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24 States under One Nation-One Ration Card

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Why in News

Recently, **Manipur, Nagaland and Uttarakhand, along with the Union Territory (UT) of Jammu and Kashmir** have been **integrated** with the **One Nation-One Ration Card (ONORC) Scheme**.

- Now a total of 24 States/UTs are connected under the ONORC scheme.
- The remaining states/UTs are targeted to be integrated into the scheme by March 2021.

Key Points

- **The ONORC Scheme:**
 - It was started as an **inter-State portability of ration cards** in 2019.
 - It allows the migratory **National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013** beneficiaries to lift their entitled quota of food grains from any Fair Price Shop (FPS) of their choice anywhere in the country.
 - This can be done by using their existing ration card with **Aadhaar** based authentication.
 - With 24 States/UTs connected under the scheme, about 65 crore beneficiaries, comprising 80% of the total beneficiaries covered under the NFSA, **can now get their subsidised ration** from anywhere in these 24 states and union territories.

- **Benefit of ONORC Scheme:**
 - **Transparency:** It will bring more **transparency** and **efficiency** in the distribution of foodgrains.
 - **Identification:** It will **improve the mechanism to identify fake/duplicate ration cards** and provide the option to **Public distribution system (PDS)** beneficiaries to lift their entitled foodgrains from the Fair Price Shops of their choice at the national level.
 - **Food Security:** The scheme will **ensure food security of migrant labourers** who move to other states to seek better job opportunities.
 - **SDG:** This will help achieve the target set under **Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDG) 2 of ending hunger by 2030.**
 - Also, it will address the poor state of hunger in India, as highlighted by the **Global Hunger Index**, where India has been ranked 102 out of 117 countries in 2019.
- **Issues Involved:**
 - **Distribution of Ration:** The distribution of ration had become an issue during the lockdown when migrant workers didn't have ration cards in the states they were staying. This led the migrants to walk towards their villages amid lockdown.
 - **Logistical Issues:** An FPS receives the monthly quota of products strictly in accordance with the number of people assigned to it.
 - The ONORC, when fully operational, would disrupt this practice, as some FPSs may have to cater to more numbers of cards even as others cater to less, owing to migration of people.
 - **Lack of Data:** There is no exact data on the mobility of poor households migrating to work, locating intra- and inter-state destinations and sectors employing the workers.

Suggestions

- The **Unorganised Sector Social Security Act, 2008**, had drawn up a system of documenting informal sector workers through a system of welfare boards.
 - In order to get credible data regarding the migrant workers, this must be implemented in letter and spirit.
- A **dedicated e-commerce platform ONORC** may resolve the challenge of logistical issues.
- **Social auditing** must be made mandatory to measure the performance of ONORC.
- NFSA defines food security as nutritional security.
 - Therefore, portability of **Integrated Child Development Services, Mid-Day Meals, immunisation**, health care and other facilities for poor migrant households can't be neglected and should be made portable.

- In the longer run, **the PDS system may be replaced by a fool-proof food coupon system or direct benefit transfer**, targeting the poor, wherein a Below Poverty Line family can buy rice, pulses, sugar and oil from any Kirana store at the market price, by either paying fully through the coupon or by cash.

Source: TH