



## Food Security & National Security

This editorial is based on “[Food security and national security of India](#)” which was published in the Financial Express on 27/03/2023. It discusses the issue of Food Security in India and ways to address it.

**For Prelims:** Food security, Fundamental Right, Nobel Peace Prize in 2020, Global Food Security Index 2022, Global Multidimensional Poverty Index MPI 2022, National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013, Central Sector Scheme, Floods, droughts, heatwaves, Minimum Support Prices, Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), National Horticulture Mission, National Food Processing Mission

**For Mains:** Food Security & National Security, Food Security and related Issues.

[Food security](#) has been a long-standing concern for India, given its large population and limited resources. **Access to safe and nutritious food has been considered a [fundamental right](#) for all citizens**, and successive governments have implemented policies to ensure food availability and affordability.

However, **the link between food security and national security has become increasingly evident in recent years**. India's vulnerability to [climate change](#), its dependence on food imports, and the growing threat of food-related conflicts have raised alarm bells about the country's food security.

The connection between national security and access to food **was emphasized when the Norwegian Nobel Committee granted the World Food Program the [Nobel Peace Prize in 2020](#)**, acknowledging its endeavors to address hunger. The committee specifically acknowledged the correlation between hunger, peace, and conflict.

A lack of food security can contribute to a variety of threats to national security, including civil unrest, political instability, and conflict. In this context, **it becomes crucial to explore the connection between food security and national security in India** and the measures required to strengthen the country's food system.

### Why Ensuring Food Security is Important for India?

- **Meeting the Nutritional Needs of the Population:**
  - **India is home to a significant population that is malnourished or undernourished**, which affects their physical and mental growth. Ensuring food security means that people have access to nutritious food to meet their dietary needs.
    - According to the [Global Food Security Index 2022](#), **India has a prevalence of undernutrition of 16.3%**. Further, **30.9% of children in India are stunted, 33.4% are underweight**, and 3.8% are obese.
    - According to the [Human Development Report 2021-22](#), India's rank on the **Human Development Index (HDI) has slipped from 130 in 2020 to 132 in**

2022.

- **Supporting Economic Growth:**
  - **Agriculture is a crucial sector that contributes significantly** to India's economy. By ensuring food security, the government can support farmers and increase their income, which can help drive economic growth.
    - Agriculture is essential in ensuring that India achieves its national food security goal.
    - With over **70% of the population engaged in agriculture-related activities**, it is the backbone of India's economy.
- **Reducing Poverty:**
  - **Food security can play a vital role in reducing poverty levels.** By providing access to affordable and nutritious food, people can better manage their expenses, reduce their healthcare costs, and improve their overall quality of life.
    - According to [Global Multidimensional Poverty Index MPI 2022](#), **India has by far the largest number of poor people worldwide at 22.8 crore**, followed by Nigeria at 9.6 crore.
- **Ensuring National Security:**
  - **Food security is also essential for India's national security.** A stable food supply can prevent social unrest and political instability, which can threaten national security.
- **Combating Climate Change:**
  - Climate change poses a significant threat to India's food security. By adopting sustainable farming practices and investing in climate-resilient crops, **India can better adapt to the changing climate and ensure food security** for its population.
    - The International Food Security Assessment for 2022-2032 conducted by GFA-33 USDA, Economic Research Service indicates that **India's large population has a significant impact on food insecurity trends.** It is projected that around 333.5 million people will be affected in India during 2022-23.
    - By the next decade, **the number of food-insecure people in India is projected to decrease to 24.7 million.**

## What are the Related Initiatives taken?

- **[National Food Security Act \(NFSA\) 2013:](#)**
  - It ensures access to affordable and good-quality food by subsidizing food grains to those below the poverty line.
- **[National Food Security Mission:](#)**
  - It was launched in 2007, as a **[Central Sector Scheme \(CSS\)](#)** to increase food production and productivity through area expansion and productivity enhancement interventions in rice, wheat, pulses, **[oilseeds](#)**, etc.
- **[National Agriculture Market \(e-NAM\) Platform:](#)**
  - It is an online marketplace for farmers to trade their products without geographical boundaries.
- **[National Food Processing Mission:](#)**
  - The Government introduced the National Food Processing Mission to promote agri-based industries for efficient use of farm produce and reduce post-harvest losses.
- **Other Policies:**
  - **[Minimum Support Prices \(MSP\) for Agricultural products](#)**
  - **[Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana \(PMFBY\)](#)**
  - **[National Horticulture Mission](#)**

## What are the Challenges of Food Security in India?

- **Inadequate Infrastructure:**
  - Inadequate infrastructure such as **inaccessible roads, lack of modern storage technologies, and limited access to credit** make it difficult for farmers to transport their produce to the market and store them properly. This leads to high wastage and lower

profits for farmers.

- **Poor Agricultural Practices:**
  - Poor agricultural practices like **over-cultivation, excessive use of pesticides, and improper irrigation techniques** have led to **decreased soil fertility** and reduced crop yields. This, in turn, affects food production and availability.
- **Extreme Weather Conditions:**
  - The **extreme weather conditions due to climate change** have also caused **crop failures and food shortages**. [Floods](#), [droughts](#), and [heatwaves](#) are becoming more frequent and intense, which affects food production and increases food prices.
- **Inefficient Supply Chain Networks:**
  - **Inefficient supply chain networks, including inadequate transportation, storage, and distribution facilities, also contribute** to food insecurity in India. This leads to higher prices for consumers and lower profits for farmers.
- **Poor Market Infrastructure:**
  - Poor market infrastructure, including a **lack of market information, low market transparency, and limited access to markets**, also contributes to food insecurity in India.
- **Fragmented Landholdings:**
  - Fragmented landholdings, **where farmers own small and scattered plots of land, make it difficult to adopt modern farming practices** and technologies. This, in turn, affects food production and availability.

## What Should be the Way Forward?

- **Investing in Agriculture Production Systems and Research:**
  - The government **should invest in modern irrigation systems, agricultural research, and development of high-yielding crop varieties** to increase agriculture production.
- **Improving Storage Facilities for Perishable Commodities:**
  - The government **should develop adequate storage facilities to prevent post-harvest losses** and ensure the availability of food throughout the year.
- **Providing Efficient Transportation Networks:**
  - The government **should invest in transportation networks for distributing food products across the country** to ensure the timely distribution of food products across the country.
- **Practicing Modern Agriculture Techniques:**
  - The government **should conduct awareness campaigns to educate farmers about modern agriculture techniques** that can increase crop yields and improve their income.
- **Prioritizing Agricultural Development:**
  - The government should prioritize agricultural development by investing in improved market infrastructure, efficient transportation networks, and better storage facilities for food products.
- **Promoting Public-Private Partnerships:**
  - The government **should promote partnerships between the public and private sectors** to improve agricultural productivity and ensure the availability of food products.
- **Creating an Early Warning System:**
  - The government **should develop an early warning system to detect and respond to food shortages** before they become widespread.
- **Encouraging Sustainable Agriculture Practices:**
  - The government **should promote sustainable agriculture practices that preserve soil health and reduce the use of harmful pesticides** and fertilizers.

### **Drishti Mains Question**

What is the relationship between food security and national security, and how can ensuring access to adequate and nutritious food contribute to a nation's overall security?

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