



Tackling Malnutrition, Hunger & Food Insecurity

For Prelims: Malnutrition, Hunger, Food Insecurity, Poshan Abhiyaan

For Mains: Tackling Malnutrition, Hunger, Food Insecurity and related Initiatives

Why in News?

India is not on track to achieve the 2030 targets for eradicating hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition.

- According to the [2021 Global Nutrition Report](#), India is not on track on achieving five of the six global maternal, newborn and young child nutrition targets to address — stunting, wasting, anaemia, low birth weight and childhood obesity.
- Six global nutrition targets were set by the World Health Organization in 2012, which are to be achieved by 2025.

What are the Factors Contributing to Food Insecurity and Malnutrition?

- **Current Policies:**
 - The current policies have encouraged modern agri-food systems to price healthy diets many times more than diets that rely on staple cereals.
 - These restrictions have made low-cost foods with a high energy density and little nutritious value more popular.
- **Extinction of Traditional Crops:**
 - Future smart crops — such as amaranthus, buckwheat, minor millet, finger millet, proso millet, foxtail millet and pulses — were traditionally grown in India, making them an important source of food and nutrition security.
 - These traditional crops are gradually becoming extinct for various reasons.
 - A lack of knowledge about their nutritional worth, viable local markets for the output and the rising demand for cash crops are fuelling their extinction.
- **Unbalanced Diet:**
 - In recent years, unanticipated forces in the socio-cultural value system have changed eating habits and diets worldwide.
- **Various Factors:**
 - Such factors include — conflict, climate extremes, economic shocks and growing inequality.
 - These factors frequently occur in combination, complicating fiscal situations and the efforts towards mitigating the same.

What are the Related Initiatives?

- **POSHAN Abhiyaan:** The government of India has launched the National Nutrition Mission (NNM) or POSHAN Abhiyaan to ensure a “Malnutrition Free India” by 2022.
- **Anemia Mukt Bharat Abhiyan:** Launched in 2018, the mission aims at accelerating the annual rate of decline of anaemia from one to three percentage points.
- **Mid-day Meal (MDM) scheme:** It aims to improve nutritional levels among school children which

also has a direct and positive impact on enrolment, retention and attendance in schools.

- **[The National Food Security Act \(NFSA\), 2013](#)**: It aims to **ensure food and nutrition security for the most vulnerable** through its associated schemes and programmes, making access to food a legal right.
- **[Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana \(PMMVY\)](#)**: Rs.6,000 is transferred directly to the bank accounts of pregnant women for availing better facilities for their delivery.
- **[Integrated Child Development Services \(ICDS\) Scheme](#)**: It was launched in 1975 and the scheme **aims at providing food, preschool education, primary healthcare, immunization, health check-up and referral services** to children under 6 years of age and their mothers.

Way Forward

- **Investment in Agri-Food Systems:**
 - Developing countries like India could invest heavily in agri-food systems to support recovery with enhanced food security and nutrition despite an economic slowdown, decreased household income, irregular tax revenues and inflationary pressures.
- **Reconsider Allocation of Public Funds:**
 - It is also necessary to reconsider how public funds are allocated to repurpose food and agricultural policies — in terms of agricultural productivity, supply chains and consumer behaviour.
- **Bridging Gaps in the Nutritional Composition:**
 - The Indian diet is notably deficient in fruits, legumes, nuts, fish and dairy — all of which are essential for healthy development and the prevention of non-communicable diseases.
 - Thus, bridging the gaps in the nutritional composition of the daily meal is the first step India must take to tackle the triple burden of malnutrition, nutrition disparity and food insecurity.
- **Introducing Future Crops:**
 - Traditional food systems are best positioned to maintain the general public's health and nutritional security as they are aligned with the local, ecological, socio-cultural and economic contexts.
 - The future smart crops are more nutritious compared to staple food crops.
- **Robust Data Management:**
 - India **needs a more robust data management system**, improved responsibility in the food distribution system, effective resource management, enough nutrition education, increased staff and rigorous monitoring to achieve the global nutrition targets by 2030.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question:

Prelims

Q. An objective of the National Food Security Mission is to increase the production of certain crops through area expansion and productivity enhancement in a sustainable manner in the identified districts of the country. What are those crops? (2010)

- (a) Rice and wheat only
- (b) Rice, wheat and pulses only
- (c) Rice, wheat, pulses and oil seeds only
- (d) Rice, wheat, pulses, oil seeds and vegetables

Ans: (b)

Q. With reference to the provisions made under the National Food Security Act, 2013, consider the following statements: (2018)

1. The families coming under the category of 'below poverty line (BPL)' only are eligible to receive subsidised food grains.
2. The eldest woman in a household, of age 18 years or above, shall be the head of the household for the purpose of issuance of a ration card.
3. Pregnant women and lactating mothers are entitled to a 'take-home ration' of 1600 calories per day during pregnancy and for six months thereafter.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 3 only

Ans: (b)

Mains

Q. Hunger and Poverty are the biggest challenges for good governance in India still today. Evaluate how far successive governments have progressed in dealing with these humongous problems. Suggest measures for improvement. **(2017)**

Q. What are the salient features of the National Food Security Act, 2013? How has the Food Security Bill helped in eliminating hunger and malnutrition in India? **(2021)**

Q. What are the major challenges of Public Distribution System (PDS) in India? How can it be made effective and transparent? **(2022)**

Source: DTE

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