Supreme Court’s order on NFSA

Why in news?

\n\n

Centre has been asked by the Supreme Court to ensure that States implement key aspects of the National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013.

\n\n

What was the case about?

\n\n

\n
- NFSA empowers the common person in securing subsidised food.
\n
- It mandates providing of highly subsidised foodgrains to targeted households with a ceiling of 75% of the population in rural areas and 50% in urban areas.
\n
- The beneficiaries are chosen by the State governments.
\n
- Sections 14, 15 and 16 of the act require the setting up of a grievance redress mechanism and a State Food Commission (SFC).
\n
- SFC has the responsibility to monitor the implementation of the law.
\n
- But they have been done only in name.
\n
- In the Swaraj Abhiyan Case, the court pointed out the SFC in Haryana and said that it has been sitting “jobless” and “without proper infrastructure”.
\n
- This was due to the state government's lacklustre response to the NFSA.
\n
- The judgment also listed nine other States — Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Bihar and Chhattisgarh.
\n
- These states responded poorly to NFSA by lack of proper implementation.
\n

\n\n

What should be done?

\n\n

\n
- **Responsibility -** Union Food Minister claimed in November 2016 that the Act covers the entire country.
\n
- This is not consistent with the underlying facts.
\n
- Union Government cannot push the blame over state governments.
\n
- Article 256 casts a responsibility on the States and the Union to ensure compliance with laws made by Parliament.
\n
- **Implementation -** The system should have in-built mechanisms to allow for the entry of new households that suddenly find themselves in financial distress, while others can exit it based on changed circumstances.
\n
- Modernisation of the PDS, with the use of information technology, could incorporate such dynamic features and eliminate deficiencies and fraud.
\n
- This can be made only when there is a full-fledged, independent machinery in the form of a Food Commission, and district-level grievance redress, besides social audits.
\n
- All these are provided for under the Act, but have been ignored.
\n
- This is mainly due to a lack of political will.
\n
- **Grievance redressal -** Food Ministry data presented to Parliament showed that a mere 1,106 complaints received from beneficiaries nationwide in 2016.
\n
- This shows that the present system does not reflect the true scale of public grievances which should be improved.
\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n



SHANKAR
IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering