

Introduction

- The Public distribution system (PDS) is an Indian **food Security System** established **under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution.**
- PDS evolved as a system of management of scarcity through distribution of food grains at affordable prices.
- PDS is operated under the joint responsibility of the Central and the State Governments.
 - The **Central Government**, through Food Corporation of India (FCI), has assumed the responsibility for procurement, storage, transportation and bulk allocation of food grains to the State Governments.

- The operational responsibilities including allocation within the State, identification of eligible families, issue of Ration Cards and supervision of the functioning of Fair Price Shops (FPSs) etc., rest with the **State Governments.**
- Under the PDS, presently the commodities namely **wheat, rice, sugar and kerosene** are being allocated to the States/UTs for distribution. Some States/UTs also distribute additional items of mass consumption through the PDS outlets such as pulses, edible oils, iodized salt, spices, etc.

Importance of PDS

- It helps in **ensuring Food and Nutritional Security** of the nation.
- It has helped in **stabilising food prices** and making food available to the poor at affordable prices.
- It **maintains the buffer stock of food grains** in the warehouse so that the flow of food remain active even during the period of less agricultural food production.
- It has helped in **redistribution of grains** by supplying food from surplus regions of the country to deficient regions.
- The system of minimum support price and procurement has contributed to the increase in food grain production.

PDS Reforms

- **Role of Aadhar:** Integrating Aadhar with TPDS will help in better identification of beneficiaries and **address the problem of inclusion and exclusion errors.** According to a study by the Unique Identification Authority of India, using Aadhaar with TPDS would help eliminate duplicate and ghost (fake) beneficiaries, and make identification of beneficiaries more accurate.
- **Technology-based reforms of TPDS implemented by states: Wadhwa Committee,** appointed by the Supreme court, found that certain states had implemented computerisation and other technology-based reforms to TPDS. Technology-based reforms helped plug leakages of food grains during TPDS.



- Tamil Nadu implements a **universal PDS**, such that every household is entitled to subsidised food grains.
- States such as Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh have implemented IT measures to streamline TPDS, through the digitisation of ration cards, the use of GPS tracking of delivery, and the use of SMS based monitoring by citizens.

Mechanism	Advantages	Disadvantages
PDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Insulates beneficiaries from inflation and price volatility ▪ Ensures entitlement is used for food grains only ▪ Well-developed network of FPS ensures access to food grains even in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Low offtake of food grains from each household ▪ High leakage and diversion of subsidised food grain ▪ Adulteration of food grain ▪ Lack of viability of FPS due to low



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well-developed network of FPS ensures access to food grains even in remote areas 	<p>food grain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adulteration of food grain ▪ Lack of viability of FPS due to low margins
<p>Cash transfers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cash in the hands of poor increases their choicess ▪ Cash may relieve financial constraints 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cash can be used buy non-food items ▪ May expose recipients to price volatility and

