

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4479

ANSWERED ON:21.04.2015

STRENGTHENING OF PDS

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

- (a) the number of Below Poverty Line (BPL) families, State-wise;
- (b) whether the Public Distribution System (PDS) has been successful to achieve the objectives envisaged therein, if so, the details thereof and if not the reasons therefor;
- (c) whether the Government proposes to strengthen and streamline the PDS and if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) whether the Government proposes to develop the scheme as e-PDS and introduce biometric system/smart cards to make it more efficient and if so, the details thereof?

Answer

MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI RAMVILAS PASWAN)

(a): Government of India notified the National Food Security Act, 2013(NFSA) on 10.09.2013, which inter alia provides for coverage of upto 75% of the rural population and upto 50% of the urban population of the country for receiving foodgrains at subsidized prices under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS). This coverage has been delinked from poverty estimates and the eligible households covered comprise of Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) households and priority households. Corresponding to the above coverage at the all India level, State/UT-wise coverage has been determined for each State/UT. Based on the preparedness and identification of beneficiaries for coverage under the NFSA, reported by them allocation of foodgrains to 11 States/UTs has started under the Act.

However, a statement giving State-wise number of Below Poverty Line (BPL) families in the States/ UTs who are yet to implement the NFSA, is placed at Annex.

(b): TPDS is an important part of Governments policy for ensuring food security in the country. Evaluation studies on the functioning of TPDS got conducted by the Department from time to time have revealed certain shortcomings/deficiencies in the functioning of TPDS, such as inclusion/exclusion errors, leakages/diversion of foodgrains, etc. Copies of these study reports have been forwarded to concerned States/Union Territories (UTs) for taking necessary remedial measures to remove the deficiencies noticed in the functioning of TPDS.

In an independent study conducted by a group of research scholars and student volunteers, including Mr. Jean Dreze, Reethika Khara and others (2011), it has been stated that there has been an impressive revival of PDS across the country during the recent years. The group have based their findings on a study made in 106 randomly-selected villages, spread over two districts each in 9 States. Based on the survey made in May- June, 2011, the researchers have brought out that there have been major initiatives in the recent past to improve PDS and these efforts are showing results.

(c): Strengthening and streamlining of TPDS is a continuous endeavour. To improve functioning of TPDS, Government has been regularly issuing advisories and holding meetings, conferences, etc. wherein State/UT Governments are requested for review of lists of beneficiaries, improving the offtake of allocated foodgrains, ensuring timely availability of foodgrains at Fair price Shops (FPSs), greater transparency in functioning of TPDS, improved monitoring and vigilance at various levels, improving the viability of FPS operations, etc.

The National Food Security Act, 2013, notified on 10.09.2013, also contains measures for reforms in TPDS, to be undertaken progressively by the Central and State/UT Governments. These reforms inter alia include door-step delivery of foodgrains at the FPS, application of information and communication technology tools including end to end computerisation, preference to public institutions/bodies in licensing of FPSs, etc.

(d): With a view to modernize the system, the Government has initiated a Plan Scheme on End-to-end Computerisation of TPDS operations on cost sharing basis with States/UTs which would facilitate digitization of ration cards/beneficiary and other databases, computerization of supply-chain management, setting up of transparency portals and grievances redressal mechanism. For the FPS automation, State Governments are advised to use aadhaar based biometric system for identification of beneficiaries at the time of delivery of foodgrains at the FPSs.

