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Extension of Food Grain Scheme

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Why in News

Recently, many states have demanded for the extension of the **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)**.

Key Points

- **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana:**
 - PMGKAY is a part of **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package (PMGKP)** to help the poor fight the battle against **Covid-19**.
 - It was announced **for a three month period (April, May and June)**, covering 80 crore ration cardholders. It will come to an **end on 30th June 2020**.
 - The scheme aimed at providing each person who is covered under the **National Food Security Act** with an **additional 5 kg grains (wheat or rice)** for free, in **addition to the 5 kg of subsidised foodgrain** already provided through the **Public Distribution System (PDS)**.
 - The beneficiaries are also **entitled to 1 kg of pulse for free**, according to regional preferences.
- **Performance of the Scheme:**
 - According to the Union Ministry of Food and Public Distribution, a total of 116.02 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) of food grains have been lifted under the scheme.
 - In April, 93% of the food grains were distributed targeting 74.05 crore beneficiaries.
 - In May, the distribution stood at 91% reaching 72.99 crore beneficiaries
 - In June 2020, 71% of allocated food grains have been distributed to 56.81 crore beneficiaries so far.

- **Sufficient Food Stock:**

- According to the Central government, the **Food Corporation of India** has “sufficient stock of food grains”.
- It has a stock of 266.29 LMT rice and 550.31 LMT wheat as on June 28.
This is excluding the ongoing purchase of wheat and paddy stocks that have not yet reached the godowns.
- Each month, only about 55 LMT of food grains is required for distribution to ration cardholders.

- **Issues Involved:**

- There is an excess of food stocks along with widespread hunger in the country.
- Around 200 million beneficiaries did not get their due in April 2020– in the distribution of additional food grains and pulses under the scheme.
- In April 2020 the government also allowed the conversion of surplus rice into ethanol for making alcohol-based hand sanitiser.
- With the beginning of the monsoon, there is a danger of food grains getting rot.

Way Forward

- The food grain provided under the scheme must continue until the impact of **Covid-19** pandemic is not reduced. The impact of Covid-19 pandemic is still continuing, many economic activities have not been able to start in their full capacity, and a large number of people are unemployed.
- India has **large buffer stocks of food grains** that are maintained precisely for meeting emergencies like Covid-19. What is required is a **universal Public Distribution System (PDS)** to ensure that nobody is excluded.

Source: TH