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**MAD- 2020**  
**Day - 18**  
**Governance**

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**Question:**

What is the one nation one ration card scheme? Examine the challenges and benefits involved.

**Answer:**

**Structure:**

What is the ONOR?

What was the need for it?

How does it resolve issues of hunger and deprivation?

Challenges

Suggestions for improvement

To sustain the reforms brought in by scheme on end to end computerization of Public Distribution System, the government of India launched the “Integrated Management of Public Distribution System (IM-PDS)” with ‘One Nation, One Ration Card’ under its aegis to provide nation-wide portability of ration card holders under National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA).

To ensure ration-card portability, the Centre has requested states to issue the ration card in the bilingual format – local language and Hindi or English. A 10-digit standard ration card number has been assigned to beneficiaries, wherein the first two digits denote the state code.

As of now, about 20 states have come on board to implement the inter-state ration card portability and there are plans for nationwide implementation by March 2021. There has been an urgent need of the same to ensure food security to one and all:

- Under the NFSA 2013, a ration cardholder can buy food grains only from an FPS that has been assigned to her in the locality in which she lives. However, this will change once the ‘One Nation, One Ration Card’ system becomes operational nationally.
- India witnesses a high percentage of inter-state migration which necessitates national portability of ration cards. The number of inter-state migrants grew at 33% between the 2001 and 2011 Census besides numerous intra-state migrants.
- Moreover, according to the census, four states which happen to be among the most economically deprived regions of the country, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh accounted for 50% of India’s total inter-state migrants.
- As the Covid19 pandemic has shown, there can also be abrupt changes in migration trends making inter-state portability a necessity to ensure food security for all.
- Importantly, family members of the beneficiaries can also avail food grains, as they will not be tied to a single FPS.
- The new system, based on a technological solution, will identify a beneficiary through biometric authentication on electronic Point of Sale (ePoS@) devices installed at the FPSs.
- It also lessens their dependence on shop owners and curb corruption.

While the system is much required and utilizes technology to ensure delivery of benefits to the individuals, there are also challenges regarding the same. Some of the hurdles include:

- Food and public distribution ministry officials acknowledge the absence of authentic data on the number of migrants in the country.
- There is also need to study migration pattern to ascertain the quantum of grain requirement under NFSA across states. Based on this assessment, the food grains allocation to states could be arranged.
- To achieve seamless inter-state portability in ration card transactions, it is essential to have a central repository of unique ration cards and beneficiaries' data under NFSA which is still a work in progress.
- Further as Jean Druze and Reetika Khera have demonstrated, governments are still relying on the 2011 census population figures to calculate state-wise coverage under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and that automatically excludes at least 100 million people.
- Moreover, in remote and backward districts, there is often issue regarding working of ePoS devices, failing which beneficiaries can't avail food grains leading to deaths due to starvation.

There is an urgent need to work on these challenges to ensure the success of 'one nation, one ration card' to ensure food security in the country. One of the first requirements is updating population and migration data into a central repository to ensure provision of enough food for all the beneficiaries. Secondly, remote and far-flung areas need to be better connected with internet and facilities for the same should be provided. Thirdly, there is also possibility of exploring cash transfer instead of physical grain delivery, which is being implemented in Chandigarh and Dadar and Nagar Haveli.