

Should the Government of India reorganise PDS to meet the intentions of one nation, one ration card? Comment:

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Public Distribution System of India is the world's largest food security programme. One Nation, One Ration Card is an evolution of PDS to incorporate the problem of inclusive food sufficiency for migrant labourers. Thus to accommodate the innovative idea, PDS system must be reorganized, rebuilt.

Ration card portability :-

Census 2011 notes that there are more than 45 crore internal migrants who fall short of education, skill. Thus nearly 81 crore people become beneficiaries of such PDS system.

- 1) Since the scheme aims to generalize beneficiary holder across India, a list of detailed family details are required.
- 2) All the ration shops must be digitized to check on blackmarket.
- 3) Authorisation factor through Aadhaar card linking must be done to eliminate ghost beneficiary.
- 4) Automatic accounting standards to deliver the required ration-national reporting needed.

FLAWS IN PDS

- 1) Data asymmetry resulted in denial of beneficiary rations.
eg. starvation related deaths in Jharkhand.
- 2) Aadhaar data linking has not been done efficiently. Further linking of details remains a concern for privacy.
- 3) PDS as a system is been incorporated by states; different from central government entitlements.
- 4) There is no robust digital infrastructure in all registered outlets to check accountability.
- 5) Presence of ghost beneficiaries, distort the poverty line related data.

Reforming: 100 small steps

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In order to match the requirement of new system, the flaws of the PDS can be overcome by following way.

- 1) Creation of Central Repository of National Food Security Act (NFSA) beneficiaries and ration cards. This will integrate databases of by states and UT's with that of centre.
- 2) Aadhaar seeding must be strengthened through security measures and prevent exclusion risks. eg: Virtual ID, tokenisation can be used and every stakeholder sensitized.
- 3) Every ration shop must be equipped with Point of Sale machine record digital ration transaction. The same has to be updated to users through mobile apps. eg: -TNEPDS app of Tamil Nadu government.
- 4) Digital India project must be enhanced to allow such a foolproof change.
- 5) Lack of concrete data on migration creates allocation related problems. Thus PDS must redesign its manpower according to State of Aadhaar survey 2017-18.
- 6) Dynamic allocation in PDS outlets must be built through well communicated framework between Depots. ~~FDD~~ FCI's Food Depot Online System can be used in backend to allow seamless online procurement until distribution.
- 7) Survey, research must be conducted in thorough manner to have learning curve matching migration flows.

PDS is the lifeline of India. Any new changes must approach a bottom up strategy. Strengthening of intra state migration possibility must first be encouraged to make it up to inter state levels. Thus the system must be open to rectify glitches, have 'improve as you learn' approach.