

Regional Heterogeneity in Food Consumption and Nutrition Intake in India

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ABSTRACT

Per capita income and food consumption both are the indicators of human development but food consumption is a better indicator of human welfare. India's faster economic growth over 1990s has raised per capita income (expenditure) and has significantly impacted its food consumption patterns by causing a change in the structure of food consumption patterns observed earlier during pre-reforms period. This raises the relevance of looking at the composition of India's food consumption basket. Changes in the composition of food consumption expenditure during the 1990s, including the shift from cereals to non-cereal items against the background of a decline in food expenditure share, occurred right across the growth spectrum and raises the issue of the nutritional implications of food items particularly during post-reforms period.

It is easier to analyze trends of consumption pattern of people at national level but is really complex to analyze at a state-level. The analysis is expanded and the inter-state differences in consumption pattern have been brought out more explicitly. The objective of the present paper is to examine changing food consumption pattern across the regions of India and is based on seven NSSO rounds (43rd, 50th, 55th, 57th, 59th, 61st and 62nd) diverging from most of the previous studies which have considered the shift in consumption pattern (Ray, Ranjan, 2007; Chatterjee, S., Rae, Allen & Ray, Ranjan, 2007, Chatterjee, S., 2007) taking two or three NSSO rounds.

The per capita food consumption for cereals (rice, wheat and other cereals) and non cereals (pulses, dairy products, oil and fats, vegetables, meat/fish/egg, etc) were analyzed. Result revealed that in spite of India's rapid economic growth there are differences among states of India particularly for consumption of food items (cereals and non cereals). State-wise trends are more mixed with wide divergence in dietary pattern in states. The states that have higher expenditure on food items (Bihar, Jharkhand and Chattishgarh) are ones that spend higher on cereals crops. Therefore, the rise in food and cereal crop prices is likely to hurt these states compared to states like Punjab, Haryana etc as in the latter expenditure on both food and cereals is lower.

The study concludes that the focus should be not only on food consumption but also on nutrition security so that human being could consume healthy food which full of energy and nutrients and human development could improve.