

'ONE NATION, ONE RATION CARD' FROM JULY 1, 2020

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Important Aspects of Governance, Transparency & Accountability including Right to Information and Citizen Charter

The 'One nation, one ration card' scheme, which will allow portability of food security benefits, will be available across the country from July 1, 2020. This means poor migrant workers will be able to buy subsidised rice and wheat from any ration shop in the country if their ration cards are linked to Aadhaar.

All the States have been given one more year to use point-of-sale (PoS) machines in the ration shops and implement the scheme, Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan told presspersons on Saturday. Already, more than 85% of people covered under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) have their cards linked to Aadhaar, he said.

While Aadhaar linkage is not necessary to access the National Food Security Act benefits in a beneficiary's local ration shop closest to her home address, it will be necessary to access the portability scheme, senior Food Ministry officials say.

Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Telangana and Tripura already offer this portability, Mr. Paswan said. Delhi had begun implementing portability, but was stopped for technical reasons. The States such as Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and Tamil Nadu could easily implement the scheme, as they had PoS machines in all the ration shops.

A senior Ministry official clarified that migrants would only be eligible for the subsidies supported by the Centre, which include rice sold at Rs. 3 a kg and wheat at Rs. 2 a kg. Even if a beneficiary moved to a State where grains were given free, that person would not be able to access those benefits, as they were funded by the State exchequer.

In a bid to reduce nutrition deficiencies among beneficiaries, the Centre would roll out a pilot project in 15 districts to fortify rice with iron, folic acid and vitamins A and B12. It would be available in ration shops from November.

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