

Effect of Drought on Nutritional Status of Rural Community in Karnataka

M. Ravindranath, K. Venkaiah, M. Vishnuvardhana Rao, N. Arlappa, Ch. Gal Reddy, K. Mallikharjuna Rao, Sharad Kumar, G.N.V. Brahmam and K. Vijayaraghavan

National Institute of Nutrition, Indian Council of Medical Research, Jamai Osmania (Post), Hyderabad 500 007, Andhra Pradesh, India

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ABSTRACT The State of Karnataka experienced drought during the year 2002, resulting fall in agricultural production, food insecurity, acute shortage of drinking water and fodder for cattle, reduced employment opportunities (in the labour activities) leading to migration of individuals to neighboring States. It was reported that the coverage of households in food for work programme, undertaken under drought relief works was poor (10.3%) and a family on an average, had an opportunity to participate in these works for a maximum of only 3 days during the entire drought period. However, a majority (71%) of the households were benefited with the developmental programme TPDS, while coverage of households in old age pension scheme (7.3%) and AAY (2.2%) was very poor in the villages covered for the present study. The intakes of foodstuffs at the household level, such as green leafy vegetables, roots and tubers, other vegetables, fruits, milk and milk products, fats and sugar was lower as compared to RDA as well as the levels reported by NNMB in its survey during non-drought period (2000-2001). The daily average intake of all the nutrients except calcium and thiamin was less than the levels recommended. The adverse effect of drought was reflected by marked decrease in the intake of vitamin A and concomitant increase in the prevalence of Bitot's Spots among preschool children. Food insecurity, particularly with respect to income elastic foods was significantly higher among SC/ST communities and in the households engaged in labour activities. Similarly, higher proportion of HHs of SC/ST communities and those households engaged in agricultural labour, adopted coping strategies like consumption of low cost foods and reduction in the quantities of food consumed. The prevalence of undernutrition among preschool children during current drought and non- drought periods was comparable perhaps due to effective implementation of supplementary nutrition programmes like ICDS in these areas. However, the prevalence of CED among adults was significantly higher during the current drought, which is reflection of reduction in the overall intake of dietary energy. The study revealed that though the serious ill effects of drought were largely prevented, there is a need to strengthen the drought relief programmes as well as supplementary nutrition programmes.