Indian Economy · GS - III

What are the salient features of the National Food Security Act, 2013? How has the Food Security Bill helped in eliminating hunger and malnutrition in India?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2021	GS - III	Indian Economy

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

National Food Security Act 2013, legal entitlement to subsidised foodgrains, 75% rural and 50% urban coverage, Antyodaya Anna Yojana, priority households, nutritional support for women and children, maternity benefits, grievance redressal, One Nation One Ration Card, hunger, malnutrition, implementation gaps

Model Answer

Introduction

The National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, transformed access to subsidised foodgrains from a largely welfare-based provision into a legal entitlement for eligible households. It seeks to improve food security and nutritional outcomes.

Salient Features

- **Coverage:** The Act provides for coverage of up to 75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population.
- **Foodgrain entitlements:** Priority households are entitled to 5 kg of foodgrains per person per month, while Antyodaya Anna Yojana households receive 35 kg per household per month.
- **Nutritional support:** Eligible pregnant women and lactating mothers receive prescribed nutritional support and maternity benefits, subject to statutory provisions.

- **Children's nutrition:** Children covered under the Act receive age-appropriate nutritional support through anganwadis and school meal programmes.
- **Women's empowerment:** The eldest woman aged 18 years or above is generally designated as the head of the household for ration-card purposes.
- **Accountability:** The Act provides for grievance redressal, state food commissions, transparency and social audits.

Contribution to Reducing Hunger and Malnutrition

The public distribution system improves the affordability and availability of staple foodgrains for vulnerable households. School meals and anganwadi services support children's food intake, while maternity benefits seek to improve maternal nutrition. Portability measures, including One Nation One Ration Card, help migrant workers access entitlements across participating states.

Limitations

Foodgrain access alone cannot eliminate malnutrition, which also results from poor dietary diversity, inadequate sanitation, disease, gender inequality and weak health services. Exclusion errors, leakages and uneven delivery further constrain impact.

Conclusion

The NFSA is a major pillar of India's food-security framework. Better targeting, diversified nutrition, stronger public health and effective implementation are necessary to translate food entitlements into lasting nutritional security.

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