



SPEECH OF  
THE HON'BLE MINISTER FOR FOOD  
GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU

**R.KAMARAJ**

AT THE  
CONFERENCE OF FOOD MINISTERS  
OF THE STATES/UTs  
ON  
ISSUES RELATING TO IMPLEMENTATION OF  
NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY ACT, 2013

1<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER, 2013  
NEW DELHI

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Hon'ble Union Minister for Food and Consumer  
Affairs,  
Hon'ble Ministers for Food from States,  
Administrators and other Dignitaries,

Vanakkam.

It is a privilege that Our Honourable  
Chief Minister "Amma" has bestowed on me this  
opportunity to attend this august gathering to  
discuss various issues pertaining to the smooth  
implementation of the National Food Security  
Act, 2013.

Our revolutionary leader, the Honourable  
Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu has consistently  
proclaimed: "It is my dream that everybody in Tamil  
Nadu should get everything. My Government will  
ensure that the poor and the downtrodden are  
provided with the necessary assistance to lead a

decent and dignified life". In order to achieve this lofty goal, our State has been implementing the Universal Public Distribution System, which assures Food Security for all without any discrimination. The first file that our Honourable Chief Minister signed on assumption of office in 2011 was for the supply of rice free of cost through the Public Distribution System. In consonance with the ideal of our Honourable Chief Minister, apart from rice, wheat and sugar, special commodities like toor dhal, urad dhal, fortified palmolein and iodised salt are also supplied to the public at an affordable and subsidized price through the Special Public Distribution System.

The Public Distribution System in Tamil Nadu has another unique feature with all the Fair Price Shops

in the State run by Co-operatives, the Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation and in some cases by Women Self Help Groups. Not a single fair price shop is in private hands in the State. Our Honourable Chief Minister recently ordered that to reach people living in remote and far-flung areas, distribution of essential commodities should be undertaken through mobile ration shops. Thus the Universal Public Distribution System in Tamil Nadu functions efficiently and meets the high expectations of the people thanks to strong administrative monitoring, constant vigilance and an effective grievance redressal mechanism. The Government under our Honourable Chief Minister provides a huge subsidy of Rs.4900 crores for the Public Distribution System.

Though the Food Security Act, 2013, has been passed by the Government of India we have strong apprehensions regarding its effectiveness in providing comprehensive food security as the Act is laden with several lacunae which could potentially be an obstacle to providing reliable and comprehensive Food Security in the State of Tamil Nadu. Our Honourable Chief Minister has rightly pointed out these defects in unequivocal terms. The apprehensions of the Government of Tamil Nadu were conveyed to the Government of India through demi official letters from our Honourable Chief Minister to the Prime Minister of India. As a result of the sincere and untiring efforts of our Honourable Chief Minister, some of the issues were addressed in the modified bill. Some of the key amendments

incorporated in the draft Bill including the retention of supply of 35 Kg. of rice to Antodaya Anna Yojana beneficiaries and the insertion of Schedule IV assuring the current level of allocation of rice were brought about, due to the efforts of our Honourable Chief Minister. However, as instructed by our Honourable Chief Minister, I would like to emphasise that the Government of India must categorically state that the differential cost between the total requirement of rice and the allocation by the Government of India would be supplied at Rs.8.30 per kg. for a period of at least three years. **This must be incorporated in the Act in the form of an Amendment.**

While some of the issues have been resolved, there are many other issues raised by our

Honourable Chief Minister in the interest of the successful implementation of the Food Security Act which remain unresolved. The following issues, though vital, are not addressed in the Food Security Act:-

- The coverage of the urban population at 50 per cent is not adequate. Urban areas do not have local food production. The country is rapidly urbanizing and the urban poor are a large segment. Tamil Nadu is a highly urbanized State with 49% of the population living in urban areas. Hence, the coverage of urban population ought to be 100% or at least 75% on par with the rural areas to have meaningful food security for all.



- Migrant population from other States is a perennial feature in some States including Tamil Nadu. Adequate provision should be introduced in the Act to address the needs of the migrant population with adequate additional allocation of food grains.
- Section 8 of the National Food Security Act, 2013, which requires State Governments to pay food security allowance when food grains cannot be supplied has been retained despite our objections. In the case of Tamil Nadu, such a situation will arise only when the Central Government fails to allocate adequate quantity of food grains. This provision does not answer the fundamental question of the responsibility

of the Central Government to make adequate food grains available. The provision contained in Section 23 is also inadequate to meet any shortfalls in supply of food grains. Our Honourable Chief Minister suggested that Section 23 should be amended making it incumbent on the Government of India to take all necessary measures, including import of food grains when warranted to ensure continued supply of food grains.

- The fundamental issue of shared responsibility is totally ignored in the Act. The successful implementation of Food Security Act is contingent on the identification of eligible families. This

onerous responsibility is fully saddled on the shoulders of the State Government.

- Section 10(1) prescribes the time limit for the identification of eligible households as 365 days from the date of commencement of the National Food Security Act, 2013. This extension itself is a result of strenuous efforts of our Honourable Chief Minister which resulted in the extension from 180 days to 365 days. The extension provided is definitely insufficient for the purpose of identification of the eligible households as the process is very challenging and complex and is to be based on the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) conducted by the Government of India, the results of which

are yet to be made available to the States. Therefore, as suggested by our Honourable Chief Minister, the time limit prescribed should commence only after the completion of Socio-Economic Caste Census which forms the basic data base for identification of eligible households. At this point, it is relevant to point out that the census process has not been completed and the data is yet to be shared with the State Governments in a final usable form. Further, it is learnt that the Government of India is yet to prescribe the guidelines on the manner in which BPL families and eligible families are to be identified based on the Socio-Economic Caste Census data base. In the

circumstances, the requirement of time for finishing the identification of eligible households in 365 days is unrealistic and is bound to create many administrative difficulties exposing the State Government to needless criticism. Hence, as suggested by our Honourable Chief Minister, the proviso under Section 10(1) may be deleted.

- Our Honourable Chief Minister had also raised the concern that the fixation of issue price of food grains over and above the entitled allotment is left to the discretion of the Union Government. There ought to have been a statutory basis in order to ensure that the assurances made by the Honourable Union Minister in Parliament are

fully honoured. Hence, we re-iterate that the relevant clause has to be amended suitably.

The Government of Tamil Nadu is successfully implementing an Universal Public Distribution System which is an unique system. Hence, Inclusion/ Exclusion criteria, issue of per unit allocation as per Section (3) and issue of fresh ration cards are not applicable to our State.

Tamil Nadu under the dynamic leadership of our Honourable Chief Minister has taken several initiatives to strengthen scientific storage facilities for storing foodgrains. Our Honourable Chief Minister had announced on the floor of the State Assembly that 47 scientific godowns will be constructed during the current year by the

Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation with a storage capacity of 4.34 Lakh Metric Tonnes. The Tamil Nadu Warehousing Corporation will be constructing another 15 storage godowns with a total capacity of 1.25 Lakh Metric Tonnes. The Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation and the Tamil Nadu Warehousing Corporation already operate godowns of 6.68 Lakh Metric Tonnes and 6.33 Lakh Metric Tonnes capacity respectively. Thus, soon, godowns with an overall storage capacity of 18.90 Lakh Metric Tonnes will be available with the Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation and the Tamil Nadu Warehousing Corporation.

I would like to conclude by reiterating the stand taken by our Honourable Chief Minister on the key issues which are still to be addressed through appropriate amendments to the Food Security Act in order to ensure food security for all.

Thank you.

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w/c - all exp should be incurred by centre  
FSA - 100% central share  
DARS - 100% exp. by centre  
Revolverg. Fund  
100% grant to Stg.