

**13– 02 – 2022**

**News: PM Poshan Scheme**

- 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.

**PM Poshan / Midday Meal Scheme**

- The Midday meal scheme (under the Ministry of Education) is a centrally sponsored scheme which was launched in 1995.
- It is the world's largest school meal programme aimed to attain the goal of universalization of primary education.
- The objective of the scheme is to address hunger and malnutrition, increase enrolment and attendance in school, improve socialisation among castes, and provide employment at grassroot level especially to women.
- The scheme provides cooked meals to every child within the age group of six to fourteen years studying in classes I to VIII who enrolls and attends the school.
- Earlier, the fund was allocated by Centre only to procure, wheat, rice, pulses and vegetables. 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**.

- The central government will **ensure Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) from states to schools, which will use it to cover cooking costs**.
- Earlier money was allocated to the states, which then included their share of the money before sending it to a nodal midday meal scheme authority at district and tehsil levels.
- This is to **ensure no leakages at the level of district administration** and other authorities.
- 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**.
- The Body mass index (BMI) is defined as **the body mass divided by the square of the body height, and is expressed in units of kg/m<sup>2</sup>, resulting from mass in kilograms and height in metres**.
- India has ranked **179 out of 196 territories assessed and ranked by Lancet International** on the basis of average BMI of boys and girls.
- **AGMARK (issued by Directorate of Marketing and Inspection) quality items are procured**, tasting of meals are done by two or three adult members of the school management committee.

- If the Mid-Day Meal is not provided in school on any school day due to non-availability of food grains or any other reason, the State Government shall pay food security allowance by 15<sup>th</sup> of the succeeding month.
- The State Steering cum Monitoring Committee (SSMC) oversees the implementation of the scheme including establishment of a mechanism for maintenance of nutritional standards and quality of meals.
- Cooked meal having nutritional standards of 450 calories and 12 gm of protein for primary (I-V class) and 700 calories and 20 gm protein for upper primary (VI-VIII class).
- All government and government aided schools, Madarsa and Maqtabas supported under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) are presently covered under the scheme. It will be extended to students studying in pre-primary or Balvatikas running in government and government aided primary schools.
- Balvatika is the pre-school that was started in government schools last year to include children aged younger than six years in the formal education system.
- The concept of TithiBhojan will be encouraged extensively.
- TithiBhojan is a community participation programme in which people provide special food to children on special occasions/festivals.
- 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.

## **Issues and Challenges**

### **Corrupt Practices**

- There have been instances of plain chapatis being served with salt, mixing of water in milk, food poisoning etc.

### **Caste Bias and Discrimination**

- Food is central to the caste system, so in many schools, children are made to sit separately according to their caste status.

### **Covid –19**

- Covid –19 has posed serious threats to children and their health and nutritional rights.
- The nationwide lockdown has disrupted access to essential services, including Mid-Day Meals.
- Although dry foodgrains or cash transfers have been provided to families instead, food and education advocates have warned that this would not have the

same impact as hot cooked meals on the school premises, especially for girl children who face more discrimination at home and are more likely to drop out of school due to the closures.

### **Menace of Malnutrition**

- According to the National Family Health Survey-5, several states across the country have reversed course and recorded worsening levels of child malnutrition.
- India is home to about 30% of the world's stunted children and nearly 50% of severely wasted children under the age of five.

### **Global Nutrition Report-2020**

- As per the Global Nutrition Report 2020, India is among 88 countries that are likely to miss global nutrition targets by 2025.

### **Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2020**

- India has been ranked at 94 among 107 countries in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2020. India has a level of hunger that is “serious”.
- Recently, the government has decided to rename the Mid Day Meal Scheme as PM Poshan and extend it till 2025 – 26.

- The **social audit of the scheme has been made mandatory in all districts** under the scheme. The scheme will be renewed after five years.

### **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.

**News:** WFP to allot Indian wheat in Afghanistan

- India signed an agreement with the United Nation's World Food Programme (WFP) for the distribution of 50,000 tonnes of wheat that it has committed to sending Afghanistan as part of humanitarian assistance.
- According to the MoU, the wheat will be taken through Pakistan to the Afghan border crossing and handed over to WFP officials in Kandahar beginning February 22.
- The wheat will eventually be divided into five batches of 10,000 tonnes, to be distributed across the country on approximately 200 trucks that are run by the WFP.
- The WFP runs its own logistics network inside Afghanistan, partnering with civil society groups, and has launched a global campaign for enough food and aid for the population facing malnutrition — estimated to be half the population or 22 million Afghans.

## **World Food Programme (WFP)**

- The World Food Programme (WFP) is the leading humanitarian organization saving lives and changing lives, delivering food assistance in emergencies and working with communities to improve nutrition and build resilience.

- It is a joint venture of Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and United Nations General Assembly with its headquarters in Rome, Italy.
- Created in 1961 (at the behest of US President Dwight Eisenhower) as an experiment to provide food aid through the UN system, WFP is to be reassessed within three years.
- In 1965, WFP is enshrined as a fully-fledged UN programme: it is to last for “as long as multilateral food aid is found feasible and desirable”.
- WFP is governed by a 36-member Executive Board. It works closely with its two Rome based sister organizations, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the International Fund for Agricultural Development. WFP partners with more than 1,000 national and international NGOs to provide food assistance and tackle the underlying causes of hunger.
- Funded entirely by voluntary donations, WFP raised a record-breaking US\$8 billion in 2019. WFP has 20,000 staff worldwide of who over 90 percent are based in the countries where the agency provides assistance.