



Right to Food Campaign

Secretariat

Email: righttofoodindia@gmail.com | Mobile: 8527359760 Landline: 011-41613468

Date: 29th June 2021

Welcome Supreme Court's direction to give rations to migrant workers and revise state-wise coverage of food security net under NFSA

The Right to Food campaign welcomes the judgement of the Supreme Court in the migrant workers case. Recognising that migrant workers are often excluded from the ambit of the food security net under the National Food Security Act, the Supreme Court has directed all state governments to formulate schemes to provide rations to migrant workers who do not possess ration cards. The court has directed the central government to allocate dry grains to states for the purpose of the schemes.

The Supreme Court has directed that provision of dry grains and cooked food through community kitchens must continue till the pandemic. This is significant as there is deep economic distress in the country and one time relief is woefully inadequate.

The Supreme Court also took cognizance of the fact that the state wise coverage of PDS under the NFSA was determined on the basis of the 2011 census and has not been revised since then leading to exclusion of many persons in need. The court has directed the central government to revisit the state wise coverage. This is crucial to ensure food security in this time of unprecedented distress and the Right to Food Campaign urges the central government to immediately revise the allocations and coverage as per the latest available population projections. Given that the Census 2021 is likely to be delayed on account of the pandemic, the government can immediately revise coverage on the basis of the population projections and when the final census figures are available it can be adjusted appropriately. Therefore, only by doing this about 100 million people will be added. Continued exclusion of people on account of the delay in census is absolutely unacceptable given the crisis in the country.

On the issue of one nation one ration (ONOR) while the RTFC is in agreement on the need for portability of all social welfare schemes, however its reliance on Aadhaar-based biometric authentication, of which there is documented exclusion, is problematic. The lack of cohesive overrides when biometric authentication fails exacerbates the distress of the poor as they are unable to access their ration entitlements. Universal public distribution system is the need of the hour as crores of people have slipped into poverty on account of the economic recession.

The directions on time bound registration of migrant workers and workers in the informal sector are much needed as the government has been dragging its feet on the issue. The court has noted the lackadaisical approach of the concerned ministry in this regard.

Lockdown restrictions put in place to curb the pandemic since last year have caused unprecedented distress among people and the relief packages by the central and state governments have been rather inadequate to address the deep nature of the crisis. Therefore, these orders given by the Supreme Court need to be implemented as soon as possible as they can provide some relief. Along with this, there is a need to revive ICDS, Mid-day Meal and universalise PDS by the government.

The Right to Food Campaign will extensively push for effective implementation of these directions with state governments and will strengthen its campaigns on the ground.

Gangaram Paikra, Aysha, Kavita Srivastava, Dipa Sinha, Anuradha Talwar, Mukta Srivastava, Amrita Johri

(On behalf of the Steering Committee of Right to Food Campaign)