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Odisha is the pioneering state to constitute State Food Commission

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Chairperson of Odisha State Food Commission Sri P.K. Merkap spoke to the press today regarding various provisions of National Food Security Act, 2013 and Odisha State Food Security Rules, 2020 under Targeted Public Distribution System (TDPS), which are of paramount importance to all the beneficiaries of our State.

Sri Merkap said that Odisha is the pioneering state to constitute State Food Commission after the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013 came into force on the 5th July, 2013 (published in official Gazette of India on 10th September, 2013). National Food Security Act (NFSA) provides for food and nutritional security in human life cycle approach, by ensuring access to adequate quantity of nutritious food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. As per the provisions under section 16 of this Act, every State Government shall, by notification, constitute a State Food Commission for the purpose of monitoring, review and implementation of this Act. In view of the above provisions, Government of Odisha decided to constitute an exclusive commission and accordingly the Department of Food Supplies & Consumer Welfare issued Notification No. 5725 on 15th March, 2016 and Odisha State Food Commission was constituted.

The Odisha State Food Commission is given a mandate to monitor and evaluate the implementation of three major schemes under National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013 in the State. These three Schemes are: a) Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS): **Total Ration cardholders– 92,55 lakh (approx.) and beneficiaries-3,23 crore (approx.),** b) Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP): **Total AWCs (approx.)-72,000 (approx.) and beneficiaries-41.23 lakh (approx.)** c) Mid-Day-Meal (MDM): **Total Government and Government aided Schools - 55,000 (approx.) (1 to 8) and Children-45,00,000 (approx.).** This Act provides for coverage up to 75% in rural population and 50% of the urban population to receive subsidized food grains under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), thereby covering about two-thirds of the population of the State.

Odisha State Food Commission was created a) To monitor and evaluate the implementation of the NFSA, 2013 in the State; hear appeals against orders of the District Grievance Redressal Officer (DGRO) and prepare annual reports. b) To give advice and suggestions to govt. agencies, autonomous bodies as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in delivery of relevant services, for the effective implementation of food and nutrition related schemes. c) To provide appropriate suggestions to the State Government for effective implementation of the NFSA, 2013.4. Inspect or cause to be inspected, the non-

compliance of policy decisions of the Government relating to NFSA, 2013. d) Motivation and awareness at all levels about the benefits and entitlement under this Act. e) To take care of grievance redressal mechanism in 3 major implementing Departments that is FS & CW, W & CD and S & ME. f) The Commission either suo-moto or on receipt of complaint may inquire into violation of entitlement. g) As various schemes under this Act is being implemented by respective administrative departments it is essential to have a convergence on important issues to optimize their efforts and effectiveness.

Salient features of NFSA, 2013 are a) Eldest woman of the household of age 18 years or above is the head of the household to receive ration cards. b) Provisions for disclosure of records, social audits and Vigilance Committees to ensure transparency and accountability. c) Provision for food security allowance to entitled beneficiaries in case of non-supply of entitled food-grains or rations. c) Provision for penalty to be imposed by the Commission, in case of failure to comply with the relief recommended by the District Grievance Redressal Officer. d) Digitization under TPDS: Computerization of beneficiary database and supply chain management. e) Seeding of Aadhaar and Bank Account in ration card database.

Salient provisions of Odisha State Food Security Rules, 2020 under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) are : a) Exhaustive guidelines for beneficiary identification **(Under Rule-3)**. b) Time bound verification of the application by the authority on the receipt of application under OPDS (Control) Order, 2016 and in case of rejection of the application; the applicant is informed in writing the reason and ground of rejections **(Under Rule-3(7) & Rule-4(4))**. c) Any person or Organisation, who has reasonable cause, may file a complaint to the notified authority for inclusion or exclusion of the person or household as the case may be in the list of beneficiaries. (People's participation in beneficiary identification; ensuring transparency **(Under Rule-3(9)(b))**. d) Availability of beneficiary data in the public domain and regular updation of beneficiary data base; providing dynamism. It is important to note that the list of names of eligible households shall be displayed at the Gram Panchayat Office and Fair Price Shops prominently. The Government shall also display the list of eligible households on its official websites and the official websites of the Central Government. As and when an application for ration card is rejected, the applicant shall be informed in writing specifying the reason(s) or ground(s) of such rejection **(Under Rule-4)**. e) The Government may designate Nodal Officers at Block/ Municipality and Municipal Corporation level for the purpose of internal grievance redressal mechanism. The Civil Supply Officer of the District shall be designated as District Nodal Officer with respect to Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) schemes and Inspector of Supplies or Marketing Inspector or Asst. Civil Supply Officer as the case may be shall be Block level Nodal Officer **(Under Rule-6 & 7)**.

Responsibility of Nodal Officer have been clearly described **(Under Rule-6)** of OSFS (TPDS) Rules, 2020.

Role and responsibility of District Grievance Redressal Officer (DGRO) (Under Rule-8 & 9) are Complete recording of grievances with unique serial number assigned to each grievance at office (DGRO) with acknowledgement receipt to the complaint. It is important to note that the Government shall, by notification, appoint or designate any officer as the District Grievance Redressal Officer to hear all grievances relating to schemes, such as, Targeted Public Distribution System, Integrated Child Development Scheme, Mid-Day Meal and Maternity Benefit Programme **(Under Rule-8)**, Give wide publicity through newspaper and other means about the District Grievance Redressal Officers including name, address, telephone number, email address, Fax number and other means of contacting him, in respect of each area for which the District Grievance Redressal Officer has been appointed and thereafter repeat it at regular intervals **(Under Rule-8 (4)(a))**, Display, at each office of Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Department, fair price shops, other public places, official website and at the office of the District Grievance Redressal Officer and the State Food Commission; the name of the District Grievance Redressal Officers, their addresses and telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, Fax numbers and other means of contacting them, in respect of each district for which the office of the District Grievance Redressal Officer has been set up **(Under Rule-8(4)(b))**, Multiple levels of grievance redressal mechanism (Nodal Officer, DGRO, State Food Commission), Timely disposal of the complaint at the level of DGRO and provision to appeal against the orders of DGRO, if not satisfied with the order of DGRO to appeal at State Food Commission **(Under Rule-13 & 14)**, Provision to conduct Social Audit to increase efficiency and effectiveness of the system **(Under Rule-17)**, Setting of Vigilance Committee at different levels to ensure transparency and proper functioning of the TPDS and accountability of the functionaries in the system **(Under Rule-19)** and Provision of imposition of penalty on public servant or authority **(Under Rule-21(6))**.

Sri Merkap said that efforts have been initiated at various levels by the Commission to make wide scale publication of this rules which are available in official websites of Food Commission and in all District offices. In regular monthly meetings with District officials, advice is being given to strictly comply the provision of the rules for the benefits of the people.

Sri Merkap answered the queries of the press and assured to act upon their valuable suggestions.

Among others, Sri D.N.Padhi, member and Sri Sibani Mohanty, member Secretary of the Commission were present.

Deeptimayee Mohapatra
Information Officer