




Be Mains Ready

 drishtiias.com/be-mains-ready-daily-answer-writing-practice-question/papers/2021/despite-being-self-sufficient-food-production-india-continue-to-rank-low-in-the-global-hunger-index/print

Q. Despite being self-sufficient in food production, why does India continue to rank low in the Global Hunger Index? (250 words).

17 Nov 2021 | GS Paper 2 | Social Justice

Approach

- Define Global Hunger Index
- Underline various factors behind India's low rank in the Global Hunger Index
- Conclude with suggesting measures

Answer

India is among the few developing countries that have achieved grain self-sufficiency. Despite this, hunger remains a major issue in India. Hunger index is based on parameters such as shares of the undernourished population, wasted and stunted children aged below five years and infant mortality rate.

Amidst so much progress on many fronts and having a high rate of GDP growth in the world, to have millions of undernourished children is something inexplicable and shows the extent of inequality of incomes and the poor implementation of policies directed at eradicating hunger.

- Agri-produce wastage is an emerging challenge that undermines the efforts to end hunger and malnutrition. According to the UN, about 40% of the food produced in India is wasted, which translates to around 92,000cr per annum, and leaves 194 million Indians undernourished.
- Despite the success of the Green Revolution, it gave rise to other problems. The movement flourished in the states of Punjab and Haryana whereas other states did not show impressive results. It compromised the production (crop) diversity and promoted mainly wheat and rice, which later gave rise to "Nutrition Hunger"/ Hidden Hunger, which is a deficiency in certain micronutrients.

- Children living in an unhealthy environment with problems in access to safe drinking water suffer from water-borne diseases and diarrhoea which lead to underweight children and subsequent wasting. Infant mortality is also high at 4.8 per cent due to the same reasons of undernourishment and poor healthcare, hygiene and sanitation.
- Child Wasting, that is, children with low weight for their height — here India has worsened. The percentage of children under the age of 5 years suffering from wasting has gone up from 16.5 in 2010 to 20.8 now. Wasting is indicative of acute undernutrition and India is the worst among all countries on this parameter.
- Experts also blame poor implementation processes (of PDS and National Food Security Act 2013), lack of effective monitoring, siloed approach in tackling malnutrition and poor performance by large states for the low ranking.

A multi-pronged approach is needed to deal with the crisis

- First, more diversified crops have to be grown (focussing on pulses and coarse cereals), especially by small and marginal farmers. A renewed focus on small and marginal holdings is imperative.
- Second, the government may create provisions to supply cooked nutritious food to the vulnerable sections of the society. This has to be done in addition to the existing provisions of healthy diets from Anganwadi and schools through mid-day meals for children, mothers and students.
- Third, rural employment schemes such as MGNREGA should be given a boost to increase employment and wages. Several organisations and individuals working under the scheme have suggested that the guaranteed work-days be increased to 200 and that commensurate wages be given in accordance with the minimum agricultural wages of the states.
- Fourth, access to food grains under the PDS needs to be streamlined by simplifying technical processes and reducing Aadhaar-related glitches.

The Union government must also ensure that the 'One Nation One Ration card' scheme is implemented through proper preparations such as proper grain allotments to shops, identification procedures and proper issuance of ration cards to individuals seeking food grain.