

CHAPTER-XII

PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

12.1.0. In Assam the Public Distribution System (PDS) is a major instrument of the Government's poverty eradication programme which is regulated under the provisions of "Assam Public Distribution of Articles Order, 1982". The main task of the State Food and Civil Supplies Department is to maintain smooth functioning of Public Distribution System in the State and overall stability of general price level as well as to ensure adequate availability of commodities essential to the society. The Food and Civil Supplies Department has been implementing some welfare schemes sponsored by the Government of India such as schemes for Below Poverty line (BPL), Above Poverty Line (APL), Antyodyoya Anna Yojana (AAY) and Randhan Jyoti through its well equipped Public Distribution Network stretching all over the State. The present status of these schemes as made available by the state Directorate of Food and Civil Supplies are narrated below.

I. Below Poverty Line (BPL):

The scheme has been in implementation in the State since June, 1997 covering 14,76,433 nos. of families till date. Under the scheme, the families have been provided with Rice at the rate of 35 Kgs. per family in a month. In addition to BPL Rice, these families are also provided with Wheat or its products, S. K. Oil, Levy Sugar, Salt (Zonal) through Public Distribution System at subsidised prices.

II. Above Poverty Line (APL):

The Above Poverty Line scheme normally covers the middle class people of the society. It is estimated that there are about 38.3 lakh families living Above Poverty Line in the State. These families have been provided with APL Rice, Wheat and its products, Levy Sugar, S. K. Oil and Salt (Zonal) in every month at Government fixed price through Family Identity Cards (FIC).

III. Antodyoya Anna Yojana (AAY):

As per the guidelines of the Government of India, the Antyodyoya Anna Yojana Scheme has been implemented since November, 2001 in the State. Under this Scheme, the State Government has been providing 35 Kgs. Rice per family per month at a price of Rs.3.00 per Kg. to each of 4,16,283 nos. families selected from the poorest of the poor BPL families. In addition to Rice, the families also get Wheat and its product, Levy Sugar, S. K. Oil and Salt (Zonal) etc.

IV. Randhan Jyoti:

Under this scheme one lakh LPG single bottle connections are to be provided to widow or a woman member of each of the one lakh selected BPL families in both rural and urban areas of the State at free of connection charges. The District-Wise targets for the number of beneficiaries have been calculated at 5.25 percent of the total selected BPL families of each District. This scheme has been in implementation since 15th August, 2003 all over the State.

12.2.0 The Public Distribution System with a Network of 33,229 Fair Price Shops (FPS) is perhaps the largest distribution network of its type throughout the State. Out of 33,229 nos. of Fair Price Shops in the State, 29,322 nos. are in rural areas, 3,907 nos. are in urban areas and the number of population covered per Fair Price Shop is around 863 nos. during 2003-2004.

12.3.0 The present monthly requirement and allocation of commodities for Public Distribution System for the State is shown in the Table-12.1

TABLE-12.1
REQUIREMENT ALLOCATION AND RELEASE OF PDS ITEMS IN ASSAM
(In metric tones)

Items	Monthly requirement		Monthly allocation (average)		Monthly release (average)	
	2002-03	2003-04	2002-03	2003-04	2002-03	2003-04
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
RICE -(i) APL, (ii) BPL,(iii) AAY	113141	200889	106305	106305	43262	69292
WHEAT	61266	65000	30000	30000	27289	30000
SUGAR	23976	20089	19149	18422	5200	1469
S. K. OIL	33168	35735	21757	20976	21757	20976

2003-04 (Provisional)

Source: Directorate of Food & Civil Supplies, Assam

CONSUMER PROTECTION AFFAIRS:

12.4.0 The most important responsibility entrusted with the Food and Civil Supplies Department of the Government of Assam is to protect the consumer's interest in the State. As per provisions of the Consumers Protection Act, 1986, the Food and Civil Supplies Department being the Administrative Department has already set up one State Commission with Headquarters at Guwahati and twenty-three numbers of District Forum (Permanent / Temporary basis) in different Districts to dispose off the cases and complaints lodged before the Commission / Forum as per provision of the aforesaid Act. The aggrieved persons are benefited by the directions of the Commission and District Forum, since its inception, 10714 numbers of cases have been filed before the Commission / Forum out of which 8941 numbers of cases have been disposed off leaving a balance of 1773 numbers cases.

As a part of its Consumer's Protection Policy, the State Government has taken some important decisions such as (i) to institute a State Level Award for State Organization which has outstanding contribution towards consumer's movement activities and carries a cash component and a citation, (ii) to include consumer awareness in the School Curriculum, (iii) to form District Information Centre (DIC) and (iv) to form Consumer Clubs at some selected School of various Districts of the State.

It is encouraging to observe that a large number of cases have been filed under "The Essential Commodities Act, 1955", "Prevention of Black Marketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act, 1980." As per information made available by the Department, a total of 971 numbers of raids have been conducted upto the end the month of August, 2004 leading to conviction of 22 numbers of persons and realization of a huge amount of money as penalty etc.