

Background :-

- National Food Security Bill (NFSB) was introduced by the Ministry of 'Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution' in parliament in December 2011.
- The Bill was sent to the Standing Committee on 'Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution' having Chairman, 'Vilas Baburao Muttemwar' in January 2012.
- In January 2013, Standing Committee submitted it's report, and the bill was introduced in Lok Sabha on August 7th, 2013. The Bill was passed in Lok Sabha on 25th August 2013.
- The Bill proposes food grain entitlements for up to 75 % of the rural and up to 50 % of the urban population, i.e. 67% of the overall population.
- This Bill proposes to give 5kg of grains per month per person at subsidized prices, i.e. 3 rs per kg for rice, 2 rs per kg for wheat and 1 rs per kg for coarse grains.
- The poorest households would continue to receive 35 kilograms of grains per month under the "Antyodaya Anna Yojana" at subsidized prices.
- Every pregnant and lactating mother shall be entitled to get free meal during pregnancy and 6 months after child birth. And they will also get maternity benefit of not less than Rs.6000/-.
- It'll cost 1.24 lakh crore to implement this.
- If Central Govt. failed to provide food grains, it will give food security allowance to the entitled persons.
- States will identify the Beneficiaries.
- This bill also introduces reforms to TPDS (Targeted Public Distribution System) such as cash transfer, Food Coupons etc. to ensure transparency.
- The eldest woman will be the head of the household. Thus it also helps in women empowerment.
- Children aged from 6 months to 6 years will get free meals from local anganwadi.
- Every state govt shall take steps for grievance handling through call centers, help lines etc.

In Favor :-

- 'Right to food' will become a legal right.
- This bill helps to eliminate hunger and malnutrition in the country.
- Inflation is on the rise, this is the time poor people need food security.
- It helps in empowerment of women, as the eldest woman will be the head of the family.
- Nutritious food will be given to pregnant and lactating mothers. This will lead to healthier families.

In Against :-

- These food grains will be distributed through the already existing PDS (Public Distribution System). This PDS has many loopholes such as leakages of food grains, corruption etc.
- The exact no. of poor is not calculated correctly. Different departments are giving different numbers. And the criteria for 'deciding who is poor' is not upto the mark.
- The cost of this bill, Rs.1.24 lakh crore will be a burden for the government, and may lead to fiscal deficit.
- As most of the food grains will be procured by Govt, exports will reduced, which is a big threat to the economy.
- Farmers have to sell their food grains for procurement prices rather than market prices. It will be loss for farmers.
- It's better if govt provide them employment rather than providing food.
- Small farmers may shift to other crops, as they may get the subsidized food grains. This may reduce the production of food grains.

Conclusion :-

Food Security Bill is definitely a boon, because it guarantees basic need, food. But the PDS system must be strengthened to avoid corruption and leakages. And procurement price must be increased. Farmers must be protected. If this bill is implemented effectively, it can help in eradicating hunger and malnutrition.

Afterwords :- What are your thoughts on this topic? Feel free to express your opinion in the comment section below.

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