



# Supreme Court's Ruling on ONORC System for Migrant Workers

## Why in News

Recently, the [Supreme Court](#) directed all states and Union Territories (UT) to implement the **One Nation, One Ration Card (ONORC) system** by 31<sup>st</sup> July 2021.

- The scheme allows migrant labourers covered under the [National Food Security Act \(NFSA\)](#) to access food at any fair price shop with his or her ration card in any part of the country.

## Key Points

### ▪ Right to Food:

- The **fundamental right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution** may be interpreted to **include the right to live with human dignity, having the right to food and other basic necessities.**

### ▪ Importance of Migrants:

- There are around **38 crore workers** engaged in the unorganized sectors (National Statistics Office (NSO) data of 2017-2018).
- These unorganized workers **did not have any permanent source of employment and have engaged themselves in small time vocations and occupations** at various places away from their native places.
- **Contributions** of these labourers towards different projects, industries, make considerable **additions in the economic development of the country.**

### ▪ Database:

- Criticized the Labour Ministry for not completing the work of the Rs 45.39-crore **National Database for Unorganised Workers (NDUW) portal** to register and identify migrant workers.
  - The Court had ordered the Ministry to finalise the NDUW module way back in 2018.
- Directed the States/UTs to register establishments and license contractors under the [Inter-State Migrant Workmen \(Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service\) Act, 1979](#) and ensure that they provide the authorities complete details of the workers employed with them.

### ▪ Redetermination of Beneficiaries under NFSA:

- Directed the Centre **“to undertake exercise under Section 9 of the National Food Security Act, 2013”** to re-determine the total number of persons to be covered under Rural and Urban areas of the State.

## ONORC System

### ▪ Background:

- Under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, about 81 crore people are entitled to buy subsidised food grains - rice at Rs 3/kg, wheat at Rs 2/kg, and coarse grains at Re 1/kg - from designated fair price shops.
- However, **NFSA beneficiaries were not able to access their [PDS \(Public Distribution System\)](#) benefits outside the jurisdiction of the specific fair price shop** to which they have been assigned.
- By introducing ONORC, the idea was to reform the PDS, which has been historically marred by inefficiency and leakages.

▪ **Launch:**

- ONORC was launched in August, 2019.

▪ **Aim:**

- The ONORC scheme is **aimed at enabling migrant workers and their family members** to buy subsidised ration from any fair price shop anywhere in the country under the NFSA.
- To promote this reform in the PDS, the government has provided **incentives** to states and also set **a precondition for additional borrowing** by states during the Covid-19 pandemic last year.

▪ **Technology Used:**

- ONORC is based on technology that **involves details of beneficiaries' ration card, Aadhaar number, and electronic Points of Sale (ePoS)**. The system identifies a beneficiary through biometric authentication on ePoS devices at fair price shops.
- The system runs with the support of two portals - **Integrated Management of Public Distribution System (IM-PDS)** and **Annavitran**.
  - While the **Annavitran portal maintains a record of intra-state transactions** - inter-district and intra-district - the **IM-PDS portal records the inter-state transactions**.

▪ **ONORC Coverage:**

- Till date, 32 states and UTs have joined the ONORC, covering about 69 crore NFSA beneficiaries.
- Four states are **yet to join the scheme - Assam, Chhattisgarh, Delhi and West Bengal**.
- While inter-state ration card portability is available in 32 states, the number of such transactions is much lower than that of intra-district and inter-district transactions.

▪ **Benefits:**

- Under the ONORC, the beneficiaries from one state can get their share of rations in other states where the ration card was originally issued.
- ONORC will also give the beneficiaries the opportunity to opt for the dealer of their choice.
- It will be particularly beneficial for women and other disadvantaged groups, given how social identity (caste, class and gender) and other contextual factors (including power relations) provide a strong backdrop in accessing PDS.
- This will help achieve the **target set under [SDG \(Sustainable development Goals\) 2](#)** (Ending hunger by 2030). Also, it will address the poor state of hunger in India, as highlighted by the **[Global Hunger Index](#)**, where India has been ranked 94 out of 107 countries.

**[Source: IE](#)**

