

Food security bill Sarvodaya based

The National Food Security Bill is based on Sarvodaya principles as it has adopted a human life cycle approach, looks at providing coarse grains (nutri-cereals) at subsidised rates, giving impetus to the public distribution system, giving woman the position as the head of the family, and synergising drinking water, sanitation, hygiene and food, M.S. Swaminathan, Member of the Rajya Sabha and Chairman, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, said.

Inaugurating a two-day Sarvodaya Leadership Summit 2012 as part of the silver jubilee celebrations of Shanti Ashram, he said that the Bill would focus on three fundamentals of food availability, food access, and food absorption. "Food availability should be assessed from home-grown food and not from what is imported. Food access depends on the purchasing power of people, and food absorption means the amount the human body is able to utilise," Mr. Swaminathan said.

Elaborating on food access and food absorption concepts, the MP said the purchasing power of the producer-consumer of agricultural produce remained poor and that was why most of them, who formed part of the 66 per cent of the country, could not get access to food.

The absorption power of women and children was not to the full capacity because of various deficiencies, and hence malnutrition of the mother and children remained a grave problem. Referring to the statement of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh that it was a national shame that 48 per cent of India's children were malnourished, Mr. Swaminathan said that in spite of various social interventions, the situation had not improved.

He believed that the Bill would elevate the livelihood of the small farmer. Putting faces before figures were necessary to get an emotional dimension to the country's problems. This was essential because the country would soon have 25 per cent of the world's farmers in India and 2014 would be the International Year of Family Farming.

We had many opportunities to convert Mahatma Gandhi's 'Sarvodaya' concept in today's India, he added. "Biological models depend on synergy and symbiosis for their success. A Sarvodaya society, or a high synergy society, can only be built on the foundation of harmony with nature and with each other.

The choice with us now is to choose between Sarvodaya or the universal good, or 'sarvanasha' or universal destruction. Kezevino Aram, Director of the Ashram, said the future focus of the Ashram would be to give impetus to the student scholarship programme, create a consortium for women entrepreneurs to alleviate poverty, reach public health to millions, and take forward the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Peace and Leadership to be set up in Coimbatore (Hindu 31-1-12).