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Cereal Consumption Declining, Pulses Production Declining: - A Great Cause of Worry for India

Jivika Sagar
Department of Biotechnology, R.V. College of Engineering
R.V Vidyaniketan Post, Mysore Road, Bangalore-560059, India.

Abstract: ***Since the mid-1990s, India has been experiencing a rise in its economy, which has been accompanied by an improvement in the country's food supply. This also has been accompanied by the change in food consumption pattern across the country due to various reasons such as, income induced diet diversification, increasing urbanization, impact of globalization and changing lifestyle of people. Since the advent of Green Revolution and also a lot of other factors which include assured prices paid through public procurement, the cereal production in the country has been gradually increasing. According to the data released by The Government of India the net production of cereals has increased from 138 million tonnes in 1990 to 198 million tonnes in 2011. But according to the National Sample Survey Organization, the per capita annual household consumption has dropped from 155kg in 1993-94 to 129kg in 2011-12, about 17 percent decline in 18 years. In contrast the net production of pulses have almost been stagnant, from 12.5 million tonnes in 1990 to 17.3 million tonnes in 2011 but even with imports India has not been able to meet the domestic demand for pulses. The changes in availability and intake of pulses and cereals have had a serious implication on the country's nutrition. Dietary energy intake has declined from 2,153 kcal per person per day in 1993-94 to 2,071 kcal per day in 2011-12. There is an urgent need to upgrade varieties, practices and policy support for pulses.***

Keywords: Per capita income, Cereals, Pulses, National Sample Survey Organization, Dietary intake.

I. INTRODUCTION

India's impressive economic growth over the past two decades and a more inclusive growth in recent years have resulted in per capita income steadily increasing in real terms as well as at market prices both in urban and rural areas. This has also lead to changing food consumption pattern across the country. Consistent with the overall economic growth, the share of consumer spending on food has declined. According to some studies, the proportion of expenditure on food items over all income groups has declined by about 10 percentage points in the rural areas and by about 16 percentage points in the urban areas between 1987-88 and 2009-10.

However, the income-induced diet diversification has resulted in consumers moving away from inferior cereals such as jowar and bajra to superior grains such as wheat, rice and other pulses.

II. CEREALS

A cereal is any grass cultivated for the edible components of its grain (botanically, a type of fruit called a caryopsis), composed of the endosperm, germ, and bran. Cereal grains are grown in greater quantities and provide more food energy worldwide than any other type of crop and are therefore staple crops.

According to the data released by Government of India, the production of cereals has steadily increased in each decade.

Despite the increase in production, the domestic absorption of cereals has grown at a lower rate, leading to an increase in export of cereals. Between 2000-01 and 2013-14, India has been exporting 8.94 million tonnes of cereals per year on average while per capita domestic intake has fallen from 155kg to 129kg, about 17 per cent.

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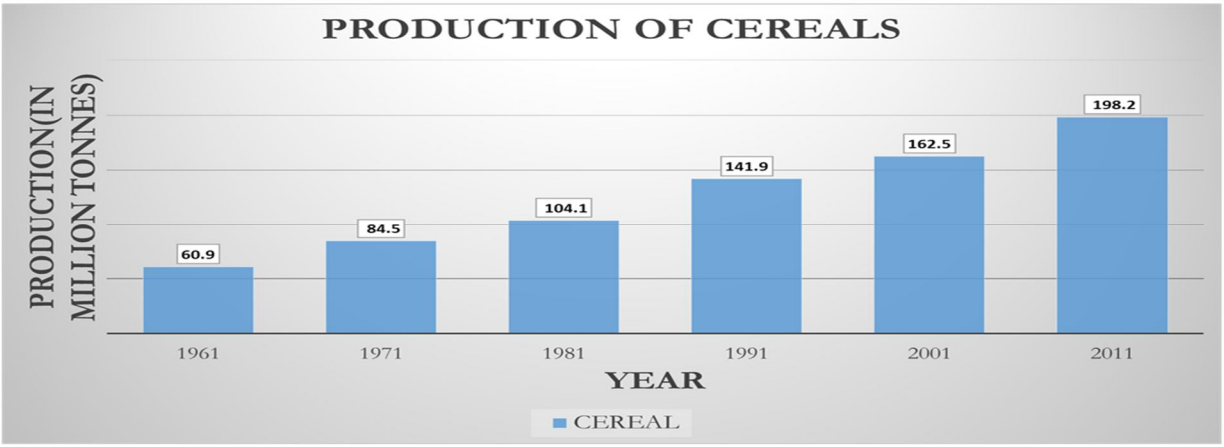

Fig. 1 Production of Cereals in Million Tonnes from 1961-2011 in India.

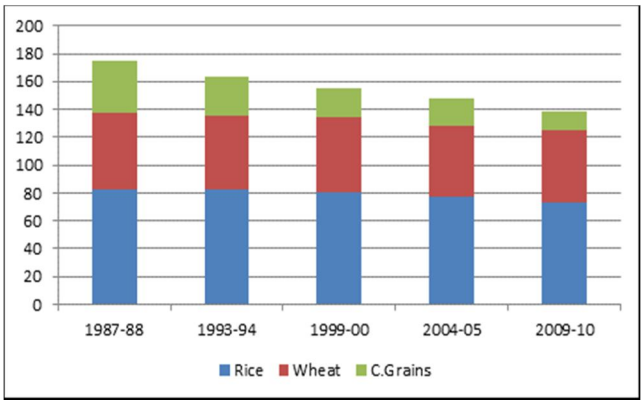

Fig.2 Trend in Cereal Consumption – Rural (Kgs. /year).

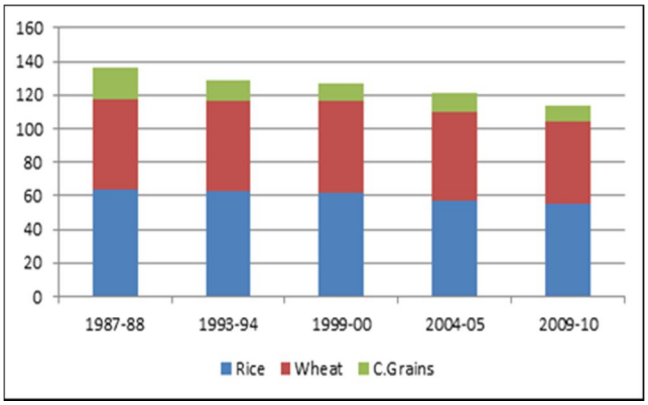

Fig.3 Trend in Cereal Consumption – Urban (Kgs. /year).

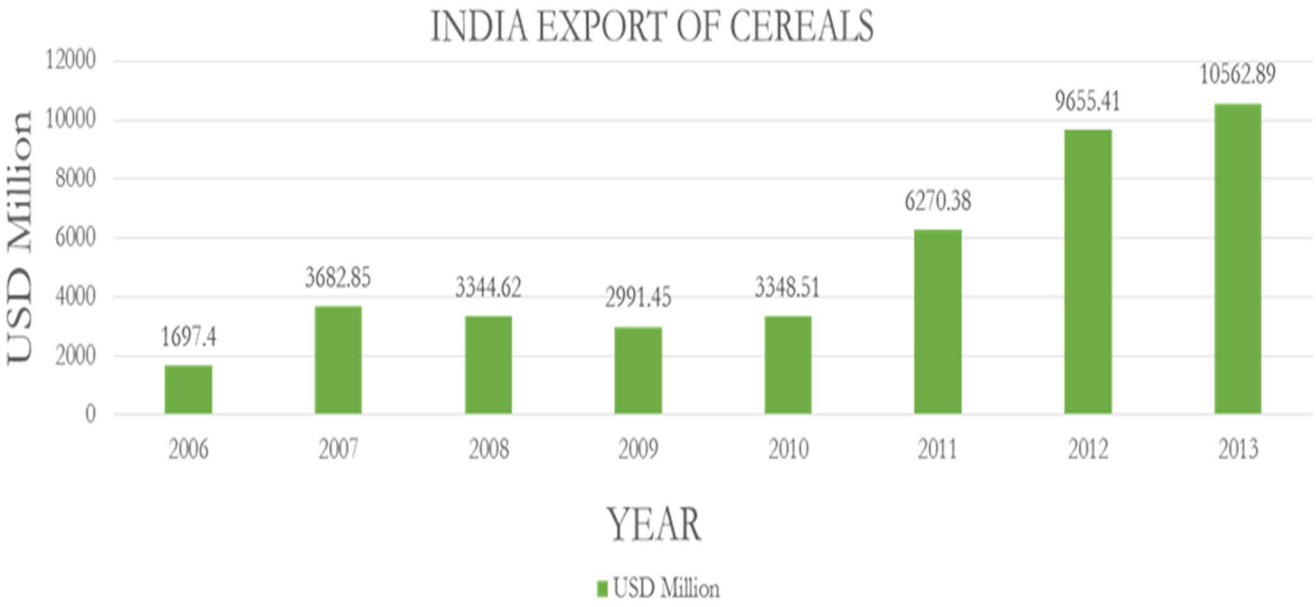

Fig.4 Export of Cereals by India.

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III. PULSES

Pulses are the edible seeds of plants in the legume family. Pulses grow in pods and come in a variety of shapes, sizes and colors. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) recognizes 11 types of pulses: dry beans, dry broad beans, dry peas, chickpeas, cow peas, pigeon peas, lentils, Bambara beans, vetches, lupins and pulses nes (not elsewhere specified – minor pulses that don't fall into one of the other categories).

In contrast to cereals, the production of pulses has not kept pace even with population growth. Even with imports, India has not been able to meet the domestic demand of pulses.

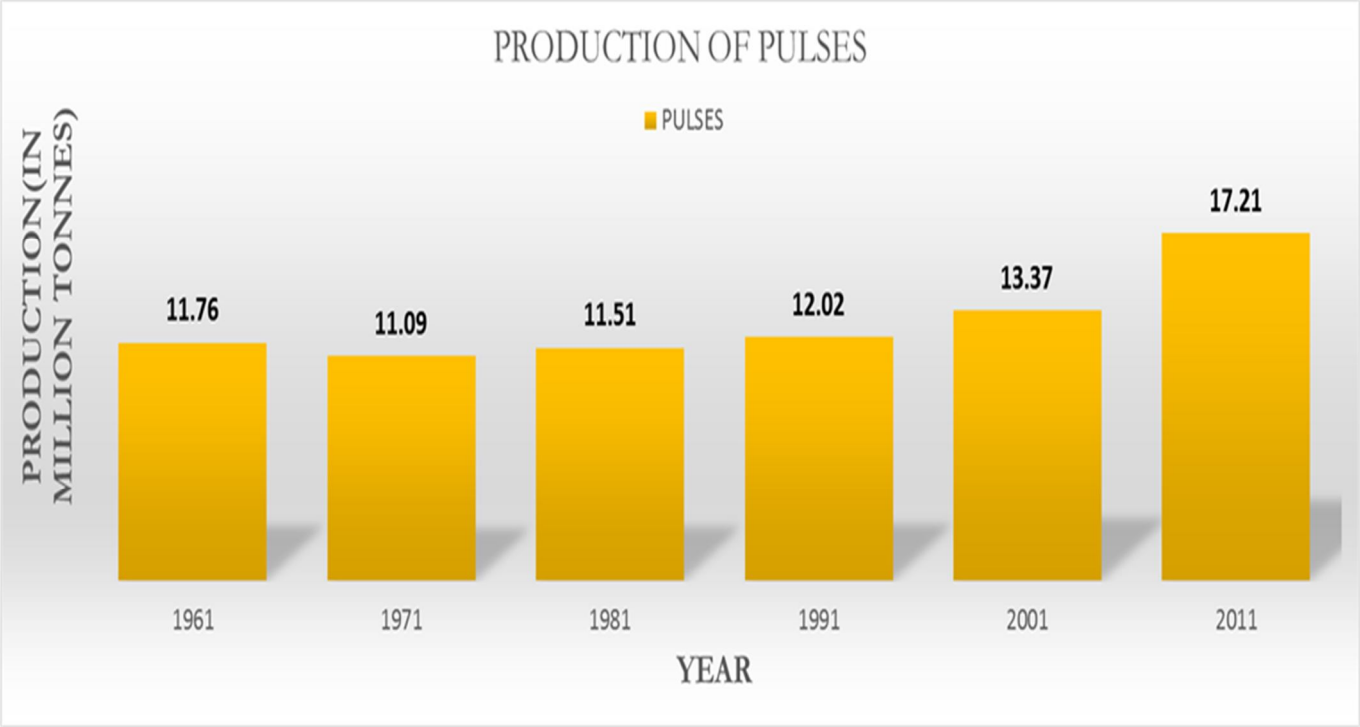

Fig.5 Production of Pulses in Million Tonnes from 1961-2011 in India.

YEAR	DEMAND	SUPPLY
2007-08	16.77	14.76
2008-09	17.51	14.57
2009-10	18.29	14.66
2010-11	19.08	18.24
2011-12	19.91	17.09

TABLE 1: Demand and Supply of Pulses in India (In Million Tonnes).

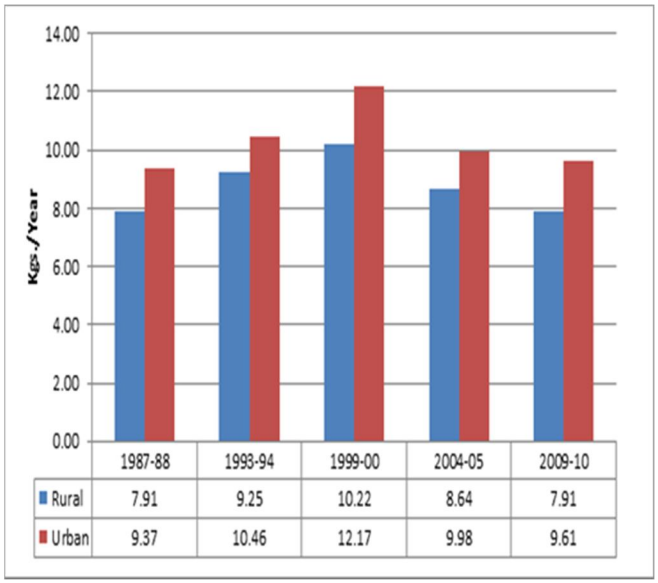

Fig.6 Trends in Per Capita Pulses Consumption.

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IV. MAJOR EFFECT

The changes in availability and intake of cereals and pulses have serious implications for nutrition in the country. The decline in cereal intake despite abundant availability has caused a decline in per capita dietary energy intake.

Dietary energy intake has declined from 2,153 kcal per person per day in 1993-94 to 2,099 kcal per person per day in 2011-12 for rural India, and from 2,071 kcal per day to 2,058 kcal per day in urban India. This has led to the undernutrition and undernourished population level to remain high.

V. CONCLUSION

Over the past few decades, the consumption of pulses has declined because of shortage in supply rather than choice. The productivity of pulses in the country is very low. High-yielding varieties of pulses haven't been developed. Pulses are grown mainly in marginal and poor environments under rain-fed conditions. Low productivity is also associated with fluctuations due to environmental stresses as well as insects and pests.

There is an urgent need to upgrade varieties, practices and policy support for pulses. The reduction in hunger and improvement in nutrition requires more of pulses and hence the future goals or targets should involve more growth for pulses than cereals.

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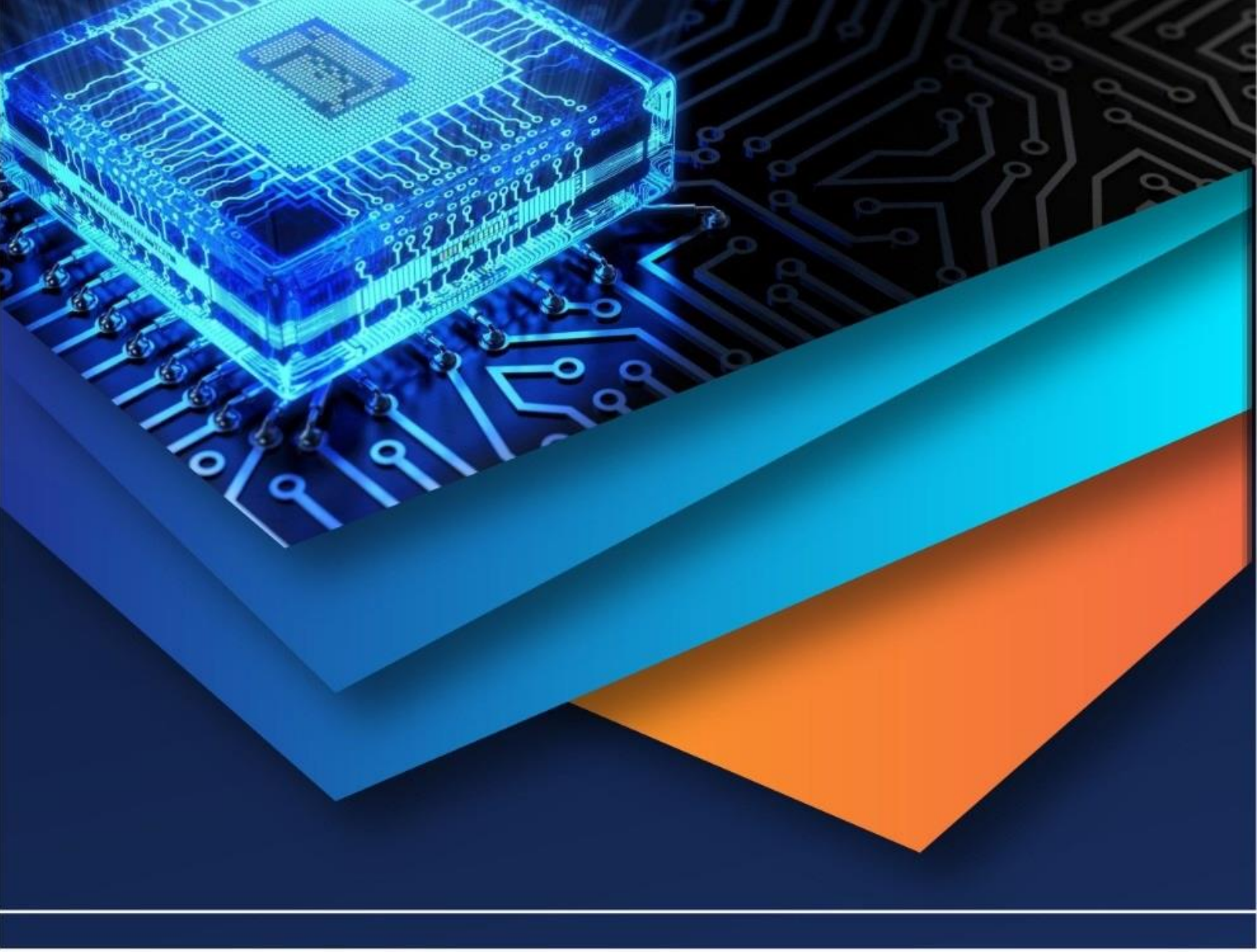

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