassroots at length. He felt that food security should not be seen only in terms of its 'distribution' alone. It should not remain restricted to promotion of mono food cultures such as those which were rice dependent, but also encompass regional diversities. He felt that local efforts rooted to tackle food security could often be more useful to strengthen rather than focus all attention on global systems alone. One must also be aware of the fact that food security does not necessarily imply nutritional security as well. The diverse food production of rain fed areas- pulses, millets and vegetables were important to focus on. Also food security entailed other related issues such as ways of improving irrigation facilities, livelihoods of farmers and so on.

2. Mr **K. S Gopal** of Centre for Environment Concern shared the objectives of the meeting- to bring important agendas on the table that had been overlooked in the Draft Bill. He felt that millets need to be included in a significant way in the Bill. It was also important that the Bill espouses a 'rights based language'. Speaking about the state of Andhra Pradesh, he said that though certain areas in the state were severely drought prone, they were very high in millet production. He felt that as important as it was to influence the Bill, we must also emphasis on positive action on the ground. The fact that as a society we had been unable to fight the issue of 'hunger' in the country was a national shame. There was a need to address the millets agenda not just as cultivators but also from the point of view of its larger inclusion in the PDS and other management systems as well. Highlighting the prime focus of the meeting, he said that questions of how to make the National Food Security bill an effective tool to address 'hunger', and promoting the interest of rain fed agriculture, were of great importance for the consultation.

3. Mr. **K.R Venugopal**, an IAS officer (Retd) and Special Rapporteur of the National Humans Rights Commission felt that it was important to safeguard the nutritional rights of people. There is a tendency to measure poverty by hunger alone and not other factors such as health, education or sanitation indicators. He said that poverty resides in that part of India where there no irrigation facilities. Of the total 65%-70% of land under agriculture, almost 37% of it was not irrigated in India. And the irony is that nearly 40% of the country's production comes from such areas. Thus it was important to look at rain fed areas and how they could contribute in a meaningful way to the National Food Security Bill.

He felt that we needed to revisit food related reforms implemented earlier in the country. For instance, speaking about the Green Revolution, he said that though it seemed like a boon at the time, it led to some very harmful impacts. Similarly, the PDS that was introduced in Tamil Nadu in the 1980's worked very well in the beginning but the time had come to address its systemic challenges. He felt that the current Bill had a tokenistic approach towards ensuring nutritional security.

Speaking on the issue of rights as enshrined by our constitution, Mr K. R Venugopal elucidated that the Preamble, Part 3 and 4 of the Indian Constitution grant basic rights to all Indian citizens. The Supreme Court of India facilitates and guarantees the realisation of these rights as well. Certain basic rights remain constant for all sections of the population like right to health, work, education, shelter and the overarching Right To Information helps in interlining all the above. However, some rights are relative in their application. For instance, the right to shelter does not imply that someone with good economic means could also apply for government schemes meant for the poor in this regard like the Indira Vikas Yojana. Thus universality of rights should not mean that it is incumbent on the State to provide food for the rich in the same way as it must for the poor, starving populations of the country. Thus he felt that the current Bill should have a focussed approach of ensuring provision of healthy, adequate food for the poor population of the country rather than covering all under its aegis who had the purchasing power to afford food for themselves.

Emphasising the need to ensure nutritional security for the poor, Mr Venugopal said that data pointed out that 200 kilo grams per capita was the requirement to ensure nutritional security of an individual. The current Bill unfortunately only targets hunger and not nutritional requirement of people. Currently, because of highly centralised procurement pattern and monopoly of wheat and paddy, all of India's food practically comes from two and half states of the country only. This must change if one wanted an effective food security policy to work well in the country. Thus there was a need to establish autonomous, regional PDS networks and decentralise production and procurement systems. If one is talking about the rights of people, it is important to see the issue of food security in a comprehensive manner. Farmers' rights must be given primacy.

This is where the fight for dry land agriculture also becomes important. It is important to locate dry land agriculture in the food and nutrition debate in the country. Small, marginal farmers in dry lands must be given their due as the current conditions in agriculture had pushed the number of farmer suicides, a grave human rights issue in the country. Alongside more public funding for research, a clear policy regarding minimum support prices, deployment of effective resources to promote dry land agriculture was the need of the hour. Government's policies promote commercial crops alone and one needs to

therefore create incentives for coarse grains as well as they were high on nutritional value and far easier to grow as compared to their water guzzling counterparts. He concluded by saying that there was therefore a need to push for coarse cereals and dry land agriculture policies with the decision makers in the capital.

Discussion

- Must demand up to 60 kilo grams of food grains per person/ instead of the proposed amount of 35 kilo grams/ per person/ month.
- Universalization of the Bill in itself will not ensure that the poor get adequate and healthy food. Therefore there was a need to emphasise on good governance mechanisms that could help realise this goal.
- The Bill is silent on agrarian sector reforms. These should be co-opted in the main body of the Bill rather than remain confined to Schedule 3 of the Bill.
- There was a lot of discussion on whether the Bill should be universal or targeted in its approach. While some participants felt that making the Bill universal would only entail more leakages and illegal siphoning off the food stock by the already privileged communities, others expressed the need to optimise what the Bill had to offer but making it, in spirit, applicable to all.



Session 2: Open Forum, Chaired by Dr. Gyan Prakash_____

1. Dr **Gyan Prakash** felt that since the regional consultations had a strong advocacy agenda as well, all kinds of suggestions and critiques should be welcomed at this stage. Certain inclusion and omissions need to be made in the proposed draft of the Bill, based on grassroots experiences. The biggest flaw of the Bill was that it was pitched as an 'entitlement' rather than a 'right' of people.
2. Putting forth his views, Mr. **Dinesh Kumar**, an activist working on agrarian issues, felt that the current PDS system needed an overhauling in order to fight the corruption that plagued it. He felt that government agencies had failed to identify the poor in villages and semi-rural areas to ensure that they are co-opted in the PDS. Despite having many food related schemes like the Antodaya, the poor in the country were still largely outside its fold. PDS had also created a homogenization of food types and killed the culinary cultural diversity of the country. The kind of rice being distributed through PDS (polished varieties) was causing large scale health hazards such as diabetics in the country. Thus he felt that the time was ripe to think about introducing alternatives in the PDS such as distribution of partially polished rice and millets, along with an overall cleaning up of the system to make it effective.
3. Ms. **Arthi Devi**, representing the Centre Indian Knowledge Systems, felt that the poor should have the option of purchasing food grains on a weekly basis (instead of once a month) in instalments as often, the pressure of procuring the whole ration might be difficult for some. Adding to this, Mr **K.R Venugopal** pointed out that in a country like India, some may not have the purchasing power to buy food stock even at the subsidized rates enlisted the proposed National Food Security Bill. Thus it was important to create conducive situations for the poor where they could buy whatever quantity was suited to their needs and thus it was important to emphasise the need for Fair Price Shops to be opened on all days of the month.
4. Mr. **Babloo** of the Timbaktu Collective that it was equally significant to bring to fore the condition of small and marginal farmers, especially in the rain fed areas. The quality of soil in these areas was deteriorating and production was going down. Thus there the government needed to invest in rain fed areas in terms of both research and technological inputs.
5. The House felt that the proposed Bill would lead to homogenisation of food types and habit across the country and there was therefore a need to voice a stand for all kinds of diversity in the vast country of India. Mr **K.S Gopal** threw light on food statistics which said that nearly 23% of food was wasted in the country, and called for strong measures to deal with this wastage.

6. Mr. **Sudhakar**, OXFAM, India (Hyderabad) felt that a decentralised procurement model was very important to promote interests of small farmers who were themselves victims of food insecurity. Attention also needed to be paid to women farmers who were severely getting impacted by climate change, widening economic gap between the rich and the poor, and monopoly of few in the agrarian sector. It would be worthwhile to think of linking up these small producer organisations like village cooperatives or groups etc through a decentralised procurement process. Also, the need to reduce dependency on rice was also important so that one could increase the share of millets or other types of food in the PDS as well. Thus the current Bill must keep all these things in mind while also setting up a strong grievance redressal mechanism at all levels so that the guilty could be brought held responsible.

7. Mr **K. R Venugopal** said that the provision of 'ready to eat food' should be removed completely from the Bill as it would only lead to corporatization of the food systems in the country. Similarly, cash transfers instead of food items should also not be allowed as these will shift attention from food items to non food items.



Session 3: Opportunities and Challenges in Coarse Cereal Chaired by Ms. Arthi, Centre Indian Knowledge Systems, Chennai

1. Mr. **Dinesh Kumar** put forth the coarse cereal agenda and how it could help strengthen the food security scenario in the country. He listed some coarse cereals like:

Name of the Cereal	Maturation Period	Average Production
Ragi	70-150 days	10 quintals per acre
Jowar	80- 180 days	8 quintals per acre
Bajra	70-150 days	8 – 10 quintals per acres
Korra (Foxtail)	90 days	8 quintals per acre
Saana (Little grain)	90-150 days	5-6 quintals per acre
Arika (Kodo)	90-150 days	10 quintals per acre
Bariga	65-75 days	6-8 quintals per acre
Oodalu	80-120ys	8 quintals per acre

He stated how these coarse cereals were both hardy and yet yielded good production. These were also high on nutritional value and required little investment compared to wheat or paddy crops. However, massive promotion of rice and wheat after Independence through all government policies, has led to even people from these rain fed areas in the southern states consuming only wheat and paddy. Thus he felt that it was important to recognise the diversity of production in the country while framing a bill like the one under discussion. The agro climatic conditions, community needs as well as cultural differences must all be kept in mind while framing anything on food security. The agricultural communities must reassert their right to grow what they felt suited them and their land the best rather than promoting one kind of monoculture. As an example, he quoted that about 30,000 tonnes of millet was produced in Rayalseema alone. However not even .01% of this was being consumed locally. Instead all of this was being exported out to America and other European nations for their bird markets as bird feed. He said that cereals like Korra, Saana and Arika could be used in place of paddy, however a big deterrent was that processing of these was still a very tedious affair. Part of the reason for this could be that all R&D in agriculture only focussed on wheat and paddy alone so not much progress was seen in other cereals. But millets were grown all over the country in low rainfall areas- from the Himalayas to Eastern and Western Ghats as well. The Deccan region, of course, was the largest producer of millets but over the years, even in this region consumption patterns had seen a decline in intake of cereals from 95% to merely 55% because of the wheat and paddy being promoted through government policies in a big way.

He felt that it was important to pay attention to upgrading skills in the millet technologies as well if we wanted to highlight them as an important food agenda.

There was a need to invest in small processing units where village groups could go and have their millets processed for at least their personal home consumption, as a starting step. Strengthening local communities, the PDS and cultural diversity in food was important to shift focus to ecologically friendly and sustainable type of agricultural practices. Citing more examples of why millets should be promoted, he said that while paddy needed 500 mm of rainfall to grow, at the very least, millets in rain fed areas required very little irrigation inputs. And since nearly 60% of regions in India received less than 500mm of rainfall, it was important to develop a plan for millet production to meet future food demand of the country. Even the satiety value of millet was much more than that of paddy. Paddy has satiety of 1 hour while for millets, it is 2- 2.5 hours. If we are talking of feeding the hungry then we have to look at how to effectively to satisfy their hunger for longer periods and polished paddy rice could not be the answer. Alongside, polished paddy also caused rise in blood sugar levels, and was not a healthy option as compared to millets. He concluded by saying that though it may take longer to set management systems in place to procure locally grown millets and streamline these into the PDS, but it would be a meaningful, sustainable way of addressing the food security issue in India.

2. Mr. **K. Velan** of Velicham, Tamil Nadu, shared his organization's experience regarding promotion of millets. In Pudukkottai district, where his organization's work is located, the utilization of ground water has been increasing with more bore wells and open wells being dug up. The level of ground water is thus going down. Small and marginalized farmers cannot tolerate the cost of agricultural production therefore they are forced to sell their lands to the companies or to other money holders. Agricultural land has become fallow without adequate water. In dry season, drought hits nine blocks out of thirteen. More than 70% of the population is depended on agriculture or related livelihoods. Due to erratic rainfall, people have started migrating to the cities for employment. In this situation, there is a need to focus on the dry land agriculture which requires less amount of water. Thus the minor millets are a more viable alternative to ensure food security of the rural communities in this District.

Another big challenge was the threat of climate change which is going to affect agriculture largely, especially the water intensive crops. Therefore unless one made efforts to increase dry land crops one could not take up the responsibility of feeding India's population. Millets are not only secure food but also minimize the mal nutrients.

Discussion

- Pulses should also be included in the National Food Security Bill as pulses combined with millets could help create a very effective agricultural system.

- Availability of seeds is a huge problem in the villages and the same is applicable for millet seeds as well. Bajra, Jowar etc need to be of good quality to be able to yield desirable results. Thus good millet varieties need to be encouraged.
- Given the fact that dams were drying up tail end areas were not getting enough water, it was time to pay attention to developing these areas for millet production. Alongside, if one could incentivize millet cultivation in command areas as well, it could help ensure food security issues in the long run.
- We must try and talk about creating food security at different levels- family, community and at the level of larger societal groups. This was important as different management systems were required to ensure food security for all. Also, food security could only be achieved if one respected the fact that producers of food are able to access good, nutritional food in appropriate quantities for themselves and their families. So farmers' interests need to be taken in to account while framing such a bill.
- Two elements in the Bill must be highlighted- regimentation of wastage of food and incentivizing an autonomous route for the poor to get food security. There was a need to stress on this autonomy.
- Class differences apply to grains as well. Some food types become high culture while others, despite being nutritious, get ignored. Thus it is important to create awareness among people about diversity and usefulness of different kinds of food-especially millets.
- Wheat and rice have been customised and created to suit the market. Same process needs to be taken in case of millets as well. Thus there is also a need to create pull factors along with keeping push factors in mind to strengthen millet production and consumption in the country.
- One must try and find opportunities to push the millet agenda with the government. One must prepare a cost-benefit analysis and present that to the State so that they reckon the economic worth of supporting millet production and distribution. Strategically, it was important to keep the policy makers and opinion makers in the loop about the agenda, to be able to influence them in a positive manner.



Session 4: Innovations and Instruments

1. **Mr. Kumaran and Mr. Sudhakar, Oxfam, India, Delhi and Hyderabad respectively, shared the mandate and experiences of the GROW campaign.** They felt that the starting point was that one cannot treat food security as a one-time problem. It is something that permeates through the system. It's a systemic problem- not just restricted to the PDS and the open market. These were merely elements of it, and not the whole system. The fundamental data on food in India reveals that it is a disaster. Food indicator- like calorie/ per day consumption has sadly been going down in the last twenty years. Average intake is going down despite the fact that we are growing economically and earning more. In contrast, countries like Brazil and China are improving their food intake but in India the picture is not the same. Ironically rather than concentrating on increasing the calorie intake of the poor through better food systems, the government has merely revised the rate of calorie consumption, rather than address the situation. Though opportunities to work are increasing under the MNREGA, government's massive investment in food schemes has not yielded any results in terms of improved health status of children. Farmer suicides are on an increase; landlessness has become rampant, while at the same time the State is making no investment in technologies or in rain fed lands. No improvement has been seen in banking credit system in agriculture sector as well. Against this backdrop, one has to engage with the issue of food security by progressively creating entitlements and providing food security to people with dignity. One must try and maximise the Bill and the entitlements in it. This is an important agenda of the GROW campaign.

This is also a window to engage with civil society; a massive opportunity to mobilise communities around food schemes. Last mile accountability can become a crucial entry point for to achieve this. Mobilising consumers as well as growers (who are also beneficiaries of food schemes) is also important. The present discussions on the Bill offer this opportunity. One must expand the agenda of Bill as well- try and have safeguards that will protect people from corporate investments, land grabbing, exploitation of natural resources and insist on having strong monitoring mechanisms.

GROW campaign's agenda is also to lend a voice to marginalised sections like women farmers (who are also producers but don't have property rights); create access of Dalits and Tribals to schemes and resources and so on. The campaign also has a futuristic agenda as we live in global economy and there are many worrying trends like emerging private investments in seed, water, land and so on. How are these trends influencing how or what we grow? Thus we must devise a way of addressing these global issues using local elements. The affluent India has made investments in African countries and created food insecurity

there. So efforts to fight food security must be global as well as local. Climate change- big policies and negotiations around this issue that are happening at big levels must resonate with the poor of India. All these are agendas of the GROW campaign.

How is one going to do this? Grow campaign talks about how we can grow better (ways of growing in sustainable ways), sharing better (depending only on government and ignoring the local knowledge systems is not good practice) and living Better (access to quality, good healthy, surplus food). The campaign is trying to achieve this by highlighting grassroots models- establishing revolving funds for communities, community kitchen gardens, innovative ways of creating tracking systems to bring in accountability and transparency measures in food processes were some of the examples of achieving this. A public hearing was also organised in Orissa where 1200-1300 marginal farmers participated and put forth their concerns. Some of their grievances were also taken up by Orissa govt. The GROW campaign, in sum, is not just restricted to Oxfam. It is a network of diverse people and communities that look to focus on water related issues in the coming years.

2. Mr **K.S Gopal** spoke about some important innovation and instruments with relation to food security that must be attended to. He felt that we had come to accept the fact that rain fed areas can only depend on rainfall for irrigation purposes and hence made little efforts in this direction. Instead of trying to create irrigation opportunities in these areas, we had adapted our agricultural practices to suite this norm. Agriculture, he felt was increasingly showing two kinds of trends- that of becoming either fertilizer or energy application heavy. Citing an example, he said that while a city like Delhi required four lakh sixty five thousand litres of water daily, amounting to two hundred and twenty litres of water per day/person, all that the orchards in a district like Anantpur required to prosper was forty litres of water/ day. Thus all that one had to do was ensure 80 litres of water per month for 6 months amounting to about 7500 litres of water in a year for food production to prosper in a state like Andhra Pradesh. It was important to recognise these dichotomies in water distribution in the country and think of getting water to rain fed areas. Speaking about the initiatives that he is seeking to promote, he spoke about starting up with small kitchen gardens in the state that will eventually have a dynamo effect of improving soil and yield over a period of time. How to create storage of 20,000 litres of water and ensure that the same could be transported to rain fed areas like Anantpur were efforts that were being thought about. Such efforts, he felt would ensure the autonomy of small farmers in the long run.

Adding on Mr. **Malla Reddy** spoke about how it was a big challenge to provide rain fed farmers with life saving irrigation facilities. He felt that such efforts

needed to be tailor made for each region depending on its conditions. Trees, fodder and biomass crops were best suited for a region like Anantpur. Taking from the experience of their watershed project in the area, he shared how they had worked on promotion of mango trees in rain fed conditions. Rather than focusing on mono-crop culture, he felt that such areas should follow mixed cropping patterns that could include fruits like tamarind, *jamun* and so on. However, a big challenge was to think of these efforts in terms of scalability prospects as well and not just as isolated experiments.

Discussion

- Campaigns like the GROW campaign were important as they helped mobilizing communities and gave a voice to their needs.
- The GROW campaign was however not a mere 'program' but a network of many kinds of platforms for divergent communities to put forth their views, share experiences and collectively think of solutions out of the food crisis, not just at a global but also localized levels.
- It was also important to see acts like the MNREGA or the proposed Bill in a holistic sense and not just an end in themselves. How would such legislation impact other sectors- investments in agrarian sector; technology and infrastructure; inter-sectoral linkages with other relevant departments like health and sanitation- all these were important to think about.

Recommendations of South Zone Consultation

Inclusion of coarse cereals in the Food Rights bill is very important. Implemented well this will give boost to rain fed farming based producers and improve nutrition and health of the consumers. Better health is crucial to harness the demographic dividend while reducing health care costs which is big reason for poor being impoverished. Hence coarse cereals inclusion must be seen as making strategic and much needed change in Indian agriculture and the food eating habits of the people. Towards this the House provided the following for consideration in developing the guidelines:

1. Rice and wheat have been improved to suit consumer preferences over a long period of time. A similar task must be undertaken for coarse cereals not only with consumer preference in terms of taste but also storage, shelf life etc.
2. In case of rice and wheat a certain type of grain is specified. In coarse cereals there are many varieties and hence selection needs to have different criteria. It should aim to give fillip to its wider production.
3. Local varieties and not hybrids in coarse cereals must be provided. It is important to recognize that some varieties were developed with animal feed in mind. They must not be procured.
4. To encourage shifting to coarse cereals by consumers we suggest going in for the higher end coarse cereals.
5. It must be noted that Rice and Wheat were generic names wherein many coarse cereals had sorghum wheat and Sorghum Rice. It depended on how the commodity was processed and is cooked. Thus what we call rice and wheat have usurped themselves this name and hence it is important that massive consumer education is built into promoting coarse cereals as wheat and rice and not as they are presently considered.
6. Promotional measures must be undertaken on coarse cereals and its purchase be incentivized.
7. There are plenty of problems related to storage and shelf life of coarse cereals and hence there must be corrective steps taken on it as otherwise its acceptance will not pick up. This is crucial as Indian grain storage technology and its practices are on rice and wheat and got it from USA and they cannot be extended to coarse cereals.
8. Storage, converting grain to flour and shelf life are key obstacles why people, although preferring coarse cereals, do not go in for it. So understanding consumer preferences and addressing them must be built into the strategy.
9. Until early 19th century, taxes in the Nizam ruled area could be paid in grain and that too sorghum. There was a fall in production once this was changed. Hence we feel that some such approach must be adopted to promote coarse cereals.
10. In terms of grain and when seen from user point one kg of coarse cereals can feed twenty percent more people and thus 800 grams of coarse cereals

equals one kg of rice or wheat. This aspect must be highlighted along with providing the grain at one rupee a kg. It is thus a very poor person friendly food item whose role and value fell in the eyes of the consumer due to what has been done to aggressively push rice and wheat in the food chain. Coarse cereals procurement must aim lowering food miles.

11. Pre existing programmes relating to ICDS and Mid Day Meal schemes must be monitored, strengthened and supported rather than replaced. Government must work to promote and provide snacks based the coarse cereal in schemes such as mid-day meal and ICDS.
12. Encouragement and support of local cultivation of nutritious food those are culturally acceptable in the area including millets, vegetables and fruits.
13. Plan to meet the requirements of Public Distribution System with emphasis on local procurements, prioritized as being – more within the same district, and from within the state and to restrict the movement of grain from outside the State only based on availability and requirement.
14. The clause regarding force majeure conditions should be abolished – local communities are indeed in need of additional support and help during conditions such as drought.
15. Proposals for cash transfer or food coupons must be put on hold till there is a more careful study, review and discussion on the impact and effectiveness of such moves.
16. Several states already have in place the Public Distribution System paying attention to local requirements some of which have evolved over a period of time – this variation and diversity needs to be respected with sufficient room in the legislation to provide for variations and building and strengthening of existing systems and experience.
17. Good practices that have worked effectively in specific states and locations must be studied and models promoted such as – The Tamil Nadu model where fair price shops are administered only by cooperatives rather than private dealers, system for surveillance and tracking all movement of food and its distribution that already existing in Chhattisgarh and Gujarat.

Way Forward- Plan of Action

Along with evolving a set of recommendations, the House also decide that:

- In order to highlight the coarse serial agenda, Mr. Dinesh would develop a brief on the issue that could be distributed for advocacy purposes.
- The House felt that the coarse grain agenda should be linked to the proposed Bill and not seen as an isolated, regional agenda. Thus, it was decide that some representatives would try and meet with the PMO's office to submit the brief and emphasise the need to relook at coarse cereals in a new, imaginative and productive fashion.