



## The State of Food and Agriculture 2023

**For Prelims:** [Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#), [Ultra-processed foods](#), [Food insecurity](#), [Fit India Movement](#), Eat Right Movement

**For Mains:** Ultra-Processed Food Constraints and Challenges, Agricultural Marketing, Food Healthy Lifestyle Related Government Initiatives,

[Source: DTE](#)

### Why in News?

A new report titled '**The State of Food and Agriculture 2023**', by the [Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#) reveals the staggering hidden costs of unhealthy diets and [ultra-processed foods](#), impacting both our health and the environment.

- These costs reach over USD 7 trillion annually and have far-reaching consequences.

### Note:

- Hidden costs in the context of agrifood systems include **environmental expenses** from emissions and land use, **health costs related to dietary patterns**, **undernourishment and social costs associated with poverty** among agrifood workers.

### What are the Key Findings of the State of Food and Agriculture 2023?

- **Hidden Costs of Unhealthy Diets:**
  - Unhealthy diets, characterized by the consumption of ultra-processed foods, fats, and sugars, lead to substantial hidden costs.
  - These costs exceed USD 7 trillion annually, reflecting the economic burden of **health-related issues like obesity and [non-communicable diseases](#)**.
    - Additionally, these diets result in **decreased [labour productivity](#)**, contributing to the overall hidden costs.
- **Global Impact and Economic Burden:**
  - The majority of hidden costs were generated in **upper-middle-income (39%) and high-income countries (36%)**, with **lower-middle-income countries at 22%** and **low-income countries at 3%**.
    - The report estimates that unhealthy diets result in hidden costs equivalent to at least USD 10 trillion annually, which accounts for nearly **10% of the global [gross domestic product \(GDP\)](#)**.
    - The analysis encompasses 154 countries, emphasizing the widespread implications of these dietary patterns.

- **Impact on India:**
  - India's total hidden costs in agrifood systems were approximately USD 1.1 trillion, ranking as **the third-largest globally after China and the United States.**
  - **Major Contributors in India:**
    - The burden of disease (**productivity losses from dietary patterns**) accounted for the largest share (**60%**) of hidden costs in India, followed by **social costs of poverty (14%)** and **environmental costs from nitrogen emissions (13%).**
- **Rapid Spread of Processed Foods:**
  - The consumption of highly processed foods is on the rise in **peri-urban and rural areas worldwide.**
    - Factors driving this trend include **urbanization, shifts in lifestyles, and changes in employment profiles** for both women and men.
    - Longer commuting times also contribute to the increased consumption of processed foods in these areas.
- **Urban vs. Rural Consumption Patterns:**
  - The report challenges the conventional notion that consumption patterns differ significantly between urban and rural areas.
    - Findings indicate that the diffusion of processed foods is extensive and similar across the rural-urban continuum.
    - In both **high and low-food-budget countries**, processed foods make up a **substantial share of overall consumption**, with urbanization not being the sole driver.
- **Global Food Insecurity:**
  - [Food insecurity](#), particularly moderate or severe food insecurity, remained largely unchanged globally for the second consecutive year.
    - These levels are, however, significantly higher than **Pre-Covid-19 pandemic** figures.
  - The report highlights that **approximately 29.6% of the global population, corresponding to 2.4 billion people**, experienced moderate or severe food insecurity in 2022.
    - Among them, roughly 900 million individuals (**11.3% of the global population**) faced **severe food insecurity.**
  - Among the nine South Asian countries, **India had the third highest prevalence of undernourishment (233.9 million)** in the total population, after Afghanistan and Pakistan, the analysis showed.
    - The share of undernourished people in India, however, had **come down from 21.4% of the population in 2004-06 to 16.6% in 2020-22.**
  - **Low-income countries were the hardest hit** by hidden costs of agrifood systems, which **represent more than a quarter of their GDP**, as opposed to less than 12% in middle-income countries and less than 8% in high-income countries.
- **Future Projections and Undernourishment:**
  - The report projects that by 2030, **nearly 600 million people** are expected to suffer from [chronic undernourishment](#).

## How can the Burden of Ultra-processed Foods be Reduced?

- The burden of ultra-processed foods can be reduced by **transforming current agrifood systems** to make them **more sustainable, healthy, and inclusive.**
  - Promoting the **production and consumption of more diverse**, nutritious, and less processed foods, such as fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, seeds, and whole grains.
- **Regulating** the marketing, labelling, and taxation of **ultra-processed foods**, and providing **subsidies and incentives for healthier foods.**
- Improving the **access and affordability of healthy foods**, especially for low-income and vulnerable groups, through social protection, food assistance, and public procurement.
- Educating and empowering consumers to **make informed and healthy food choices**, through nutrition education, behaviour change communication, and digital technologies.
- Enhancing the **efficiency and circularity of the agrifood systems**, by reducing **food losses and waste**, improving resource use efficiency, and adopting cleaner and renewable energy sources.

- **Strengthening the governance and coordination** of the agrifood systems, by engaging multiple stakeholders, fostering innovation and research, and monitoring and evaluating the impacts and outcomes.

## What are the Government Initiatives to Promote Healthy Lifestyle?

- [The National Food Security Act \(NFSA\), 2013.](#)
- [PM-POSHAN Scheme.](#)
- [Fit India Movement.](#)
- Eat Right Movement.
  - [Eat Right Station Certification.](#)
  - [Eat Right Mela.](#)

## What is the Food and Agriculture Organization?

- **About:**
  - FAO is a specialised agency of the [United Nations](#) that leads international efforts to defeat hunger.
  - [World Food Day](#) is celebrated every year around the world on 16th October. The day is celebrated to mark the anniversary of the founding of the FAO in 1945.
  - With 194 member countries and the **European Union** including India, FAO works in over 130 countries worldwide.
  - It is one of the UN food aid organisations based in Rome (Italy). Its sister bodies are the [World Food Programme](#) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).
- **Flagship Publications:**
  - The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA).
  - The State of the World's Forests (SOFO).
  - [The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World \(SOFI\).](#)
  - The State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA).
  - The State of Agricultural Commodity Markets (SOCO).

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### Prelims

**Q. With what purpose is the Government of India promoting the concept of “Mega Food Parks”? (2011)**

1. To provide good infrastructure facilities for the food processing industry.
2. To increase the processing of perishable items and reduce wastage.
3. To provide emerging and eco friendly food processing technologies to entrepreneurs.

**Select the correct answer using the codes given below:**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: (b)**

- The Scheme of “Mega Food Park” aims at providing a mechanism to link agricultural production to the market by bringing together farmers, processors and retailers, so as to ensure maximizing value addition, minimizing wastage, increasing farmers’ income and creating employment opportunities, particularly in the rural sector. **Hence, 2 is correct.**

- It envisages creation of state-of-the-art support infrastructure in a well-defined agri/horticultural zone for setting up of modern food processing units in the industrial plots provided in the park with well-established supply chain. **Hence, 1 is correct.**
- “Mega Food Park” scheme has no provision for providing eco-friendly food processing technologies to entrepreneurs. **Hence, 3 is not correct. Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.**

**Q. Aspartame is an artificial sweetener sold in the market. It consists of amino acids and provides calories like other amino acids. Yet, it is used as a low-calorie sweetening agent in food items. What is the basis of this use? (2011)**

**(a)** Aspartame is as sweet as table sugar, but unlike table sugar, it is not readily oxidized in human body due to lack of requisite enzymes

**(b)** When aspartame is used in food processing, the sweet taste remains, but it becomes resistant to oxidation

**(c)** Aspartame is as sweet as sugar, but after ingestion into the body, it is converted into metabolites that yield no calories

**(d)** Aspartame is several times sweeter than table sugar, hence food items made with small quantities of aspartame yield fewer calories on oxidation

**Ans: (d)**

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### **Mains**

**Q.** Discuss the factors for localisation of agro-based food processing industries of North-West India. **(2019)**

**Q.** What are the challenges and opportunities of the food processing sector in the country? How can the income of the farmers be substantially increased by encouraging food processing? **(2020)**