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Right to Food Campaign rejects food security bill's proposed draft

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The members of the Right to Food Campaign on Monday "rejected" the proposed draft of the National Food Security Bill that promises 25 kilogram of foodgrains to each Below Poverty line population family per month at Rs. 3 per kg and urged Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to come up with a bill that covers every adult resident of the country under the Public Distribution System (PDS).

"Nothing short of a universal entitlement for the PDS would suffice to change the existing situation. Every adult resident of the country must be covered by the PDS with entitlements of 14. kgs of cereals (including nutritious millets) per month at Rs. 2 per kilogram, 1.5 kilogram of pulses at Rs. 20 per kg and 800 gms of cooking oil at Rs. 35 per kg with children getting half the entitlements and the ration cards made in the name of female head of the household," they said in a letter written to the Prime Minister on Monday.

'Minimalist draft'

Describing the proposed Bill—that is with the Law Ministry—as a "minimalist draft," the signatories to the letter said, "it does not address any of the nutritional needs of the people. This draft is not only a betrayal of the people of India but also is in contempt of the letter and spirit of the orders of the Supreme Court in the right to food case. This draft completely ignores the multiple entitlements which constitute the right to food of all ages of people and all sections of society including vulnerable groups."

Among the signatories are Jean Dreze, Aruna Roy, Harsh Mander, Annie Raja, Mira Shiva, Vandana Prasad, Nikhil Dey, Arun Gupta, Radha Holla, Kavita Srivastava, Sandeep Pandey, Arundhati Dhuru and Biraj Patnaik.

"The single entitlement proposed by the Empowered Group of Ministers [on Food] in the name of food security by provisioning for only 25 kg per household is in fact less than the current entitlement of 35 kg which has been mandated by Supreme Court orders. A legislation that promises a "right" but in reality reduces the existing entitlement is completely unacceptable." "To make matters worse, the proposed Bill seeks to restrict this "entitlement" further to just BPL families (as per Planning Commission estimates). Targeting minimum food entitlements is to create food insecurity. A universal entitlement for food is the only way that the country can ensure food security for all." The letter further said: "As you are aware, we are reeling under the worst food inflation in the last three decades and are dismayed at your Government's refusal to bring down prices. At such a time, this bill makes a further mockery of growing hunger and malnutrition."

Keywords: [Right to Food Campaign](#), [National Food Security Bill](#), [Public Distribution System](#), [Manmohan Singh](#), [calorific value](#)