

# Food and Nutrition: Nutrition and Health of the Public Nutritional Security and Public Health Issues in India: Challenges and Way Forward

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**Abstract**—Adequate nutrition is a fundamental keystone of any individual's health and nutritional security as implied by physical, social and economic access to balanced diet, clean drinking water, safe environment and healthcare for every individual is a significant indicator of a country's development. Although India ranks 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> in the world in the production of milk and fruits and vegetables, the nutritional status of an average Indian does not reflect this. India has the distinction of having the highest prevalence of undernutrition even after seven decades of independence. Moreover, lifestyle and environment related diseases like obesity and chronic degenerative diseases are also on a rise. Thus, malnutrition, that in the present situation implies both undernutrition as well as overnutrition, seriously impacts India's productivity and development. Despite several programmes, missions and policies on nutrition, India is yet to achieve its goal of nutrition security because firstly, nutrition has never been a stated goal with measurable parameters for regular monitoring in any of these and secondly, nutrition has never been given its due importance even in health and agriculture development programmes. The issue of nutrition and public health can be addressed through an integrated synergistic approach that must include involvement of community, trained personnel and government policy makers on a common platform for developing region-specific policies/programmes to meet the nutritive and general health requirements; directing these policies/programmes to address the causative factors that are both dietary and non-dietary viz. environment, water, disease, income, lifestyle etc.; and lastly adopting advanced communication strategies for creating awareness about nutrition amongst the masses. The objective of this paper is to identify the challenges related to nutrition security and how proper education and awareness regarding public health and nutrition can help in overcoming these challenges to enhance the socio-economic status of India.

**Keywords:** nutrition; malnutrition; health; awareness.