

# Bottom line: No food security in Kandhamal

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TORN apart worldwide for the communal frenzy in recent times, Kandhamal has got a new label, and yet another dubious one. It is Orissa's most insecure district in terms of food security.

The no-railway, no-industry district is at the bottom of the table on food security index, according to the 'Food Security Atlas of Rural Orissa,' prepared by UN World Food Programme (WFP).

The tribal-dominated district is not the only one at the nadir. For company, it has Gajapati, Rayagada and Nabarangpur which too have been termed extremely insecure.

However, Kandhamal rules the bottom. In terms of food availability, it has been ranked 30th. Access to food index puts it at the 24th position. Ability to absorb, another parameter, leaves the district at the 30th position.

The Food Security Index (FSI), as per this report, is a composite of three parameters including availability, access

and absorption.

While food availability uses factors like per capita value of agricultural output, percentage of villages having access to paved roads, proportion of net irrigated area to sown area and forest cover, access takes into account percentage of agricultural labour, SC/ST population, working age population and per capita monthly consumption expenditure. The absorption factor is all about percentage of households having access to safe drinking water and PHC access.

The Atlas, prepared by WFP and New Delhi-based Institute of Human Development, revealed that going by per capita agricultural output, Kandhamal is ranked lowest (30th) while irrigation coverage puts it at 29th, just ahead of Nabarangpur.

A district with such low development indices, Kandhamal having high forest cover has low net sown area leading to even lower irrigation and a pathetic per capita agricultural production estimated at Rs 900 per annum.

The report was released by Abhijit

Sen, member, Planning Commission, in the presence of India Country Director, WFP, Mihoko Tamamura. It has showed that rural connectivity to Kandhamal is the poorest, so are indices on access to safe drinking water.

Interestingly, the report shows that only three districts in the State are secure while another six are moderately secure.

'In the State, there is a contiguous zone of acute food insecurity - all districts of eastern ghats and the adjoining coastal pockets,' it said. Tamamura said the Atlas marks the start of a comprehensive food security information system and will enable rational allocation of resources to the most vulnerable areas for improving food and nutritional security.



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