How India’s food systems must respond to the climate crisis?

Why in news?

UN Secretary-General will convene the Food Systems Summit 2021 in New York that aims for a transforming the global food systems in order to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

What is the definition of food systems as per the FAO?

- Food systems encompass the entire range of actors involved in the production, aggregation, processing, distribution, consumption and disposal of food products that originate from agriculture, forestry or fisheries.
- It also encompasses the parts of the broader economic, societal and natural environments in which the food products are embedded.

What are the problems in India’s food system and approach?

- **Impacts of Green Revolution** - Green Revolution led to water-logging, soil erosion, groundwater depletion and unsustainability of agriculture
- **MSP** - The procurement, subsidies and water policies are biased towards water guzzling crops like rice
- **Marginal and small farmers** – lack technology and innovation to reap the benefit from value chain
- **Hunger and malnutrition** - According to NFHS-4 survey, around 38 per cent of the country’s children reported stunting in 2015-16
- **Climate change** - Estimates show that the food sector emits around 30 per cent of the world’s greenhouse gases
- **Inequalities in health and education** – widens the nutritional gap especially among women

How to improve the India’s food system?

- Diversification of cropping patterns towards millets, pulses, oilseeds, horticulture is needed for more equal distribution of water

- Deployment of technology such as **e-Choupal** initiative can benefit small farmers

  e-Choupal is an initiative by ITC Limited that provides Internet access to rural farmers to enable them to order supplies, learn about best agricultural practices, receive weather reports and read about pricing for crops throughout the region.

- Groups like **Kudumbashree** in Kerala can be organised for empowerment of women
- Organisation of cooperative value chains like Amul might help small holders, women and consumers
- Animal-sourced foods are still needed for countries like India to address the twin problems of undernutrition and obesity
- Climate-resilient cropping patterns such as abiotic stress resistant varieties, etc. have to be promoted
- Need an inclusive and more diversified high-value production, better remunerative prices and farm incomes
- Women's health indicators need to be improved for better nutrition.
- Strengthening India's MGNREGA , public distribution system (PDS), ICDS, mid-day meal programmes, can improve income, s and nutrition of the poor and vulnerable groups
- Non-staples like pulses and oils, and biofortified cereals for better nutrition can be provided in PDS
- Labour-intensive manufacturing and services can reduce pressure on agriculture
- Strengthening rural MSMEs and food processing can solve the problem of disguised unemployment
- At the global level, there is a proposal to have an International Panel on Food and Nutritional Security (IPFN) in line with IPCC

Source: The Indian Express

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