

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

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 5513
TO BE ANSWERED ON 25TH MARCH, 2026

CEREALS DISTRIBUTION IN PDS

5513. SHRI SAGAR ESHWAR KHANDRE:

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

- (a): whether the Government has assessed that the existing Public Distribution System largely focuses on distribution of cereals and does not adequately address nutritional requirements such as protein and micronutrient intake;
- (b): if so, whether concerns have been raised regarding rising malnutrition and diet-related diseases despite food security interventions and if so, the details thereof;
- (c): whether any proposal exists to diversify the PDS basket to include pulses, millets and other nutritious foods; and
- (d): the steps taken by the Government to transition from a calorie-based food security approach to a nutrition-sensitive Public Distribution System?

A N S W E R

MINISTER OF STATE FOR MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS,
FOOD & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
(SHRIMATI NIMUBEN JAYANTIBHAI BAMBHANIYA)

(a) to (d): Public Distribution System (PDS) is now governed as per the provisions of the National Food Security Act, 2013. Under the Act, free of cost foodgrains are distributed to eligible beneficiaries identified by the State Government. The term "foodgrains" is defined as rice, wheat or coarse grains or any combination thereof conforming to such quality norms as may be determined, by order, by the Central Government from time to time. At present, no proposal to include more items of cereals under the Act is under consideration of the Government.

In order to improve level of nutrition among the beneficiaries covered under the National Food Security Act, 2013, all the States/UTs have also been advised to procure millets and distribute for NFSA beneficiaries as per local consumption preference and as per the guidelines of the Government of India.

To address the micronutrient deficiencies, particularly anemia, the Government of India is supplying fortified rice through the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) and in Other Welfare Schemes (OWS) in all States and UTs. The initiative aims to provide fortified rice enriched with essential micronutrients such as iron, folic acid, and vitamin B12.

Nutrition goes beyond mere eating of food; it requires proper digestion, absorption, and metabolism of nutrients. This process is influenced by factors like sanitation, education and access to safe drinking water. As malnutrition requires a multi-sectoral approach involving dimensions of food, health, water, sanitation and education, it is crucial to effectively address the issue of malnutrition in a convergent manner. It is being addressed under Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 by establishing cross cutting convergence amongst 18 Ministries/Departments.

To address the challenges of malnutrition, Anganwadi services, Poshan Abhiyaan and Scheme for Adolescent girls (of 14-18 years in Aspirational Districts and North-Eastern region) have been subsumed under the umbrella Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 (Mission Poshan 2.0). It is a Centrally Sponsored mission, where the responsibility for implementation of various activities lies with the States and UTs. The Mission is being implemented in all States and UTs in the country.

Under this Mission, Supplementary Nutrition is provided to Children (6 months to 6 years), Pregnant Women, Lactating Mothers and Adolescent Girls in accordance with the nutrition norms contained in Schedule-II of the National Food Security Act, 2013. These norms have been revised in January 2023. The old norms were largely calorie-specific; however, the revised norms are more comprehensive and balanced in terms of both quantity and quality of supplementary nutrition based on the principles of diet diversity that provides for quality protein, healthy fats and micronutrients (Calcium, Zinc, Iron, Dietary Folate, Vitamin A, Vitamin-B6 and Vitamin B-12). Extra Supplementary Nutrition is provided to Severely Acutely Malnourished (SAM) children as per National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA).

Ministry vide notification dated 12th September 2022 issued Integrated Nutrition Support Programme- Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan (2.0), Rules 2022 to regulate the entitlements specified under the provisions of National Food Security Act, 2013 for every pregnant woman and lactating mother, till six months after childbirth and every child in the age group of six months to six years.

To encourage diet-diversity and consumption of wholesome local produce, Poshan Vatikas have been developed at Anganwadi Centres (AWCs). Poshan Vatikas help to meet the important dietary diversity gap that has been repeatedly revealed in different surveys by providing different fruits, nuts, herbs, medicinal plants and vegetables round the year. The main objective of introducing the concept of Poshan Vatika is to encourage community members to cultivate local food crops in their backyards.

Under this Mission, one of the major activities undertaken is Community Mobilization and Awareness Advocacy to educate people on nutritional aspects as adoption of good nutrition habit requires sustained efforts for behavioral change. State and UTs are conducting and reporting regular sensitization activities under Jan Andolans during Poshan Maah and Poshan Pakhwada celebrated in the months of September and March-April respectively. Community Based Events (CBEs) have served as a significant strategy in changing nutritional practices and all Anganwadi workers (AWWs) are required to conduct two Community Based Events every month. A total of 9.8 crore CBEs have been conducted from 2018 to February 2026 and more than 150 crore Jan Andolan activities have been conducted since 2018 through 15 Jan Andolans.

The 'Poshan Tracker' application was rolled out as an important governance tool. The Poshan Tracker facilitates monitoring and tracking of all AWCs, AWWs and beneficiaries on defined indicators. Technology under Poshan Tracker is being leveraged for dynamic identification of stunting, wasting, underweight prevalence among children. It has facilitated near real time data collection for Anganwadi Services such as, opening of AWCs, daily attendance of children, ECCE

activities, Growth Monitoring of children, Provision of Hot Cooked Meal (HCM)/Take Home Ration (THR-not raw ration), Growth Measurement etc. The Poshan Tracker application is available here : <https://www.poshantracker.in>

For last mile tracking of Service Delivery, Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) has developed Facial Recognition System (FRS) in Poshan Tracker Application for distribution of Take-Home Ration to ensure that benefit is given only to the intended beneficiary registered in Poshan Tracker.

The Nominee Module has been introduced in Poshan Tracker to ensure uninterrupted delivery of Take-Home Ration (THR) to the beneficiaries; Pregnant Women, Lactating Mothers, and Adolescent Girls. If due to any reason, the registered beneficiary is unable to visit the Anganwadi Centre to receive their THR through FRS, she can nominate a nominee on her behalf to receive her THR.
