



## **PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM: THE RAPTURE OR CURSE?**

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### **Abstract**

*Public Distribution System is considered as an important measure coming under the Government's Food Policy to tackle down the problem of food in our country. It involves an extensive state intervention across the country, because it requires weighty expenditures for subsidizing the sale of food items through the Fair Price Shops, and affects the living levels of a colossal number of peoples. It is a case of primitive Public Distribution System, now a day the role of computer in the field of Public Distribution System plays a vital role. That is why we are using the term e- PDS (it is a system in which the whole process of public distribution of essential commodities were computerized) Dr. A.S Dileep, Shanand. K. P.(2014). The entire process begins from applying for ration card to final delivery of commodities to the end beneficiaries were digitalized. It may be considered as a sheer means for availing the important food items at a cheap rate. But it is much more than this, because, it helps to stimulate the economic development by a great extent. It is an important anti-poverty measure also, because it provides protection to the poor from the bloody clutches of the temporary ill-effects of the current economic reforms in operation since mid-1991.*

**Key words:** *Public Distribution System, e-PDS, Economic Development.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

One of the important problems that our country now experiencing is that, there are so many people facing severe problems to meet their requirements of food grains. Their food habits also showed a deficiency in nutritional level. This problem is so severe among the poor. So one of the remedy suggested for such problem are the efficient Public Distribution System. It may be considered as a sheer means for availing the important food items at a cheap rate. But it is much more than this, because, it helps to stimulate the economic development by a great extent. It is an important anti poverty measure also, because it provides protection to the poor from the bloody clutches of the temporary ill-effects of the current economic reforms in operation since mid-1991.

Public Distribution System is considered as an important measure coming under the Government's Food Policy to tackle down the problem of food in our country. It involves an extensive state intervention across the country, because it requires weighty expenditures for subsidizing the sale of food items through the Fair Price Shops, and affects the living levels of a colossal number of peoples. It is a case of primitive Public Distribution System, now a day the role of computer in the field of Public Distribution System plays a vital role. That is why we are using the term e- PDS (it is a system in which the whole process of public distribution of essential commodities were computerized) Dr. A.S Dileep, Shanand. K. P.(2014). The entire process begins from applying for ration card to final delivery of commodities to the end beneficiaries were digitalized.

### **POSING THE PROBLEM**

Public Distribution System is considered as an important measure coming under the Government's Food Policy to tackle down the problem of food in our country. It involves an extensive state intervention across the country, because it requires weighty expenditures for subsidizing the sale of food items through the Fair Price Shops, and affects the living levels of a colossal number of peoples. In its present form, as also before it for a long time, it is a problem of the poor. Largely due to the inadequacy of food articles as also of the lack of sufficient purchasing power with the poor, the problem has been worsened by many factors. Moreover, many of the population feel bad to obtain their nutritional requirements of food grains.

### **IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY**

One of the important problems in our country is the lack of nutritional requirements of food grains. The food habits of the people also showed a deficiency in nutritional level. This problem is so severe among the poor. So one of the remedy suggested for such problem are the efficient Public Distribution System. It may be considered as a sheer means for availing the important food items at a cheap rate. But it is much more than this, because, it helps to stimulate the economic development by a great extent. It is an important anti poverty measure also, because it provides protection to the poor from the bloody clutches of the temporary ill-effects of the current economic reforms in operation since mid-1991.



## METHODOLOGY

The Study Public Distribution System A Rapture or A Curse is for providing a general view about the functioning of Public Distribution System. It also tried to demarcate the primitive PDS from the new e-PDS. So the study has been mainly conducted by using secondary data. The supporting data can be collected from various journals and documents, various magazines.etc.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Dr.A.S. Dileep and Shanand K.P (2012)** defines e-PDS is a system in which the whole process of public distribution of essential commodities were computerized. The whole process starts by applying for ration card to final delivery of commodities to the final beneficiaries were digitalized. **A.N Agrawal (2009)** defines PDS is an effective anti poverty measure, and it helps to ensure nutritional requirement to the people. **J.K Chopra (2013)** defines Public Distribution System plays a significant role in the achievement of food security by the people.

## OBJECTIVES

- To make a detailed explanation about e-PDS.
- To identify the merits and demerits of PDS.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Public Distribution System is considered as an important measure coming under the Government's Food Policy to tackle down the problem of food in our country. It involves an extensive state intervention across the country, because it requires weighty expenditures for subsidizing the sale of food items through the Fair Price Shops, and affects the living levels of a colossal number of peoples. It is a case of primitive Public Distribution System, now a day the role of computer in the field of Public Distribution System plays a vital role. That is why we are using the term e- PDS (it is a system in which the whole process of public distribution of essential commodities were computerized).

The Public Distribution System was introduced in Kerala in the year 1965. Kerala is trying to meet their 86 percentages of food requirements by depending on other states. So the PDS have a crucial role rural area especially having more poor. Food and Civil Supplies Department administers the PDS through more than 14000 Fair Price Shops around the state of Kerala.(2012). Despite of numerous measures taken by the Government to enhance the efficiency of the PDS, the system continued to criticize for its deficiencies namely errors in identifying the beneficiaries, leakage of PDS commodities, corruption in supply chain, manual maintenance of accounts, in adequate monitoring and grievance redresses mechanism etc. E-PDS is an important initiative from the part of government to rectify the above mentioned problems. It is associated with the introduction of End-to-End computerization of PDS. It is a system under which the whole process of public distribution was computerized. As said earlier it starts by applying ration cards and ends by enjoying the delivery of commodities by the beneficiaries.

## IMPORTANCE OF e-PDS

- It ensures more transparency in database.
- Accurate accounting and transactions
- Dissemination becomes more easy, quick and reliable information.
- To create a good supply chain management.
- To make a responsive grievance redress mechanism.

## CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

1. An online Ration Card Management System and complete AADHAR based database.
2. E-POS (Point Of Sale, means Ration Shop)
3. A standardized e-PDS Website.
4. Complete office automation and LAN.
5. Introduction of information kiosks and hardware up gradation at the Taluk Supply Office/District Supply Office level.
6. GPS tracking for the vehicles and fleet management.
7. Decision support system for policy making.
8. Toll free help line and Grievance Redresses Centre.



**Table - 1**

Total Number of cards and the break of APL, BPL, Andhyodhaya and Annapoorna Cards-2014					
State level report of Ration cards					
District	APL	BPL	AAY	APNA	Total
Trivandrum	691094	160710	62809	2350	914613
Kollam	503320	154027	50206	1706	707553
Pathanamthitta	250903	57306	25656	1507	333865
Alapuzha	392652	131086	42260	985	565998
Kottayam	371739	95250	33945	1682	500934
Idukki	201402	60378	31174	1150	292954
Ernakulam	681040	99877	38207	2470	819124
Thrissur	569042	170969	56197	1191	796212
Palakkad	553304	100319	46392	1317	700016
Malappuram	653849	143878	53506	2144	851233
Kozhokkode	544342	131028	41490	2362	716860
Wayanadu	126472	33060	39528	1425	199060
Kannur	454994	90055	34375	1731	579424
Kasargod	213564	48898	20311	5125	282773
Total	6207717	1476841	576056	27145	8260619

Source: Civil Supplies KERALA

The table shows the number of card holder's distribution by district wise. The division can also make on the basis of APL, BPL, and ANDHYODAYA ANNA YOJANA AND ANNAPOORNA.

#### Merit of PDS

Since PDS is meant for ensuring food security by the mass, they had the following merit.

**For Development:** The public distribution system promotes a non inflationary way to development. This role of PDS was well explained by LEWI's model of economic growth, in which the agricultural sector plays a significant role in the development by supplying cheap food and cheap labor.

**Anti Poverty Measure:** The PDS is a helpful mechanism in reducing the distress caused by the very low incomes of the poor, especially those who are destitute with very little service. The physical level of living is a function of both the income and the prices of consumer goods. The PDS through the supply of food grains at cheap rates provides, so to say, a means of safekeeping to the poor. It is also a very helpful for those poor families where, for want of adequate employment opportunities, only one or a few members find work.

**Protecting Poor from Unfavorable Effects of Reforms:** The changes due to reform are of very much open, and market oriented economy. This change has a potential create a lot of harm to the poor for some time to come. The protecting hand of state gets withdrawn from several areas where the poor work. Quite a number of traditional occupations go under against the vicious force of antagonism and modernization. No doubt the reform creates more jobs with higher incomes. But it is more time consuming to come into being. Further the poor were not able to take the advantages of this because of their poor skill and education. Many people were out of track because of old age. Besides, the poor, with no or little surplus, will not be able to participate in the market. With the opening of market leads to an increased export of agricultural commodities, hence by its price rises fillip the rural poor by increasing their income and standard of living.

#### MAJOR DEMERITS

The PDS at present beneficial to many of the poor by ensuring food access to them, especially in backward regions. But it has its own demerit.

**Several in Adequacies:** The public distribution system fails to cover all areas prescribed for it. The infrastructure for the PDS is also poor in major fields like storage facilities, distribution network etc. for an efficient delivery of the services, is far from adequate. Some states are completely ignored by the Public Distribution System; therefore they even get their allotted quota by the centre. At the Fair Price Shops also the situation is not satisfactory. Because of the inefficient delivery system,



the sale often falls short of stocks in these shops. The supplies in these shops are not adequately regulated. The food grains available are also poor in quality.

**Serious Disparities.** The Public Distribution System is grossly uneven in respect of the distribution of food grains across classes and regions. Generally states with larger urban population get larger Public Distribution System supplies. In order to avoid such demerits some improvement measures are also need to be adopted by the way of extending its coverage, means making necessary steps to establish new shops in areas where it lacks. Next is designing an efficient Public Distribution System and finally setting up an ideal Public Distribution System.

### CONCLUSION

Public Distribution System is considered as an important measure coming under the Government's Food Policy to tackle down the problem of food in our country. It involves an extensive state intervention across the country, because it requires weighty expenditures for subsidizing the sale of food items through the Fair Price Shops, and affects the living levels of a colossal number of peoples. It is a case of primitive Public Distribution System, now a day the role of computer in the field of Public Distribution System plays a vital role. Even though the PDS have the merit like development promotion, anti poverty measure and protecting mechanism, it is not free from demerit like low coverage, corrupted sale etc. So it's very difficult to say whether the PDS is a bliss or curse.

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