Indian Economy · GS - III

Explain the changes in cropping pattern in India in the context of changes in consumption pattern and marketing conditions.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2023	GS - III	Indian Economy

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Cropping patterns respond to changing food preferences, incomes, prices, procurement incentives, exports, technology and market access; India's shift towards high-value crops reflects demand diversification but also creates sustainability and regional-balance challenges.

Model Answer

Introduction

Cropping pattern refers to the proportion of cultivated area devoted to different crops at a given time. In India, it has evolved with changes in consumer demand, prices, procurement policies, technology and domestic and global markets.

Body

Changes in Consumption Pattern

Diet diversification: Rising incomes and urbanisation have increased demand for fruits, vegetables, dairy, meat, pulses and other high-value foods.

Health consciousness: Greater preference for nutritious foods has increased demand for millets, pulses and horticultural products.

Processed-food demand: Expansion of food processing has increased demand for oilseeds, maize, fruits and vegetables.

Changes in Marketing Conditions

MSP and procurement: Assured procurement of rice and wheat has encouraged their cultivation in several regions.

Export opportunities: Global demand has encouraged production of commodities such as cotton, spices, marine products and horticultural crops.

Contract farming and organised retail: Improved market linkages have encouraged farmers to diversify towards commercial and high-value crops.

Infrastructure: Cold chains, roads, storage and digital marketplaces have reduced some marketing constraints.

Technology: Improved seeds, irrigation and protected cultivation have enabled diversification.

Emerging Pattern

There has been increasing movement towards **horticulture, oilseeds, pulses, commercial crops and high-value agriculture**, although rice and wheat remain dominant in major procurement regions.

Concerns

Market volatility, water-intensive crops in unsuitable regions, excessive chemical use and inadequate storage can reduce the sustainability of diversification.

Way Forward

India needs region-specific crop planning, better price discovery, diversified procurement, efficient supply chains, irrigation rationalisation and stronger farmer-producer organisations.

Conclusion

Cropping patterns increasingly reflect **consumer demand and market signals**, but policy incentives must align with ecological sustainability and nutritional security to make agricultural diversification beneficial for farmers and consumers.