Indian Economy · GS - III

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

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2022	GS - III	Indian Economy

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

The Public Distribution System safeguards food security by supplying essential foodgrains at subsidised prices. However, leakages, exclusion errors, diversion, outdated beneficiary records and uneven delivery undermine its effectiveness. Technology, social audits, grievance redressal and accountable local institutions can improve transparency and last-mile delivery.

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Model Answer

Introduction

India’s Public Distribution System (PDS), supported by the National Food Security Act, 2013, provides subsidised foodgrains to eligible households and protects vulnerable populations from food insecurity.

Major Challenges

1. Leakages and Diversion: Foodgrains may be diverted from fair-price shops into the open market.

2. Identification Errors: Outdated records can exclude eligible households or include ineligible beneficiaries.

3. Quality and Quantity Issues: Beneficiaries may face poor-quality grain, under-weighing or irregular supplies.

4. Weak Accountability: Inadequate grievance redressal and monitoring reduce public trust.

Measures for Improvement

Digitised beneficiary records, electronic point-of-sale devices, end-to-end tracking of foodgrains and regular audits can reduce diversion. Social audits, vigilance committees, public disclosure of stocks and timely penalties can strengthen accountability. Portability under the One Nation One Ration Card system helps migrant workers access entitlements across states. Grievance mechanisms must remain accessible to people facing digital or biometric authentication difficulties.

Conclusion

A transparent, technology-enabled and accountable PDS can strengthen food security. Technology must complement, not replace, effective monitoring and accessible grievance redressal.

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