

- In 2021, India exported a record 20 million tonnes of rice and wheat.
- The **UN Food Systems Summit 2021** also highlighted India's long journey from a country with chronic food shortage to being a surplus food producer which offers several **valuable lessons for other developing countries** in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.
- The period between 1991 to 2015, saw the **diversification of agriculture beyond field crops** and brought greater focus on the **horticulture, dairy, animal husbandry, and fishery sectors**.
- How India Envisaged to Ensure Food Security within the Country?
- One of India's greatest contributions to equity in food is its **National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013** that anchors the **Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS)**, the **Mid-Day meals (MDM)**, and the **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)**.
- Today, India's food safety nets collectively reach over a billion people.
- Food safety nets and inclusion are linked with public procurement and buffer stock policy.
- **TDPS** with a robust stock of food grains became a **lifeline for the marginalised and vulnerable families** during the global food crisis of 2008-2012, and more recently during the Covid-19 pandemic fallout.
- The **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)** introduced in 2020 to provide **relief to 800 million beneficiaries covered under the NFSA** from Covid-19 induced economic hardships has been extended by another six months up to September 2022.

What about India's own Hunger Scenario?

- **Food and Agriculture Report, 2018** stated that **India houses 195.9 million** of the 821 million undernourished people in the world, accounting for approximately **24% of the world's hungry**.
- Prevalence of **undernourishment** in India is 14.8%, **higher than both the global and Asian average**.
- It had been reported in 2017 by the **National Health Survey** that approximately **19 crore people** in the country were **compelled to sleep on an empty stomach every night**.
- Moreover, the most alarming figure revealed is that approximately **4500 children die every day under the age of five years** in the country **due to hunger and malnutrition**, amounting to over three lakh deaths every year, owing to hunger, of children alone.

- India slipped to **101st position** in the **Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2021** of 116 countries, from its 2020 position of **94th**.

What Can Be the Way Forward?

- **Towards Global Peace: Humanitarian food assistance and partnerships that help create robust policy innovations by way of food safety nets** and resilient livelihoods, will contribute towards global peace.
- India's support to its neighbours and other countries that struggle with food emergencies and food insecurity must continue for its growth trajectory as well as to maintain good ties with other countries.
- **India - WFP Partnership:** India has made major progress in addressing hunger and malnutrition, but a lot needs to be done to deliver the **goal of Zero Hunger** and **food equity globally**.
- For over five decades the WFP has been partnering with India and seen its transition from being a recipient to a donor.
- As the world's largest humanitarian agency, the WFP, and India, as the largest democracy, can **leverage this partnership to contribute to addressing food emergencies** and strengthening humanitarian response, embodying the **spirit of 'leave no one behind'** and **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**.
- **Eradicating Hunger from the Country:** Although India's efforts in assisting other countries are commendable, it is also important to take a look at India's own problems of hunger.
- The government needs to **ensure early disbursement of funds and optimum utilisation** of funds in schemes linked to nutrition.
- The sharp increase in food insecurity points to an urgent need for the government to **establish systems for regular monitoring of the food security situation** in the country.
- Also, the proper **implementation of schemes regarding health, water, sanitation** etc. is equally important as **nutrition goes beyond just the availability of food**.

The Right Approach for India

Russia's actions on Ukraine have decisively shaped international opinion and the Indian foreign policy is going to be affected in a profound manner. The most important question facing Indian diplomacy is how to navigate India's

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