



## One Nation One Ration Card

**For Prelims:** National Food Security Act, Fair Price Shop, Migrant Workers, AtmaNirbhar Bharat

**For Mains:** One Nation One Ration Card, significance and Challenges

### Why in News?

Assam has become the 36<sup>th</sup> State/UT to implement [One Nation One Ration Card \(ONORC\)](#).

- With this, the ONORC programme has been successfully implemented in all states and Union Territories, **making food security portable throughout the country.**
- The government has also rolled out the '**MERA RATION**' mobile application to take maximum advantage of the ONORC plan. The mobile app is **providing a host of useful real-time information to the beneficiaries** and is available in 13 languages.
- During the last two years of [Covid-19 pandemic](#), **ONORC plan has significantly contributed in ensuring subsidized foodgrains to National Food Security Act (NFSA) beneficiaries**, especially migrant beneficiaries.

### What is ONORC?

- **About:**
  - The ONORC scheme is being implemented under [National Food Security Act \(NFSA\)](#).
  - This system allows **all NFSA beneficiaries, particularly migrant beneficiaries**, to claim either full or part foodgrains from any [Fair Price Shop \(FPS\)](#) in the country through existing ration card with [biometric/Aadhaar authentication](#) in a seamless manner.
  - The system also **allows their family members back home**, if any, to claim the balance foodgrains on same the ration card.
  - The implementation of ONORC was **initiated in August 2019**.
- **Objectives:**
  - **To empower all NFSA beneficiaries to become AtmaNirbhar for their food security anywhere** in the country, through portability of their existing ration cards enabling them.
  - To seamlessly **lift their entitled subsidized foodgrains (in part or full) from any Fair Price Shop** of their choice.
  - To enable family members to lift balance/required amount of foodgrains on the same ration card at their native/ any place from the FPS of their choice.

### What is the Significance of ONORC:

- **Enabling Right to Food:** Previously, ration cardholders can avail their entitlement of subsidised food grains under the National Food Security Act, **only from the designated Fair price shop (FPS) within the concerned state.**
  - However, **if a beneficiary were to shift to another state**, he/she would need to apply for a new ration card in the second state.
  - Thus, **ONORC envisages removing the geographical hindrance** to social justice and

enabling the right to food.

- **Supporting One-Third of Population:** Nearly, **37% of the population is that of migrant labourers**. The scheme is therefore important for anyone who is going to move from one place to the other.
- **Reducing Leakages:** The ONORC can **reduce leakages, because the fundamental prerequisite of this scheme is deduplication**.
  - This will **ensure that the same person does not figure** as a beneficiary in two different locations of the country.
  - Further, the scheme is linked with Aadhaar and biometrics, this removes most possibilities of corruption.
- **Reducing Social Discrimination:** ONORC 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 \(Public Distribution System\)](#)**.

## What are the Associated Challenges?

- **Exclusion Error:** The digitisation of this PDS process, through Aadhaar-linked ration cards and smart cards, has been pushed in an effort to reduce leakages. However, **there has been a rise of exclusion errors** in post-Aadhaar seeding.
  - There are many sections of society who still don't have Aadhar Cards, thereby depriving them of food security.
- **Domicile-Based Social Sector Schemes:** Not only PDS, **most of the anti-poverty, rural employment, welfare and food security schemes were historically based on domicile-based access** and restricted people to access government social security, welfare and food entitlements at their place of origin.
- **Disrupting Supplies At FPS:** An FPS receives the monthly quota of products strictly in accordance with the number of people assigned to it.
  - The ONORC, when fully operational, **would disrupt this practice**, as some FPSs may have to cater to more numbers of cards even as others cater to less, owing to migration of people.

## What has been the Performance of Scheme So Far?

- This is one-of-its-kind Citizen Centric initiative in the country, **which is swiftly implemented in a short-span of time covering about 80 Crore beneficiaries**, after being initiated in August 2019.
- Since 2019, about **71 crore portable transactions have taken place delivering foodgrains equivalent to about Rs 40,000 crore** in food subsidy through portability.
- At present, a **monthly average of about 3 crore portable transactions are being recorded**, delivering the subsidised NFSA and free **[PMGKAY \(Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana\)](#)** foodgrains with anywhere flexibility to the beneficiaries.

## Way Forward

- If emergencies continue to hamper uptake at ration shops, **alternate delivery channels can be considered for delivering food grains** to vulnerable groups.
- Food security **should be seen from a broader framework of nutritional security**. Therefore, ONORC must allow the portability of **[Integrated Child Development Services](#), [Mid-Day Meals](#), [immunization](#)**, health care and other facilities.
- In the longer run, the **PDS system may be replaced by a fool-proof food coupon system** or direct benefit transfer.
  - Wherein, a Below Poverty Line family can buy rice, pulses, sugar and oil from any Kirana store at the market price, by either paying fully through the coupon or by cash.

**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)**

**Exp:**

- Issue of food security has been addressed by the Government through the Public Distribution System and the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS). The National Food Security Act (NFSA) enacted on July 5, 2013 marked a shift in the approach to food security from welfare to rights based approach.
- Salient features of National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013
- Upto 75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population will be covered under TPDS with uniform entitlement of 5 kg per person per month.
- Pregnant women, lactating mothers and children in the age group of 6 months to 14 years will be entitled to meals as per prescribed nutritional norms under Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and Mid-Day Meal (MDM) Schemes. Higher nutritional norms have been prescribed for malnourished children upto 6 years of age.
- Pregnant women and lactating mothers will also be entitled to receive maternity benefit of not less than `6,000.
- Prior to implementation of the NFSA, there were mainly three types of ration cards issued by State Governments such as Above Poverty Line (APL), Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Antyodaya (AAY) ration cards distinguished by different colours opted by the concerned State Government. According to NFSA 2013, **APL and BPL groups have been re-classified into two categories - Non-Priority and Priority.** Hence, statement 1 is not correct.
- Eldest woman of the **household of age 18 years or above is to be the head of the household for the purpose of issuing of ration cards.** Hence, statement 2 is correct.
- Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers are **entitled to food supplement of 600 calories of energy and 18-20 gms of protein per day** in the form of Micronutrient Fortified Food and/or energy dense food as take away home ration. Hence, statement 3 is not correct. Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.

**Source: PIB**