India’s alarming Hunger levels

What is the issue?

- As per Global Hunger Index 2020, India at 94th position among 107 countries.
- India is much behind Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nepal.
- UN-FAO report reveals that about 23% of the world’s undernourished population are from India.
- India’s malnutrition levels are almost twice the level of many African countries.

What are the strides made by India in Agricultural production?

- India has already achieved self-sufficiency in agricultural production.
- It produces more than the estimated amount required to feed the entire population.
- It ranks first in millets, second in rice & wheat production in the world.
- India’s has surplus production of horticultural crops-fruits and vegetables.
- Still mass hunger is rampant across States.

Why does hunger level still exist?

- As per the Department of Consumer Affairs data, between 2011 -2017 almost 62,000 tons of food grains were damaged in FCI warehouses.
- In 2016-17 alone, over 8,600 tons of food grains were lost.
- The study by Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations reveals that millions of ineligible and bogus ration cards exist.
- But many genuine poor families do not have ration cards.

How to address this issue?

- State should ensure remunerative prices for the farm produce.
- For this, MSP should be made available to maximum range of farm products to enhance the purchasing power of farmers.
- India should also improve PDS & Public Procurement.
- World Food Programme recommends 60 grams of pulses in food basket to prevent cancer, diabetes & heart diseases.
- Hence procurement, creation of buffer stock of pulses should be increased & it should be included in PDS.

- Kerala has some serious issue w.r.t. food security.
- **Annapurna Yojana** guarantees 10Kgs of food grains per month at free of cost to destitute persons (above 65 years) who are with no or meagre subsistence.
- But centre has fixed a target that 20% of beneficiaries should be from the category who does not receive any pension from any old age pension scheme.
- In Kerala, almost all the sections of people are covered under social security pension & are excluded from this scheme.
- This paradox needs to be resolved.

Source: The Hindu

