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

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

DATE: 01/08/2023

Commission:

Shri S.C.Tewary, Chairperson, West Bengal State Food Commission, was present. From the Commission, Smt. Monisha Mukherjee, 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, Secretary of the Department, Shri Achintya Kumar Pati, Secretary in the Department, Dr. Ajay Bhattacharya, Director, DDP & S, Shri Debabrata Chakraborty, Sr. Special Secretary (CON), Shri Suman Kumar Ghosh, Director, Rationing, Shri Pranab Kumar Biswas, Addl. Secretary (IT), Shri Saroj Kumar Gupta, OSD & E.O. Joint Secretary (Law), and Smt. Sima Halder, Joint Secretary.

Discussion:

After initial introduction, discussion started.

The Secretary of the Department and other officials present informed that the provisions of the National Food Security Act were being implemented properly in the state of West Bengal. They also explained the significant aspect of functioning of the Public Distribution System through Fair Price Shops (FPSs). It was informed that implementation of AAY (Antyodaya Anna Yojana) and distribution of food grains to priority households [both as per provisions of NFSA] is being done in the state. Moreover, certain other categories of the population beyond the scope of NFSA are also being covered under Rajya Khadya Suroksha Yojana (RKSU-I and RKSU-II)- schemes of Government of West Bengal.

In addition, under special packages, namely for areas of Jungle Mahal, Tea Gardens, Hilly Areas, for Toto tribals and land losers of Singur are being given additional food grains. The beneficiaries covered under specific requirement of NFSA are 5,99,83,238 and under the two RKSU schemes are 2,81,25,882. Beneficiaries covered under the special packages total 50,03,634. Other details like scale of distribution of food grains under the schemes were also informed. It was also informed that requirement of food grains per month is approximately 3,49,000 and 1,32,200 MTs of rice and wheat respectively in the state.

The scheme of Duare Ration, which started in November 2021, is continuing. All the beneficiaries are being delivered subsidized / free food grains at the doorsteps of the beneficiaries every month. Moreover, fortified rice (fortified with iron, vitamin B₁₂ and Folic Acid) has also been distributed for the ICDS and Mid Day Meal Schemes from 2022.

Linking of Aadhaar cards with ration cards has been continuing and till December, 2022, out of 8,79,47,407 active ration cards 8,21,59,795 ration cards had been linked with Aadhaar (93.4%). The features of One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) and also intra-state portability of the ration cards have been implemented in the state for ration cards linked with Aadhaar. Consequently, such ration card holders can draw their ration from any FPS within the state or within any other state in the country.

It was also informed that procurement of paddy has been going on in the state like earlier years. Storage capacity for storing food grains is also adequate in the state.

It was also informed that the Vigilance Committee system and Grievance Redressal System at lower level and at the district and state level has been functioning properly. The system includes disposal of grievances through the internal grievance redressal mechanism for which a nodal officer in the rank of Joint Secretary to Government of West Bengal has been designated. Apart from this, District Grievance Redressal Officers (DGROs) as per NFSA are also functioning. A toll free number and portal is also available for lodging grievances.

It was also informed that some other initiatives have been taken to strengthen the PDS in the state. About 21500 vacancies due to death or medical incapacitation of FPS dealers have been filled up, mainly through appointment of family members of erstwhile FPS dealer. Further, FPS dealers have been permitted to sell essential non P.D. items from their shops to the consumers without hampering normal PDS. Periodic assessment of the quality and service in selling such items is done so that the integrity of the PDS is not compromised. A form of social security has been extended to FPS dealers, whereby if the dealer expires, his eligible claimant is entitled to get for one time support of Rs. 2,00,000/-

The Chairperson wanted to know more details about functioning of e-POS machines of FPS.

The Secretary of the Department clarified that each e-POS machine is facilitated with a duplicate SIM card as well as Wi-Fi. Hence the incidence of inaccessibility of the e-POS due to poor net connectivity is minimised. The Secretary of the department contended that there has been no problem, in general, in use of the e-POS during the last one year. In the matter of seeding of the ration card of each beneficiary to his/her AADHAR Number, 93.4% of AADHAR seeding has been completed upto Dec. 2022. The question of plausible malintention and malpractice on the part of the dealer in the matter of non completion of linking of the AADHAR No. with the ration card no. was ruled out since only the beneficiary himself could now draw ration from any part of the State by using his AADHAR No. at the e-POS and Information Management System of Food Department centrally monitors all transactions. An NFSA beneficiary accordingly can also lift ration from any FPS throughout the country under ONORC (One Nation One Ration Card).

It was also informed that food grains are provided free of cost to about 8.81 crores PDS beneficiaries and 100% distribution of food grains is made through e-POS only. About 99.6% transactions are authenticated transactions.

The method of execution of Duare Ration, a pilot project of the State, was also explained. The system caters to about 150 to 200 families per day on each day of a week from Tuesday to Friday by each FPS.

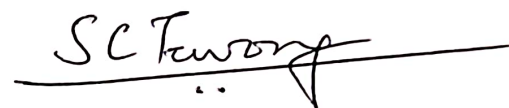
On an average, a distributor caters to the requirements of 30-40 Fair Price Shops. Food grains are stocked at the godowns owned by the State Government, CWC or SWC.

Duare Ration, a GPS enabled scheme, is executed through selection of about 1-16 routes /clusters for distribution of food grains, depending upon the no. of beneficiaries reducing thereby the wastage of time of the ration card holder as well as his travel expenses.

In the matter of FPS, it was informed that there are 20,400 existing FPS in the State and another 3,446 vacancies that have been created in the last 2 years (exclusive of the 20,400 FPS). 2485 vacancies have been notified for receiving applications and 574 vacancies are yet to be notified.

The detailed break-up of information including, inter-alia, in 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 etc. was submitted by the department in a booklet form and is enclosed along with these minutes.

There being nothing more for discussion, the meeting concluded with thanks to all.



(Shri S.C. Tewary)
CHAIRPERSON, WBSFC.

Enclosure: Report.