

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 The Scheme

The Government food management strategy involves the implementation of a well targeted and properly functioning Public Distribution System as an instrument for providing food security to the poor by making available foodgrain at affordable prices at appropriate time. The steps involved in achieving the above objective were: i) identification of beneficiaries; ii) issue of ration cards (Family Identity Cards) to identified beneficiaries; iii) allocation, lifting and distribution to cover all identified beneficiaries having FICs; iv) scale of distribution as per norm; v) distribution on time; vi) quality of PDS commodities; vii) pricing of foodgrain as fixed by Government; and viii) an effective mechanism in place to oversee the efficient operation of the above system.

The Public Distribution System (PDS) in Assam is regulated under the “Assam Public Distribution of Articles Order, 1982” and is covered by “Essential Commodity Act, 1955”. Under the System, the Above Poverty Line (APL) families would continue to get foodgrain and other essential commodities from Fair Price Shop (FPS) through ration cards at normal Central Issue Price (CIP).

To ensure food security to the economically weaker sections of the society, Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) was launched in June 1997 to provide foodgrain at subsidised rate¹ below the CIP to Below Poverty Line (BPL) families as per the norms² prescribed. The BPL families were to be identified and issued with special cards.

Antodaya Anna Yojana (AAY), launched in December 2000, was intended to secure food availability to the poorest of the poor from the BPL families by providing rice at ₹ 3 per kg. Distinctive ration cards were to be issued to the AAY families.

The State Government, on receipt of allocation for the State from GOI, sub-allocates the foodgrain to civil sub-divisions of all districts. The foodgrain are then lifted by the notified lifting agencies (i.e., WSCCSs³/GPSSs⁴) for distribution through FPSs.

Under TPDS, the FCI off-takes foodgrain (mainly rice and wheat) from Central pool as per allocation made by the GOI and stores the foodgrain in various base depots spread throughout the State for lifting by numerous notified lifters.

¹ Government approved rate for BPL (Maximum) (₹ 6.67)

² 35 Kg per family per month at subsidized rate.

³ Whole Sale Consumer Co-operative Societies (WSCCS).

⁴ Gaon Panchayat Samabay Samitees (GPSS).