



PM-POSHAN Scheme

For Prelims: Features of the PM-POSHAN Scheme, Anemia Mukht Bharat Abhiyan, The National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) Poshan Abhiyaan.

For Mains: Issues related to child nutrition and related steps need to taken, Initiatives taken by government to improve the child nutrition.

Why in News?

Recently, the central government requested state governments/union territory administrations to **explore the possibility of introducing millets under the PM POSHAN Scheme** preferably in the districts where eating millets is a culturally accepted food habit.

- **NITI Aayog** has also been advocating the need to introduce millets in the mid-day meal programme (now PM POSHAN Scheme), moving away from rice and wheat.

What are the Benefits of Millets?

- Millets or nutri-cereals, which include **Jowar, Bajra, and Ragi**, are rich in minerals and B-complex vitamins, as well as proteins and antioxidants, making them an ideal choice for improving the nutritional outcome of children.
- **Multidimensional benefits** associated with millets can address the issues related to **nutrition security, food systems security, and farmers' welfare**.
- Further, many unique features linked with millets makes them a suitable crop which is resilient to India's varied agro-climatic conditions.
- India pushed a resolution to declare **2023 as the international year of millets** which has been adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.

What is the PM Poshan Scheme?

- In September 2021, the Union Cabinet approved the **Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman or PM-POSHAN** for providing one hot cooked meal in **Government and Government-aided schools** with the financial outlay of **Rs 1.31 trillion**.
- The scheme **replaced the national programme for mid-day meal in schools** or Mid-day Meal Scheme.
- It has been launched for an initial period of **five years (2021-22 to 2025-26)**.

What are the Features of the PM Poshan Scheme?

- **Coverage:**
 - Primary (1-5) and upper primary (6-8) schoolchildren are currently entitled to 100 grams

- and 150 grams of food grains per working day each, to ensure a minimum of 700 calories.
- It also covers **students of balvatikas (children in the 3-5 year age group)** from pre-primary classes.

- **Nutritional Gardens:**

- Use of locally-grown nutritional food items will be encouraged from "**school nutrition gardens**" for boosting the local economic growth, and will also include involvement of [Farmers Producer Organizations \(FPO\)](#) and [Women Self Help Groups](#) in the implementation of the scheme.

- **Supplementary Nutrition:**

- The scheme has a provision for **supplementary nutrition for children in aspirational districts** and those with high prevalence of [anaemia](#).
 - It **does away with the restriction** on the part of the Centre to provide funds only for wheat, rice, pulses and vegetables.
 - Currently, if a state decides to add any component like milk or eggs to the menu, the Centre does not bear the additional cost. Now that restriction has been lifted.

- **Tithi Bhojan Concept:**

- TithiBhojan is a **community participation programme** in which people provide special food to children on special occasions/festivals.

- **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT):**

- The Centre has directed the states and the UTs to switch to **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system** for providing compensation to the cooks and helpers working under the scheme.
- This is to ensure no leakages at the level of district administration and other authorities.

- **Nutrition Expert:**

- A nutrition expert is to be appointed in each school whose responsibility is to ensure that health aspects such as Body Mass Index (BMI), weight and haemoglobin levels are addressed.

- **Social Audit of the Scheme:**

- A social audit of the scheme has also been mandated for each school in each state to study the implementation of the scheme, which was so far not being done by all states.

What is the Need for Introducing Millets?

- **Malnutrition and Anaemia among Children:**

- According to the [National Family Health Survey \(NFHS\)-5](#), India has unacceptably high levels of stunting, despite marginal improvement over the years.
- In 2019-21, **35.5%** of children below five years were stunted and **32.1%** were underweight.

- **Global Nutrition Report-2021:**

- According to the [Global Nutrition Report \(GNR, 2021\)](#), India has made no progress on anaemia and childhood wasting.
 - Over **17% of Indian children** under 5 years of age are affected due to childhood wasting.
 - The **data in NFHS 2019-21** shows the **highest spike in anaemia** was reported among children aged 6-59 months from **67.1% (NFHS-5) from 58.6% (NFHS-4, 2015-16)**.

- **Human Capital Index:**

- India ranks **116 out of 174 countries** on the [human capital index](#).
 - **Human capital consists** of the knowledge, skills, and health that people accumulate over their lives, enabling them to realize their potential as productive members of society.

What are the other related Initiatives?

- [Anemia Mukt Bharat Abhiyan](#)
- [The National Food Security Act \(NFSA\), 2013](#)
- [Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana \(PMMVY\)](#)
- [Poshan Abhiyaan](#)

Way Forward

- Looking at this data related to the nutrition of children, it is **imperative to push for convergence of health and nutrition programmes** right from pregnancy until the child reaches five years of age.
- A **well-planned and effective Social and Behavioural Change Communication (SBCC) strategy** is essential since behaviours are ingrained in society and in family traditions.
- **Effective monitoring and implementation of programmes** to address malnutrition and prioritizing the reduction of child undernutrition in the national development agenda is the need of the hour.

Source: PIB

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