

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

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 6100
TO BE ANSWERED ON 1ST APRIL, 2026

AUDIT OF FREE RATION BENEFICIARIES UNDER NFSA

6100. SHRI ANURAG SINGH THAKUR:

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

- (a): whether the Government initiated an audit/verification exercise of beneficiaries under National Food Security Act (NFSA) to weed out ineligible and suspicious ration cardholders and if so, the details thereof;
- (b): the number of such suspicious, ineligible beneficiaries identified, removed so far, State-wise including district-wise for Himachal Pradesh along with the key parameters being used for verification including Aadhaar de-duplication;
- (c): the details of the estimated savings in terms of foodgrains and subsidy expenditure resulting from such removal;
- (d): the details of the safeguards to ensure that genuine vulnerable poor families are not adversely affected during verification drive, details of appeal, grievance redressal available;
- (e): whether any instances of misuse, political interference or fraudulent practices by officials or private parties have been detected during this audit exercise and the corrective action taken by the Government in this regard; and
- (f): the manner in which the Government proposes to further strengthen transparency and accountability in the distribution of subsidised foodgrains, while ensuring intended benefits reach only most deserving households?

A N S W E R

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

(a) & (b): The Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), governed under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, operates under the joint responsibility of the Central and State/UT Governments. The operational responsibilities relating to identification of eligible beneficiaries and families, issuance and management of ration cards, and updation of beneficiary databases rest with the respective State/UT Governments.

In order to support States/UTs in improving the accuracy of beneficiary databases and to address inclusion and exclusion errors, the Department of Food and Public Distribution has undertaken a “*Rightful Targeting*” exercise using data analytics and cross-verification of NFSA beneficiary data with multiple external databases of various Ministries/Departments, including Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN)/CBIC, Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH – Vahan), and Aadhaar, along with internal PDS database parameters. The key parameters used for identification of ineligible beneficiaries include, beneficiaries identified as Directors in companies (MCA), income criteria as per CBDT records (e.g., income above ₹6 lakh or as per State-specific thresholds), Aadhaar-based checks such as deceased beneficiaries, beneficiaries above 100 years of age or anomalous cases like single-member households below 18 years, ownership of motor vehicles as per MoRTH database, GST-related indicators such as turnover exceeding ₹25 lakh, detection of duplicate beneficiaries, and identification of “silent beneficiaries” not availing ration for a prolonged period.

Based on this exercise, **8.51 crore beneficiaries** were flagged across States/UTs for field verification by the respective State/UT Government. Subsequent field-level verification by States/UTs has led to removal of **2.21 crore ineligible beneficiaries** enabling improved targeting of genuinely eligible households. Additionally, **2.64 crore beneficiaries** were **found eligible** by the States/UTs and have been retained. **State/UT-wise details are placed at Annexure-I. District-wise details for Himachal Pradesh are placed at Annexure II.**

(c): The savings cannot be precisely quantified, as States/UTs issue new ration cards to eligible beneficiaries in place of those removed. However, the removal of ineligible/duplicate beneficiaries creates space for inclusion of more deserving households and enhances the overall efficiency and targeting of the system.

(d): States/UTs have been advised to carry out re-verification of these flagged cases strictly in accordance with their notified inclusion/exclusion criteria. Any decision regarding retention, deletion, or correction of beneficiary records is taken only after such verification by the respective State/UT Governments. No beneficiary is removed automatically or without due process. The Department has also undertaken several measures to strengthen digital monitoring and grievance redressal mechanisms under the Public Distribution System (PDS).

Firstly, grievance redressal systems have been strengthened through the universal availability of toll-free helplines (1967/1800 series) across all States/UTs. In addition, Anna Sahayata (ASHA) has been introduced as an AI-enabled grievance redressal platform leveraging WhatsApp and IVRS channels, enabling beneficiaries to lodge complaints and provide feedback in their preferred regional languages.

The Mera Ration Mobile App also provides an integrated interface for beneficiaries to access their entitlement details, view transaction history, locate nearby FPSs, and register grievances directly.

Further, monitoring has been strengthened through integration with the CPGRAMS platform, wherein States/UTs have been advised to adhere to the prescribed timeline of 21 days for grievance disposal. Grievance pendency is regularly monitored through dashboards, and periodic advisories are issued to ensure timely resolution. States/UTs with high pendency are specifically flagged for corrective action.

These initiatives collectively enhance transparency, improve accountability, and ensure timely delivery of services to beneficiaries under the PDS.

(e): No instances of misuse, political interference, or fraudulent practices by officials or private parties have been reported to this Department.

(f): Present Status of modernization efforts of Public Distribution System (PDS) by the Department across the country are as follows –

- Ration cards/beneficiary's database have been completely digitized (100%) in all States/UTs.
- Aadhaar seeding has been completed for more than 99.7% ration cards and about 99.26% beneficiaries.
- All States/UTs have been regularly urged to complete the eKYC so that the benefits of the scheme reach the entitled beneficiaries. The eKYC has been completed for 87.30% beneficiaries.

- Nearly 5.50 Lakh (99.8%) out of total 5.51 Lakh Fair Price Shops (FPSs) in the country have been automated by installing ePoS devices for the distribution of foodgrains through Aadhaar biometric authentication of beneficiaries.
- Introduction of Anna Sahayata, an advanced AI-enabled WhatsApp and IVRS-based grievance redressal system, allowing beneficiaries to lodge complaints in their own language using these platforms.
- Mera Ration Mobile App, which enables beneficiaries to check their entitlements, member and demographic details, last month's distribution status, nearby FPS location, and to lodge grievances directly through the app.
- Anna Mitra mobile app enables the field level functionaries as well FPS dealers to run day to day PDS operations.
- For effective and efficient implementation of the distribution process, the Department has urged the States to integrate the ePOS devices in FPS with weighing scales.

State/UT-wise details

Annexure I

Sr No.	State Name	Flagged Cases	Deleted by States/UTs	Retained by States/UTs	Total Actions % by States
1	GUJARAT	55,09,230	15,17,734	42,84,766	100.00%
2	KERALA	19,21,831	85,788	18,09,058	98.60%
3	RAJASTHAN	75,68,053	16,67,678	56,87,645	97.19%
4	ODISHA	49,27,086	5,28,099	41,08,592	94.11%
5	ANDHRA PRADESH	37,90,418	3,21,157	30,43,946	88.78%
6	CHHATTISGARH	33,36,534	2,93,521	23,07,675	77.96%
7	UTTAR PRADESH	54,80,518	22,77,303	17,32,339	73.16%
8	TRIPURA	1,05,000	51,807	20,153	68.53%
9	LAKSHADWEEP	6,084	4,012	-	65.94%
10	HARYANA	31,64,507	20,03,743	1	63.32%
11	KARNATAKA	7,61,689	4,26,315	54,342	63.10%
12	BIHAR	54,20,773	13,46,788	14,54,077	51.67%
13	PUNJAB	22,11,899	2,66,548	7,94,297	47.96%
14	TELANGANA	4,95,795	1,39,718	79,998	44.32%
15	MAHARASHTRA	1,78,44,571	74,18,527	57,837	41.90%
16	ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS	971	137	267	41.61%
17	ASSAM	35,95,862	12,94,024	25	35.99%
18	TAMIL NADU	10,46,675	2,10,814	1,28,195	32.39%
19	WEST BENGAL	17,29,802	3,57,390	1,86,612	31.45%
20	JHARKHAND	40,69,980	6,94,090	3,66,617	26.06%
21	Dadar & Nagar Haveli & Daman & Diu	52,265	8,689	9	16.64%
22	MADHYA PRADESH	73,85,254	9,26,882	2,15,687	15.47%
23	HIMACHAL PRADESH	5,32,435	25,357	55,324	15.15%
24	UTTARAKHAND	8,53,703	74,414	41,253	13.55%
25	SIKKIM	38,134	4,411	400	12.62%
26	CHANDIGARH	61,481	7,457	-	12.13%
27	DELHI	8,14,258	80,420	-	9.88%
28	NAGALAND	3,08,904	23,799	2	7.70%
29	GOA	49,279	3,312	-	6.72%
30	MIZORAM	1,72,241	8,669	7	5.04%
31	PUDUCHERRY	31,002	1,342	-	4.33%
32	LADAKH	19,229	618	1	3.22%
33	JAMMU AND KASHMIR	10,67,961	28,665	3,056	2.97%
34	MANIPUR	5,66,437	15,540	-	2.74%
35	MEGHALAYA	49,455	1,317	-	2.66%
36	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	1,67,926	30	-	0.02%
Grand Total		8,51,57,242	2,21,16,115	2,64,32,181	57.01%

Annexure II

District - wise details for Himachal Pradesh

Sr No	District Name	Flagged Cases	Deleted Cases	Retained Cases	% Actions Taken
1	CHAMBA	35683	1204	4097	14.86%
2	KANGRA	116280	6809	4979	10.14%
3	LAHUL AND SPITI	994	118	836	95.98%
4	KULLU	38052	808	19166	52.49%
5	MANDI	95982	2962	6125	9.47%
6	HAMIRPUR	29166	1541	1022	8.79%
7	UNA	41424	1794	1666	8.35%
8	BILASPUR	36844	1468	672	5.81%
9	SOLAN	46505	4335	2129	13.90%
10	SIRMAUR	34742	1016	1578	7.47%
11	SHIMLA	51902	3086	12366	29.77%
12	KINNAUR	4861	216	688	18.60%
Grand Total		5,32,435	25357	55324	15.15%