

# **NATIONAL CALL BY THE RIGHT TO FOOD CAMPAIGN**

**SAVE THE PDS!!!!**

**SAVE THE FARMERS!!!**

## **REJECT THE GOVERNMENT DRAFT OF THE NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY BILL**

**New Delhi, 25 July, 2011**

Dear friends,

The Steering Committee of the Right to Food Campaign, with over forty representatives met in Bhopal over the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2011. Over the two days we discussed threadbare the attack on the PDS along with the related issues of poverty caps, the BPL Census 2011 methodology, bursting food stocks and the reluctance on the part of the Government to distribute food and the various drafts of the National Food Security Bill (NFSB).

We all resolved that we will not allow the Government to dismantle the PDS or let subsidized food be replaced with cash transfers. We see this not just as an attack on the consumer but also on the farmers. We once again need to determinedly fight for a universal PDS. It was also decided to oppose the immediate twin decisions of the Government of stopping procurement of grain from the farmers and instead taking the decisions towards exporting grain as cattle fodder to other countries at prices lower than the BPL. We are strongly of the opinion that with millions underfed in this country, this decision of the Government to export food only exposes its lack of concern towards the people.

We also believe that the 2011 BPL survey methodology along with the poverty caps would serve as a tool for keeping out many of the poor rather than their inclusion. Thus we need to expose this right up to the gram panchayat level. As we are writing to you we have in our hands the Government draft of the NFSB 2011 which is a complete farce in the name of food security. An exercise that began in June 2009 has come to nought, we stand more or less where we began, with the principle of multiple and universal entitlements been demolished and the essential elements of food security Production, Procurement, Storage being completely out of the pale.

This letter is being written to you as an appeal that we all join hands for the proposed plan of action. (Please also go through the detailed decisions taken). We need to build alliances with as many groups as possible- farmers organizations, anti displacement groups, trade unions, women, dalit, tribal, youth, minorities and other progressive groups in order to reverse the above decisions. The national call consists of:

1. **8-15 August 2011 Action Week at State, district, block, gram panchayat and gram sabha levels.** These dates are not sacrosanct if States want to shift them. They can be revised but strong public action must happen in August itself. Some of the suggestions of what can be done are as follows:
  - State, district and block level discussions on rotting grains, cash transfers, the BPL-APL issues, Government decisions relating to exports and a rejection of the Government draft of the NFSB. These could include protests outside godowns at the district and block level (see attached parchas)
  - At the village level there can be social audits outside of PDS shops.
  - At state level, delegations to meet CMs and MPs. (sample letter attached)
  - Postcard campaign on Saving PDS to PM and CMs
  - Dabbas with food and other essential items bought for Rs 15 per day (for rural areas) and Rs. 20 per day (for urban areas) to expose the farce of the planning commission in fixing poverty lines.
  - 15<sup>th</sup> August and around : Getting the gram sabhas to resolve against the BPL methodology and the caps being fixed at a minimum of Rs 15 and Rs 20 per day expenditure for rural and urban areas. (parcha attached)
2. **5<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> September 2011: Protest outside the Parliament in Delhi:** A mobilization to Delhi in several thousand “for a universal PDS and against the dismantling of the PDS through cash transfers and our rejection of the Government draft of the National Food Security Bill”. More will be made available on this.
3. **Join the dharna on the 3, 4 and 5 August 2011** –called by SANGHARSH and other struggling groups in front of Parliament for issues regarding urban and rural displacement, land and food security issues.

We hope you will also be monitoring the lifting and the distribution of the extra grain allotted for extremely poor districts of the State by the Justice Wadhwa Committee as per the Supreme Court orders. We will send you the particulars of each State.

We are,

The Steering group of the Right to Food Campaign

Anjali Bhardwaj, Aruna Roy and Nikhil Dey (National Campaign for People’s Right to Information), Annie Raja (National Federation for Indian Women), Anuradha Talwar, Gautam Modi and Madhuri Krishnaswamy (New Trade Union Initiative), Arun Gupta and Radha Holla (Breast Feeding Promotion Network of India), Arundhati Dhuru and Ulka Mahajan (National Alliance of People’s Movements), Asha Mishra and Vinod Raina (Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti), Ashok Bharti (National Confederation of Dalit Organizations), Colin Gonsalves (Human Rights Law Network), G V Ramanjaneyulu (Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture), Kavita Srivastava and Binayak Sen (People’s Union for Civil Liberties), Lali Dhakar, Sarawasti Singh, Shilpa Dey and Radha Raghwal (National Forum for Single Women’s Rights), Mira Shiva and Vandana Prasad (Jan Swasthya Abhiyan), Paul Divakar and Asha Kowtal (National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights), Prahlad Ray and Anand Malakar (Rashtriya Viklang Manch), Subhash Bhatnagar (National Campaign Committee for Unorganized Sector workers), Jean Drèze and V.B Rawat (Former Support group to the Campaign)