

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.1530
TO BE ANSWERED ON 31ST JULY, 2024

INCLUSION OF BENEFICIARIES UNDER PDS

1530 MS. PRANITI SUSHILKUMAR SHINDE:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION उपभोक्ता मामले, खाद्य और सार्वजनिक वितरण मंत्री be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of the measures being taken by the Government to ensure all eligible beneficiaries are included in the PDS, including the recent data on coverage improvements;
- (b) the steps being implemented to improve the quality of foodgrains provided through PDS;
- (c) whether the Government is ensuring adherence to quality standards and if so, the details thereof;
- (d) the details of the strategies put in place to address leakages and corruption within the PDS;
- (e) whether the Government is ensuring accountability at various levels of the supply chain and if so, the details of the incidents reported so far across the country during the last five years; and
- (f) the manner in which the Government is addressing technological barriers in rural areas to ensure the smooth implementation of reforms like direct benefit transfers the initiatives being taken by the Government to enhance administrative efficiency across the States?

A N S W E R
MINISTER OF STATE FOR MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS,
FOOD & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
(SHRIMATI NIMUBEN JAYANTIBHAI BAMBANIYA)

(a): The Public Distribution System (PDS) is operated under joint responsibilities of the Central and State/UT Governments. The operational responsibilities including identification of eligible beneficiaries/households, issuance of ration cards to them etc., rest with the respective State/UT Government. As per sub-clause (13) of clause 3 of the TPDS (Control) Order, 2015, the State Government are required to regularly review the list of the eligible households for the purpose of deletion of ineligible households or inclusion of eligible households.

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States/UTs have also been advised to utilize the available coverage under their overall NFSA limits by launching special drives to identify and include most vulnerable and economically weakest sections of the population in urban and rural areas who are outside the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS).

(b) & (c): The foodgrains meant for central pool are procured strictly as per the uniform specification formulated by the Government of India. Further, there is a set procedure/mechanism to issue foodgrains under the PDS. The Government has issued following instructions to State Government/Union Territories (UTs) and Food Corporation of India (FCI) to ensure the supply of good quality foodgrains under PDS:

(i) Only good quality foodgrains, free from insect infestation and conforming to Food Safety Standards are to be issued under TPDS and other welfare schemes.

(ii) The State Government/UT Administration has to inspect the stocks prior to the lifting of the same from the FCI godowns.

(iii) Samples of foodgrains are to be collected from foodgrains stocks to be issued under TPDS jointly by the FCI and the State Government/UT Administration in sealed packets.

(iv) An officer not below the rank of Inspector is to be deputed from the State Government to take delivery of foodgrains stocks from FCI godowns.

(v) It is the responsibility of the concerned State Government/UT Administration to ensure that during transportation and storage at different stages in the distribution chain, the foodgrains retain the required quality specifications.

(vi) The State Government, where the decentralized procurement is in operation, should ensure that the quality of foodgrains issued under TPDS and other welfare schemes should meet the standards under the Food Safety and Standards (Food Products Standards and Food Additives) Regulations, 2011 as amended from time to time.

(d) to (f): In order to ensure transparency and accountability in Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) under NFSA, Section 28 of the Act provides for periodic social audits on the functioning of fair price shops, TPDS and other welfare schemes, through local authority, or any other authority or body as may be authorized by the State Government. The Central Government may also conduct or cause to be conducted social audit through independent agencies having experience in conduct of such audits.

In addition, Section 29 of the Act provides for constitution of Vigilance Committees at the State, District, Block and fair price shop levels for ensuring transparency and proper functioning of the TPDS and accountability of the functionaries in the system.

Further, as part of the technology driven Public Distribution System (PDS) reforms, with the aim to improve the efficiency of the current system and to address various challenges such as leakages and diversion of foodgrains, ration cards/beneficiaries database have been completely digitized in all States/UTs, transparency portal and online grievance redressal facility/Toll-free number have been implemented in all States/UTs, online allocation has been implemented in all States/UTs (except UTs of Chandigarh and Puducherry which have adopted DBT Cash Transfer scheme) and supply chain has been computerized in 31 States/UTs. Further, nearly 5.41 Lakh out of total 5.43 Lakh Fair Price Shops (FPSs) in the country, have been automated by installing ePoS devices for the distribution of foodgrains in a transparent manner (electronically) through biometric/ Aadhaar authentication of beneficiaries.

Since the TPDS is operated under the joint responsibility, as and when complaints for any State/UT are received in this Department from any source regarding any irregularities in the functioning of the TPDS, these complaints are forwarded to the concerned State/UT Government for inquiry and appropriate action at their end.

An offence committed in violation of the provisions of PDS (Control) Order, 2015 is liable for penal action under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955. Thus, the Order empowers State/UT Governments to take punitive action in case of contravention of relevant provisions of these Orders.
