

Under AtmaNirbhar Bharat Scheme, intended target of 8 crore migrant persons (10% of total 80 crore NFSA beneficiaries) was estimated; allocation of 4 LMT foodgrains per month was made @ 10% of monthly allotment under NFSA for free distribution

State Governments were to distribute this ration to anyone not having any ration card; majority of targeted migrants have reached their home States/UTs where they may have access to NFSA/State Scheme foodgrains

As per initial figures from States/UTs during identification of migrants, about 2.8 crore persons were projected for coverage; final figures of distribution still to be received

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Pursuant to the economic measures announced by Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman under the "AtmaNirbhar Bharat Package" (ANBP), Department of Food & Public Distribution under Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution had allocated a total quantity of about 8 Lakh MT of foodgrains (7 LMT Rice and 1 LMT Wheat) to all States/UTs under the "AtmaNirbhar Bharat Scheme" (ANBS) vide letter dated 16.05.2020, to help mitigate the food-security plight of the migrant/stranded migrant workers/labourers and other needy persons across the country who were not covered under NFSA or under any other State PDS scheme, or not able to access their NFSA foodgrains, during the unprecedented COVID-19 situation.

Since, no data on actual/estimated number of migrants/stranded migrants across the country was available with the DoFPD, a liberal figure of 8 crore migrant persons (10% of total 80 crore NFSA population) was estimated, and accordingly, a uniform allocation of 4 LMT foodgrains per month was communicated to all States/UTs (@ 10% of monthly allotment under NFSA) for free-of-cost distribution under AtmaNirbhar Bharat Scheme to migrants/stranded migrants at a scale of 5 kg per person per month for a period of two months i.e. May and June 2020.

The initial estimate of 8 crore persons was liberal and in response to the situation as projected in the media. In fact the scale of the problem as got highlighted was such that it required

compassionate and generous response from the Government so that no one was left out. Accordingly, State Governments were given complete freedom in distribution and they were free to distribute this additional ration to any one who did not possess any ration card. Thus, while being prompt in allocating additional food-grains, DoFPD gave full operational freedom to the states to meet the challenge of the situation

It is a matter of satisfaction that all those who needed to be fed were fed and it is a matter of relief that this number turned out to be much less at 2.13 crore than the initially estimated number of 8 crore. Those who have availed the free food-grains under ANBS are those who needed assistance at that point in time. It needs to be understood that 8 crore migrants should not be construed as the real target but an intended target to serve if it had existed. Moreover, it was always a dynamic number with the cross movement, reverse migration to home States/UT, and migration in transit. In fact another perspective would be that large coverage of persons under NFSA/State ration cards has drastically altered the dynamics of the migrant population and hence the coverage under ANBS was much less than estimated.

Another fact which needs to be kept in mind is that during the lockdown period in addition to regular NFSA food-grains amounting to 127.64 LMT, additional 157.33 LMT food-grains were lifted by states, NGOs etc under OMSS, OWS, PMGKAY etc. This additional supply of ration was a great support to the entire population during the lockdown and is more than double the regular quantity distributed by TPDS (between 24rd March till June 30th 2020).

Although, States/UTs made concerted efforts to identify target persons (i.e. migrants, stranded migrants, migrants in transit and migrants in quarantine centers, etc. in collaboration with other State Departments such as Labour Departments and relevant agencies/NGOs, etc.) on war footing and distributed free foodgrains to them under ANBS; many States/UTs have informed that a majority of targeted migrants have already moved back to their home States/UTs where they may have access to NFSA/State Scheme foodgrains. Thus, the liberally allocated quantity of 8 LMT foodgrains under ANBS may not be utilised/distributed completely.

Further, as per figures indicated initially by States/UTs during the course of identification, an approximate number of about 2.8 crore persons was projected to be covered against which as per provisional figures received up to 30.6.2020, 2.13 crore persons had reportedly been covered. This is about 76% of the original estimate of 2.8 crore. In fact, states have lifted about 6.4 LMT food grains which is 80% of the initial allocation of 8 LMT. States have been asked to submit their final figures of distribution by 15th July 2020, and are still reporting their distribution figures, for instance, Bihar, has reported covering a total of 1.73 crore persons today (2nd July 2020). This shows that with the filing of reports from more states in due course, the final figure of coverage under ANBS could be substantially higher than the provisional figure of 2.13 crore reported as on 30.6.2020.

APS/SG/MS

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