



## Changing Food Consumption Patterns in India

**For Prelims:** [Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister \(EAC-PM\)](#), [Minimum Support Price \(MSP\)](#), [Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana \(PMGKY\)](#), [National Food Security Act \(NFSA\) 2013](#), [National Food Security Mission](#), [National Agriculture Market \(e-NAM\) Platform](#), [National Food Processing Mission](#), [Minimum Support Prices \(MSP\) for Agricultural products](#), [Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana \(PMFBY\)](#), [National Horticulture Mission](#).

**For Mains:** Implications of changing food consumption patterns across various socio-economic classes in India on government welfare policies.

[Source:IE](#)

### Why in News?

In a working paper, published recently by the [Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister \(EAC-PM\)](#), India's average household expenditure on food has fallen to less than half for the first time since 1947.

- The paper titled '**Changes in India's Food Consumption and Policy Implications: A Comprehensive Analysis of Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2022-23 and 2011-12**' analysed changes unfolding in India's food consumption pattern.

### Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM)

- It is an **non-constitutional, non-statutory, independent body** constituted to give advice on economic and related issues to the Government of India, specifically to the Prime Minister.
- The council serves to **highlight key economic issues** to the government of India from a neutral viewpoint.
  - It advises the Prime Minister on economic issues like [inflation](#), [microfinance](#), and [industrial output](#).
- For administrative, logistic, planning and budgeting purposes, the [NITI Aayog](#) serves as the **Nodal Agency for the EAC-PM**.
- **Periodic Reports:**
  - Annual Economic Outlook.
  - Review of the Economy.

### What are the Key Findings of the Report?

- **The share of total household expenditure on food has declined substantially in rural and urban areas across all states and UTs.**
  - This is the first time in modern India that the average household spends less than half of its

total monthly budget on food.

- **The share of spending on cereals has significantly dropped in both rural and urban areas, with the decrease being most noticeable among the poorest 20% of households.**
  - The sharp drop in **spending on cereals has enabled families to diversify their diets**, leading to more spending on milk, fruits, and eggs, fish, and meat.
- The rise in dietary diversity, especially among the poorest 20%, shows that better infrastructure, transport, and storage have made fresh fruits, eggs, fish, meat, and dairy more accessible and affordable. This is a **positive sign** of inclusive growth in the country over the past decade.
- The average daily intake of micronutrients, such as iron and zinc, has declined from 2011-12 to 2022-23, particularly from cereals.
  - However, improved dietary diversity, especially among the poorest 20%, has been observed due to better access to a variety of foods.
- This trend **likely reflects the Indian government's effective food security policies**, which provide free food grains to millions of beneficiaries, particularly targeting the most vulnerable populations.

## What do the Changing Food Consumption Patterns Imply for Various Policies?

- **Implications for Agricultural Policy and Food Security:** The move from cereals to more fruits, dairy, eggs, fish, and meat in diets calls for changes in agricultural policy, including increased support for these foods.
  - This shift also questions the future need for price support mechanisms like the **Minimum Support Price (MSP)**, which mainly focus on cereals.
- **Impact on Welfare Policies:** Welfare programs like the **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY)**, which offer free food grains, have acted as a fiscal boost.
  - By lowering cereal costs, these programs have allowed households, especially the bottom 50%, to spend more on a varied diet, improving dietary diversity.
- **Nutrition and Micronutrient Policy:** The findings stress the need for promoting dietary diversity in nutrition policy.
  - While fortifying cereals to increase iron intake has had limited success in tackling anaemia, focusing on a varied diet might be more effective. This includes better consumer education and improved access to diverse foods.
- **Targeted Nutritional Interventions:** The large differences in micronutrient intake and dietary diversity across various income groups and states highlight the need for targeted interventions.
  - Even among wealthier groups, many people have insufficient iron intake and dietary variety, increasing their risk of anemia. Nutrition programs need to be customized to meet the specific needs of these groups for better results.

## How Shifting Food Expenditure Patterns Affect Nation's Health and Nutrition Strategies?

- **Nutritional Balance and Health Outcomes:**
  - The increased diversity in diets is likely to improve overall nutritional balance, potentially **addressing deficiencies in micronutrients and contributing to better health outcomes.**
- **Policy Adjustments:**
  - The **change in expenditure patterns necessitates a reevaluation of agricultural and food security policies. Policymakers may need to support the production and supply chains of diverse foods** to meet the new demand and ensure food security.
- **Focus on Dietary Diversity:**
  - The shift highlights the **importance of promoting dietary diversity as part of health and nutrition strategies.**
    - There is a need to **continue infrastructure improvements**, such as better storage and transportation, and continue to facilitate access to a variety of nutritious foods.
    - Government agencies should **update dietary guidelines to reflect the evolving food consumption patterns** and emphasize the importance of dietary diversity.

## What are the Various Food Security Policies Launched by Government?

- [National Food Security Act \(NFSA\) 2013](#)
- [National Food Security Mission](#)
- [Antyodaya Anna Yojana](#)
- [National Food Processing Mission](#)
- [Minimum Support Prices \(MSP\) for Agricultural products](#)

### **Drishti Mains Question:**

Q. How could shifts in food expenditure patterns impact the formulation and effectiveness of the nation's health and nutrition strategies?

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

### **Prelims**

**Q. In the context of India's preparation for Climate-Smart Agriculture, consider the following statements:**

1. The 'Climate-Smart Village' approach in India is a part of a project led by the Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), an international research programme.
2. The project of CCAFS is carried out under Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) headquartered in France.
3. The International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in India is one of the CGIAR's research centres.

**Which of the statements given above are correct?**

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

**Ans: (d)**

**Q. With reference to the provisions made under the National Food Security Act, 2013, consider the following statements: (2018)**

1. The families coming under the category of 'below poverty line (BPL)' only are eligible to receive subsidised food grains.
2. The eldest woman in a household, of age 18 years or above, shall be the head of the household for the purpose of issuance of a ration card.
3. Pregnant women and lactating mothers are entitled to a 'take-home ration' of 1600 calories per day during pregnancy and for six months thereafter.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

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

(d) 3 only

Ans: (b)

**Mains:**

**Q.** What are the reformative steps taken by the Government to make the food grain distribution system more effective? **(2019)**

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/changing-food-consumption-patterns-in-india>

