Extension of Food Security Program (PMGKAY)

Why in news?

Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced an extension of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), the free ration scheme for another 5 years.

What is PMGKAY?

- It is the world's largest food security welfare scheme.
- **Launch year-** 2020.
- **Aim-** To provide free food grains to the poor and needy through the Public Distribution System (PDS).
- **Eligibility-** It will be provided to around 80 crore beneficiaries covered under both categories of *National Food Security Act,2013 (NFSA)*
    - **Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY)-** 35 kg food grains per household per month
    - **Priority Householders (PHH**)- 5 kg per person per month
- It also provides an *additional 5 kg of food grains* per person per month for free, over and above the existing entitlements.
- The scheme can be availed through the One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) plan.
- **Key features**-

Features	About
Coverage	Around 66% of the Indian population is covered under the scheme
Food security	Each one of them receives double of their current entitlement. This additionality is at free of cost.
Protein availability	As per regional preferences 1 kg of pulses is provided to families.

- **Merger-** The government subsumed the PMGKAY under the NFSA Act and the entire quantity of entitlement under the NFSA would be available free of cost.
- The scheme has been extended many times ever since its introduction.

What is NFSA 2013?

> *The Act marks the paradigm shift in the approach of food security from welfare to rights based approach*

- **Aim-** To provide for *food and nutritional security* in the human life cycle approach, by ensuring access to adequate quantities of quality food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity.
- **Coverage-** It provides coverage for nearly 2/3rd of the country's total population

based on the basis of *Census 2011*.
    - Rural population- 75%
    - Urban Population- 50%
- **Eligibility-**
    - **Priority Households (PHH)** - Covered under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), according to State government guidelines
    - **Existing Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) Households**

Category	Entitlements
AAY Households	35 kg of food grains
PHH	5 kg of food grain per person per month will be given at Rs 3/2/1 per kg for rice/ wheat/coarse grains
Maternity benefit	Meals and monetary support of not less than Rs 6000 to pregnant women and lactating mothers during pregnancy and 6 months after the child birth
Children	Meals is provided up to 14 years of age

- **Special provisions -** Special provisions have been made for pregnant women and lactating mothers and children (6 months to 14 years of age), by entitling them to receive nutritious meal free of cost through Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS).
- **Responsibility-** NFSA defines the joint responsibility of the Centre and State/UT Government.

Government	Functions
Central Government	• Allocation of required food grains to State/UTs • Transportation of food grains to State/UTs • Providing central assistance to State/UTs for delivery of food grains from designated Food Corporation of India godowns to the doorstep of Fair Price Shops (FPS)
State Government	• Identification of eligible households and issuing ration cards to them • Distribution of food grains to eligible households through FPS, issuance of licenses to FPS shops • Setting up effective grievance redressal mechanism • Necessary strengthening of TPDS

- **Direct Benefit Transfer**- It reduces the need for huge physical movement of food grains.
- **Food security allowance**- Governed through the *Food Security Allowance Rules, 2015, i*t is provided to beneficiaries in case of non-supply of entitled food grains or meals.
- **Grievance redressal mechanism**- It is provided at State and district levels.
- **Social audit-** It is authorized by State government to conduct periodic social audits on the functioning of FPS, TPDS and other welfare schemes.
- **Vigilance committee-** It is appointed by State government for ensuring transparency and accountability of the TPDS.

What are the benefits of PMGKAY?

- **Eliminate Malnutrition**- Eligibility criteria would eliminate malnutrition among the vulnerable section of the country.
- **Reduce child mortality**- The pregnant women are entitled to maternity benefit thus reducing the mortality rate of children which is high due to unavailability of food.
- **Better health outcomes**- Food security along with protein entitlement would improve the health of the population.
- **Affordability**- The entitlements are available free of cost to the targeted beneficiaries, thus reducing the burden on the poor people.
- **Accessibility**- Food security allowance is provided in case of non-supply of food grains, thus providing the beneficiaries the right to food even in the event of unavailability of food grains.
- **Women empowerment**- Eldest woman of the beneficiary household (18 years or above) is considered as '*Head of Family*' for issuing ration cards.

References

1. Indian Express- 5 year extension for free ration
2. NFSA- About NFSA,2013

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