

1

**MEETING OF WEST BENGAL STATE FOOD COMMISSION WITH OFFICIALS OF
FOOD & SUPPLIES DEPARTMENT, GOVT. OF WEST BENGAL**

VENUE: Office chamber of the Chairperson,
West Bengal State Food Commission

DATE: 23/02/2024

Commission:

Shri S.C.Tewary, Chairperson, West Bengal State Food Commission, was present. From the Commission, Smt. Monisha Mukherjee, W.B.C.S. (Exe.), Sr. Deputy Secretary also attended the meeting.

Food & Supplies Department, Government of West Bengal:

Food & Supplies Department, Govt. of West Bengal was represented by Shri Parwez Ahmad Siddiqui, I.A.S., Principal Secretary of the Department, Shri Debabrata Chakraborty, I.A.S., Sr. Special Secretary, Md. Ikhlauque Islam, I.A.S., Sr. Special Secretary, Dr. Ajay Bhattacharya, I.A.S., Director, Dte. of DDP&S, Shri Suman Kumar Ghosh, W.B.C.S. (Exe.), Director, Dte. of Rationing, Shri Pranab Kumar Biswas, W.B.C.S.(Exe.), Addl. Secretary (IT), and Smt. Sima Halder, W.B.C.S. (Exe.), Joint Secretary to the Government of West Bengal.

Discussion :

After initial introduction, discussions started. Chairperson, WBSFC thanked the department for timely receipt of the report in the matter of the status of functioning of the NFSA. He sought clarification of the abbreviation SPIII in the report submitted by the Department and the Principal Secretary replied that SPIII is a term coined by the State to specify Special Priority House Holds (SPIII) that were eligible for receiving subsidized sugar during the festive seasons.

The GoI has renamed NFSA as Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) w.e.f. 1st January, 2023 and is providing free of cost foodgrains. In addition, the Government of West Bengal also caters to needy population outside the scope of NFSA by supplying free food grains through two schemes named Rajya Khadya Suraksha Yojana [RKSU – I and RKSU – II.] The beneficiaries of RKSU-I and RKSU-II receive 5 kg and 2 kg of rice per month respectively.

The Principal Secretary of the Department of Food & Supplies informed of difficulty in the procurement of paddy due to high market price and untimely rains. The demand of paddy has increased due to change in the entitlement pattern of rice and wheat for NFSA and non-supply of wheat by FCI for RKSU. The difficulty in availability of wheat has resulted in enhancement of monthly allotment of rice for all categories of ration card holders in the following way:

- For AAY beneficiaries allotment of rice has been enhanced from 15 kg per family to 21 kg per family
- For PHH/SPHH beneficiaries allotment of rice has been enhanced from 2 kg per card to 3 kg per card
- For RKSU-I beneficiaries allotment of rice has been enhanced from 2 kg per card to 5 kg per card
- For RKSU-II beneficiaries allotment of rice has been enhanced from 1 kg per card to 2 kg per card

Chairperson wanted to know about the vacancies of FPS dealers and actions taken/ being taken to fill them up. It was informed that there was a pendency of about 2,500 cases of appointment on compassionate grounds such as death and medical incapacitation during 2020. Special drive was undertaken and since then 3,813 cases have been disposed. Subsequently, vacancies have been created due to relinquishing of dealership and rationalisation of the shops and tagged ration cards. Continuous efforts are on to fill up those vacancies also. He also informed that West Bengal is the only State to have Death Benefit Scheme for ration dealers and also pays highest remuneration in the country to them. He added that a beneficiary in West Bengal gets ration card within a day of application and, contrary to other states of the country, seeding of AADHAR with ration card is done for each individual (and not in the name of the Head of the Household.)

The Chairperson requested the Department to provide a note about the rationalisation of FPS dealers and benefits/ remuneration being given to them to make the PDS more effective.

Thereafter, the Chairperson requested the Department to appraise about the grievance redressal situation in the state.

It was informed that Grievance Redressal Mechanism through the Management Information System of the State was very prompt. Grievances were received through following channels (and then redressed by Department):

- Through Helpdesk;
- Online lodging of complaints through Portal;
- Through processing of complaints received at the Districts or within KMC by the respective DGRO;
- Through the Chief Minister's Grievance redressal mechanism.

It was informed that though complaints are generally received online, the manual mode of receiving complaints has not been discontinued.

Regarding Transparency and Accountability, it was informed that:

1. Targeted Public Distribution System related records are placed in the public domain and kept open for inspection u/s 27 of the NFSA.
2. A concurrent evaluation in the matter of implementation of the NFSA has been undertaken by the University of Calcutta at instance of Ministry of CA, F & PD, Government of India and Phase -II of the evaluation is under process.

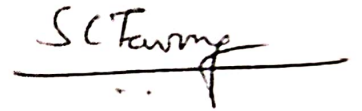
Vigilance Committees have already been formed at various levels of the administration:

- a) The State level Vigilance Committee has been formed under the Chairmanship of the Chief Secretary, Govt. of West Bengal.
- b) The District Level Vigilance Committees have been formed under the Chairmanship of the respective District Magistrates or, as the case may be, under the Chairmanship of the Municipal Commissioner for the Kolkata Municipal Commission.
- c) Block Level Vigilance Committees and Fair Price Shop Level Vigilance Committees have already been formed.

Further information:

Further, a detailed break up of information covering, inter alia, the matter of beneficiaries, category-wise, monthly requirement of food grains, district wise vacancies of FPS in the State, modes of compliance with Sec 40 of the NFSA was submitted by the Department earlier, which has been noted by the Commission.

After the discussion, the meeting was concluded with a vote of thanks to and from the Chair.



(Shri S.C. Tewary)
Chairperson, WBSFC

Memo. No. 06/WB SEC/NFSA 11N-01/2024

Date: 13/03/2024

Copy for kind information and necessary action to Shri Parwez Ahmad Siddiqui, I.A.S.,
Principal Secretary of the Department Food & Supplies, West Bengal.



Sr. Dy. Secretary, WBSFC.