

Chapter 5 Ration Cards

Ration card is a document issued under an order or authority of the State Government for purchase of essential commodities under PDS through the network of FPS. The Director, FCS issues distinctive ration cards to BPL, AAY, Annapurna and APL beneficiaries for the said purpose.

5.1 Estimation and printing of ration cards

The estimation of printing of ration cards should be based on the requirement received from district supply offices in consultation with local bodies duly approved by the District administrative officers. The periodicity of printed BPL & AAY ration cards is for two years and were required to be renewed after every two years. The periodicity of printed Annapurna card was for three years and were being renewed after every three years. APL card did not have any periodicity printed on the card. The position of printing and issue of ration cards to the District authorities for renewal or fresh distribution in respect of different targeted groups is depicted below:

Table No. 5.1

Category of Ration cards	BPL	AAY	Annapurna	APL	TOTAL
Number of Ration cards printed during 2005-11	244500	147100	21800	129397*	542797
Number of ration cards retained with Directorate	2510	1775	378	87346	92009
Total ration cards issued	241990	145325	21422	42051	450788

**balance out of 3 lakh APL ration cards brought forward from 2004-05*

Name of the district	Statement showing the requirement, issue and retention of ration cards with the district supply offices											
	Total number of Ration cards ¹³ required for 6 years				Total number of Ration cards issued for 6 years				Total number of Ration cards issued beyond the requirement			
	BPL	AAY	Annapurna	Total	BPL	AAY	Annapurna	Total	BPL	AAY	Annapurna	Total
Dimapur	35514	18240	3240	56994	36376	18490	3350	58216	862	250	110	1222
Kohima	25515	14430	2307	42252	26460	14680	2419	43559	945	250	112	1307
Phek	24522	13515	1689	39726	25253	13765	1803	40821	731	250	114	1095
Wokha	23529	12810	1380	37719	24656	13060	1490	39206	1127	250	110	1487
Zuneboto	24861	13425	1605	39891	25894	13750	1725	41369	1033	325	120	1478
Tuensang	10560	12555	2421	25536	12590	12805	2537	27932	2030	250	116	2396
Mokokchung	29985	16500	2613	49098	30915	16750	2721	50386	930	250	108	1288
Mon	21747	13995	2475	38217	22978	14245	2585	39808	1231	250	110	1591
Peren	8697	8370	1074	18141	10028	8620	1188	19836	1331	250	114	1695
Kiphire	18396	10770	819	29985	19224	11020	933	31177	828	250	114	1192
Longleng	6174	7890	558	14622	7616	8140	671	16427	1442	250	113	1805
Total	229500	142500	20181	392181	241990	145325	21422	408737	12490	2825	1241	16556

(Source:- Departmental figures)

¹³ Maximum requirement has been calculated on the basis of beneficiaries stated in Table 4.1

- It was noticed from the records of the Department that assessment of requirement of ration cards was not made from the field units in order to estimate the quantity of ration cards to be printed in respect of targeted groups. The Department printed distinctive coloured ration cards for targeted groups for ₹31.90 lakh¹⁴ during 2005-11 through a private printer located at Dimapur without observing the purchase procedures and financial rules. It can be seen from the above table that the total requirement of ration cards (excluding APL households) during 2005-11 was 3,92,181. The Director, FCS however, issued 4,08,737 ration cards resulting in excess issue of 16,556 ration cards during the same period. The Department also did not exercise any control over the issue of ration cards through periodical physical verification which facilitated issue of duplicate and bogus cards at the district level as discussed in succeeding paragraph.

The Department stated (November 2010) that due to the inability of the 'Department of Printing and Stationery' to undertake the printing job, the Department engaged a renowned printing press after obtaining 'No Objection Certificate' from the Department of Printing and Stationery which was approved by the Government. The Department further stated that extra number of ration cards was printed in anticipation of cases such as cancellation, mutilation, loss, etc. However, the fact remains that the excess cards were not traceable as explained in Paragraph 5.2.

- Audit scrutiny in the selected districts revealed that the ration cards were issued to the beneficiaries without affixing the photographs of the beneficiaries in the cards. As the ration cards issued did not bear the photograph of the beneficiary, the possibility of misuse of the cards by unauthorised persons cannot be ruled out.

The Department stated (December 2011) that ration cards had been redesigned and photograph of the beneficiary incorporated.

- It was also seen that the database of the ration card holders were not maintained by the Department systematically by mentioning the age of the card holders, father's name, card numbers of the beneficiaries. Hence, the database of ration cards could not be vouchsafed and verified in audit.

The Department stated (December 2011) that the database of the ration cards was being updated with detailed particulars of beneficiaries.

5.2 Existence of bogus/duplicate ration cards

The Director abruptly issued printed ration cards of various targeted groups of beneficiaries to the district controlling officers in excess of the actual number of beneficiaries without receipt of any request/application from the district offices except for APL group. Scrutiny of stock registers maintained at the four selected districts revealed the following:

¹⁴ BPL (76500 Nos) & AAY (47500 Nos)- ₹ 31 lakh (on two occasions)
Annapurna (6727 Nos)- ₹ 0.90 Lakh(once only)

Table No. 5.2

Name of District	Number of Ration Cards issued by the FCD			Total	Number of RCs issued to beneficiaries			Total	Cards available with ADS			Total	Short (5-9-13)
	BPL	AAY	Annapurna		BPL	AAY	Annapurna		BPL	AAY	Annapurna		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Dimapur	36376	18490	3350	58216	35514	18240	3240	56994	22	15	12	49	1173
Peren	10028	8620	1188	19836	8697	8370	1074	18141	140	14	41	195	1500
Tuensang	12590	12805	2537	27932	10560	12555	2421	25536	0	0	0	0	2396
Zunheboto	25894	13750	1725	41369	24861	13245	1605	39711	1033	505	120	1658	0
TOTAL	84888	53665	8800	147353	79632	52410	8340	140382	1195	534	173	1902	5069

(Source: Departmental records)

As could be seen from the table above, against the actual requirement of 140382 ration cards, the Director issued 147353 ration cards to the district offices during 2005-11 resulting in excess issue of 6971 cards.

Physical verification of stock register by audit (July 2011) in the three (Dimapur, Peren and Tuensang) test-checked districts, revealed that against the actual closing balance of 6971 ration cards, only 1902 ration cards were physically available in stock. Thus, there was a possibility of misuse of 5069 cards.

The Department did not create a healthy system to eliminate the risk for issue of Bogus/Duplicate Ration Cards by constituting FPS Committees and Vigilance Committees as well as periodical verification of ration cards to check the diversion of essential commodities.

The Department stated (June 2011) that identification to weed out bogus/duplicate ration cards was under investigation by the Committee constituted for the purpose and the outcome would be intimated to audit. In addition to their earlier reply, the Department while accepting the facts (December 2011) stated that Ration Cards were issued in excess to replace cards which had been lost, torn or contained clerical errors. But records in this regard could not be furnished to audit, though called for.

Conclusion

As the database of ration card holders was not maintained systematically, audit could not vouchsafe the veracity of the records. The excess ration cards issued to the district offices without any requisition point towards possibility of misuse of 5069 ration cards. The possibility of diversion of essential commodities to unauthorised persons also cannot be ruled out.

Recommendations

The Department should maintain the database of ration card holders systematically mentioning all the details of the card holders in order to assess the requirements and also to avoid duplicate ration cards.

Steps should be taken to weed out bogus ration cards already issued. Effective control mechanism at district level should also be formulated to prevent issue of bogus ration cards in future.