

## A Shift in Approach from Cereal Based Diet to Dietary Diversity in India: A Case Study of Aligarh District

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**Abstract :** Food security issue in India has surrounded over availability and accessibility of cereal which is regarded as the only food group to check hunger and improve nutrition. Significance of fruits, vegetables, meat and other food products have totally been neglected given the fact that they provide essential nutrients to the body. There is a need to shift the emphasis from cereal-based approach to a more diverse diet so that aim of achieving food security may change from just reducing hunger to an overall health. This paper attempts to analyse how far dietary diversity level has been achieved across different socio-economic groups in India. For this purpose, present paper sets objectives to determine (a) percentage share of different food groups to total food expenditure and consumption by background characteristics (b) source of and preference for all food items and, (c) diversity of diet across socio-economic groups. A cross sectional survey covering 304 households selected through proportional stratified random sampling was conducted in six villages of Aligarh district of Uttar Pradesh, India. Information on amount of food consumed, source of consumption and expenditure on food (74 food items grouped into 10 major food groups) was collected with a recall period of seven days. Per capita per day food consumption/expenditure was calculated through dividing consumption/expenditure by household size and number seven. Food variety score was estimated by giving 0 values to those food groups/items which had not been eaten and 1 to those which had been taken by households in last seven days. Addition of all food group/item score gave result of food variety score. Diversity of diet was computed using Herfindahl-Hirschman index. Findings of the paper show that cereal, milk, roots and tuber food groups contribute a major share in total consumption/expenditure. Consumption of these food groups vary across socio-economic groups whereas fruit, vegetables, meat and other food consumption remain low and same. Estimation of dietary diversity show higher concentration of diet due to higher consumption of cereals, milk, root and tuber products and dietary diversity slightly varies across background groups. Muslims, Scheduled caste, small farmers, lower income class, food insecure, below poverty line and labour families show higher concentration of diet as compared to their counterpart groups. These groups also evince lower mean intake of number of food item in a week due to poor economic constraints and resultant lower accessibility to number of expensive food items. Results advocate to make a shift from cereal based diet to dietary diversity which not only includes cereal and milk products but also nutrition rich food items such as fruits, vegetables, meat and other products. Integrating a dietary diversity approach in food security programmes of the country would help to achieve nutrition security as hidden hunger is widespread among the Indian population.

**Keywords :** dietary diversity, food Security, India, socio-economic groups

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