Indian Economy · GS - III

What are the reformative steps taken by the Government to make food grain distribution system more effective?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2019	GS - III	Indian Economy

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Targeted Public Distribution System; National Food Security Act; digitisation; Aadhaar-based authentication; One Nation One Ration Card; direct benefit transfers; storage reforms; grievance redressal

Model Answer

Introduction

India’s food-grain distribution system, primarily implemented through the Public Distribution System (PDS), aims to provide subsidised food grains to eligible households and strengthen food security.

Major Reformative Steps

1. Targeted Public Distribution System

The system prioritises eligible households, while the National Food Security Act, 2013, provides a legal entitlement to subsidised food grains for a large proportion of the population.

2. Digitisation of Ration Cards

Digitised beneficiary databases help identify duplicate and ineligible ration cards and improve transparency.

3. Aadhaar-Based Authentication

Authentication at fair-price shops can reduce impersonation and improve transaction records. However, alternative arrangements are essential to prevent exclusion due to authentication failures.

4. One Nation One Ration Card

The portability initiative enables eligible beneficiaries to collect food grains from participating fair-price shops outside their home location, helping migrant workers and mobile households.

5. Electronic Point-of-Sale Devices

Electronic devices record transactions and improve monitoring of food-grain distribution.

6. Direct Benefit Transfers

Cash transfers have been implemented in selected contexts as an alternative delivery mechanism, although their suitability depends on market access, price stability and beneficiary preferences.

7. Supply-Chain Improvements

Modern storage, scientific warehousing, better transportation and improved procurement logistics can reduce wastage and delays.

8. Monitoring and Grievance Redressal

Social audits, vigilance committees, toll-free helplines and transparent complaint mechanisms can strengthen accountability.

Challenges and Way Forward

Inclusion and exclusion errors, diversion, poor-quality grains, inadequate storage and uneven digital connectivity remain concerns. Reforms should strengthen local monitoring, improve storage infrastructure and provide accessible offline alternatives wherever digital authentication fails.

Conclusion

An effective PDS must combine technology with accountability, reliable supply chains and beneficiary protection to ensure that food security reaches every eligible household.

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