

## **2. One Nation One Ration Card Scheme**

**Prelims Level: Governance- Policies, Schemes**

**Mains Level: GS-II- Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these Vulnerable Sections.**

### **Why in News?**

- The Centre has designed a standard format for ration cards as it moves ahead with ‘one nation, one ration card’ initiative and has asked State governments to follow the pattern while issuing fresh Ration Cards.

### **About the Ration Card and Ration Shop:**

- A **ration card** is issued to the head of the family, depending on the number of members in a family and the financial status of the applicant.
- It is used by households to get essential food grains at subsidised prices from designated ration shops (also called fair price shops) under the **Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS)**.
- Over the years, different types of ration cards were issued depending on the level of deprivation. Later, in 2013, when the **National Food Security Bill** was passed, different ration cards were compressed to just two – **priority and Antyodaya (for the poorest)**.
- The responsibility of identifying eligible families and issuing ration cards to them rests with the state/UT government.
- **Ration shops** can be privately owned or owned by cooperative societies or by the government. Ownership licenses are issued by the concerned state government.
- Presently, commodities including wheat, sugar, rice and kerosene are being allocated as part of the (TPDS).
- State governments have the discretion to provide additional commodities.

### **About the Scheme:**

- Since Ration Cards are issued by State Governments, this implied that beneficiaries could procure food grains only from the designated ration shops within the concerned state.
- If a beneficiary were to shift to another state, he/she would need to apply for a new ration card in the second state. There were other complications.

- For instance, after marriage, a woman needed to get her name removed from the ration card issued to her parents, and get it added to the ration card issued to her husband's family.
- The **ONORC scheme** attempts to address this gap in TPDS delivery. Essentially, the scheme has been launched keeping in mind the internal migration of our country, since people keep moving to different states in search of better job opportunities and higher standards of living.
- As per Census 2011, 4.1 crore people were inter-state migrants and 1.4 crore people migrated (inter and intra-state) for employment.
- With the ONORC scheme being implemented, the beneficiary can buy food grains from ration shops located in any of the states.
- Currently, the central government's ambitious initiative is being implemented on a pilot basis in a cluster of six States. The government hopes to implement the scheme across India by June 1, 2020.

#### **Benefits of the Proposed Scheme:**

- According to Census 2011, there are more than 45 crore internal migrants in India, of whom more than half have not completed primary education, while 80% have not completed secondary education.
- Lower levels of education are linked to lower income, which would make a large percentage of these migrants eligible for NFSA benefits.
- Registering for ration cards at their new location is an arduous process, especially if some members of the household still remain in their original home.
- Apart from this, there are short-term migrants, often working in cities, but not moving there permanently. Women who change locations after marriage also find it difficult to start accessing ration benefits using a new household's card.
- To curb corruption and improve access and service quality by Removing Monopolies.

#### **Drawbacks of the Scheme:**

- Since the scheme is based on technology, the government may face some technical challenges during the implementation of the scheme.
- Few Regional Parties have expressed apprehensions on bearing the cost of additional ration cards. This is a matter which is to be settled between the states and the Government of India.

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- One of the apprehensions mentioned by few states is the cost of additional food grain to be supplied to the migrant workers.
  - However, the whole system is based on the entitlements mandated under the NFSA and this prevents the charges of additional cost. Beneficiaries will continue to pay the same issue prices that are fixed under the NFSA.

