

SC ASKS CENTRE TO EXPAND FOOD SECURITY COVERAGE

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Public Distribution System: Objectives, Functioning, Limitations & Revamping

The Supreme Court has directed the Centre to increase coverage under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) so that “more and more needy persons and citizens get the benefit” under the 2013 law which entitles rural and urban poor to receive subsidised foodgrains under the Targeted Public Distribution System.

The coverage under the NFSA is still as per the population figures of 2011 census.

In an eight-page order, a Bench of Justices M.R. Shah and B.V. Nagarathna ordered the Union government to re-determine the NFSA coverage in States and Union Territories after taking into consideration the population increase between 2011-2021 so that benefits are not restricted to beneficiaries identified way back in 2011.

Fundamental right

“Right to Food is a fundamental right available under Article 21 of the Constitution,” the Supreme Court noted. The Union, in its affidavit, had stated in court that the Act required coverage to be updated as per the latest published census figures. However, the NFSA coverage cannot be determined as the 2021 census has been postponed indefinitely and no date has been notified.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, for petitioners Anjali Bhardwaj, Harsh Mander and Jagdeep Chhokar, had pointed out that due to the absence of the latest population figures, over 10 crore people were left outside the food security law’s protective umbrella without even ration cards.

Mr. Bhushan had urged the court to direct the government to use the official population projections published by the Health Ministry to expand the coverage.

The court found the petitioners’ concerns “genuine and justified”.

e-Shram portal

In the order, the court also directed the States which were not able to register unorganised workers, including migrant labourers, in the e-Shram portal to do so within six weeks.

The Union Labour Ministry has developed a National Database of Unorganised Workers (NDUW) portal and the e-Shram portal for registration of labourers spread over 400 occupations including in constructions, agriculture, fishing, dairy, self-employed and even ASHA and anganwadi workers.

However, many States have achieved less than 50% registration, with Tamil Nadu being one of the lowest at only 34.84%.

END

Downloaded from crackIAS.com

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

CrackIAS.com