

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2888
TO BE ANSWERED ON 6TH AUGUST, 2025

HIDDEN HUNGER AND NUTRITIONAL INSECURITY

2888. SHRI RAJA RAM SINGH:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

- (a): whether it is a fact that 40 percent of rural and 20–30 percent of urban Indians cannot afford two basic meals a day, despite being classified above the poverty line and if so, the action taken by the Government therein;
- (b): whether the Public Distribution System (PDS) is failing to address hidden hunger and nutritional insecurity among non-beneficiaries excluded due to outdated poverty lines and if so, the details thereof along with the measures which are in place to tackle this;
- (c): whether the Government is going to revise the coverage of PDS to include those unable to afford a minimum nutritious thali/meal, even if they fall outside current income-based cut-offs and if so, the details thereof;
- (d): whether any coordination has been made with NITI Aayog to incorporate food affordability indices like the Thali Index into targeting frameworks;
- (e): if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor; and
- (f): the details of the data on PDS exclusions and per capita food affordability, State/district-wise?

A N S W E R
MINISTER OF STATE FOR MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS,
FOOD & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
(SHRIMATI NIMUBEN JAYANTIBHAI BAMBHANIYA)

- (a): National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, being successfully implemented in all the States/UTs, aims to supplement the food requirements of upto 75% of the rural and upto 50% of the urban population which at Census 2011 comes to 81.35 crore beneficiaries. Under the NFSA, while Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) households, which constitute poorest of the poor are entitled to 35 kg of foodgrains, per Household per month, Priority Households (PHH) are entitled to 5 kg of foodgrains per person per month at free of cost.

The Coverage under the Act is substantially high to ensure that all the vulnerable and needy sections of the society get its benefit. The States/UTs have identified only 80.56 crore person, against the intended coverage of 81.35 crore person. Still, there is a scope for identification of 0.79 crore more beneficiaries, by the States/UTs, under the NFSA.

The Central Government, in order to remove the financial burden of the poor beneficiaries and to ensure nationwide uniformity had decided to provide food grains free of cost to beneficiaries i.e. AAY households and PHH beneficiaries, for a period of one year beginning from 1st January 2023 under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY). The period for distribution of free of cost foodgrains has been extended for further five years i.e. from 1st January, 2024, with an estimated financial outlay of Rs. 11.80 lakh crore totally to be borne by Central Government.

(b): In order to supplement the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), the Government of India provides targeted support to the pregnant women and lactating mothers and children in the age group of 6 months to 14 years, by entitling them to receive nutritious meal free of cost through a widespread network of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) centres, called Anganwadi Centres under ICDS scheme and also through schools under PM-POSHAN scheme.

Further, to cater to the growing demand for more impactful nutritional interventions, the Government has revised the Schedule-II of National Food Security Act, 2013, in January 2023. The new schedule has revised the supplementation for children and pregnant & lactating women under ICDS and PM-POSHAN, making it more age-appropriate and nutritionally balanced.

Moreover, the rice supplied through the TPDS and other welfare schemes of the Central Government is enriched with Iron, folic acid, and Vitamin B12 to address micronutrient deficiencies, particularly addressing anaemia.

(c) to (e): Section 9 of the Act provides that the percentage coverage under the TPDS in rural and urban areas for each State shall be determined by the Central Government and the total number of persons to be covered in the State shall be calculated based on the population estimates as per the census of which the relevant figures have been published. Therefore, any revision in the coverage under the NFSA shall be possible only after the relevant data of the next population Census is published. As already mentioned, still, there is a scope for identification of 0.79 crore more beneficiaries, by the States/UTs, under the NFSA as per existing population census. Further, the targeting framework is adequately defined in sub-section (2) of section 3 of NFSA as mentioned in reply to part (a).

(f): Under the joint responsibility of the Central and State Government, the responsibility for identification of beneficiaries and issuance of their ration cards, based on exclusion & inclusion criterion, rests with the concerned State Government. The Central Government issues advisories to all the States/Union Territories from time to time to identify all eligible and poor persons/ households including vulnerable Sections of the Society for inclusion under the NFSA. States are undertaking updation of their beneficiary database so that ineligible ration cards get deleted and better targeting of rightful beneficiaries is ensured. Under the NFSA, while Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) households, which constitute poorest of the poor are entitled to 35 kg of foodgrains, per Household per month, Priority Households (PHH) are entitled to 5 kg of foodgrains per person per month at free of cost.
