

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1251

ANSWERED ON:29.11.2011

BIOMETRIC TECHNOLOGY IN PDS

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Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Union Government has decided to use biometric technology to include eligible beneficiaries and weed out the ineligible ones under the Public Distribution System (PDS);
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Union Government has also decided to notify the revised poverty estimates on the basis of which States can undertake proper identification of beneficiaries under the PDS;
- (d) if so, the details thereof;
- (e) whether various Conferences of Secretaries of the State Food Departments made crucial recommendations for revamping the system and ensuring that the grains reached the targeted beneficiaries; and
- (f) if so, the steps taken by the Union Government so far to implement these recommendations?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS)

(a) to (b): In terms of the Public Distribution System (Control) Order, 2001, State/UT Governments are to review the lists of Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) families every year for the purpose of deletion of ineligible families and inclusion of eligible families.

Government of India has issued detailed guidelines to all States/UTs to take up end-to-end computerization of TPDS in a time-bound manner to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the TPDS. Under these guidelines, States/UTs are encouraged to include PDS related fields in the data collection exercise being undertaken by various UIDAI appointed Registrars as part of the UID (Aadhaar) enrolment. Further, as far as possible, State/UT Governments should also link the process of electronic authentication of delivery and payments at the FPS level with Aadhaar registration. This would help in streamlining the process of biometric collection as well as authentication of beneficiary at the time of commodity issuance at FPS.

(c) to (f): For allocation of foodgrains (wheat and rice) to States and UTs under TPDS, Department of Food and Public Distribution uses the number of BPL families based on 1993-94 poverty estimates of Planning Commission and the population estimates of Registrar General of India as on 1st March 2000 or the number of such families actually identified and ration cards issued to them by State/UT Governments, whichever is less. As per these estimates, the number of BPL families is 6.52 crore, which includes about 2.44 crore AAY families. Further, Government has taken up the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) in the country which will enable the identification of beneficiaries for coverage under different Government programmes and schemes including the TPDS.

This Department has been regularly interacting with the States for successful and effective reforms of the TPDS. In the Conference of State Food Secretaries and other officials held in July, 2010 on 'Best Practices and Reforms in TPDS', it was resolved among others that proper identification of beneficiaries be made based on revised poverty estimates and latest population estimates, timely delivery of foodgrains be ensured every month, door-step delivery undertaken to FPS, bulk distribution of foodgrains be made wherever there is demand, etc. Four Regional Conferences were also held with State Food Ministers and Food Secretaries in February, 2011.

Strengthening and streamlining of TPDS is a continuous process. Government has regularly reviewed and has also issued instructions to States/Union Territories to strengthen functioning of TPDS by improving monitoring mechanism and vigilance, increased transparency in functioning of TPDS, adoption of revised Model Citizen's Charter, use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools and improving the efficiency of Fair Price Shop operations.