

1. What are the major bottlenecks in creating an efficient nation-wide agricultural market? Discuss. What recent measures have been taken to address these bottlenecks.

Demand of the question:

It expects students to discuss major bottlenecks in creating an efficient nation-wide agricultural market. It also expects students to write about the recent measures taken by the government to address these bottlenecks.

Introduction:

Agriculture sector is one of the dominant sectors of Indian economy. It contributes about 14% of the total GDP of India and provides employment to over 60% of the population. But, it is plagued with many problems. The problem of nation-wide agri marketing tops the list of issues related to agriculture.

Body:

Bottlenecks in creating an efficient nation-wide agriculture market:

- Minimum Support Price (MSP) for different crops announced by the Union Government. But there is a wide gap between the cost of production and the MSPs announced for the year. MSP is not available to Dairy products, vegetables, fruits etc.
- Not many private markets could come up during the last 15 years as the local APMCs felt threatened by them.
- There are hindrances when it comes to establishing market for livestock sector which is a very important sector of the agribusiness economy.
- India has surplus production in most agri-commodities but farmers have been unable to get better prices due to lack of investment in necessary infrastructure such as Ware house, Cold Storage etc. Almost 40 per cent produce of all fruits and vegetables production lost annually in India due to less number of cold storages, ware houses etc.
- The imposition of the curbs on stocking of farm produce and regulation of the prices of commodities, etc. under Essential Commodities Act (ECA) are some of the factors responsible for less interest of entrepreneurs. Hence, less investment in the farm sector.
- There are restrictions for farmers in selling agri-produce outside the notified Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) which in turn put less money in the hands of farmer.
- The farmers are also restricted to sell the produce only to registered licensees of the State Governments, which restricted farmers option to explore new markets in other states.

- Further, barriers exist in free flow of agriculture produce between various States owing to the prevalence of various APMC legislations enacted by the State Governments.
- Climate change is expected to make the situation worse by posing some unprecedented challenges such as floods, sea level rise, disturbed monsoon cycle etc.

These structural, operational & natural bottlenecks resisted the creation of efficient nation-wide agriculture market. Hence, Union government recently introduced new measures to address these bottlenecks:

The central government introduced major agriculture market reforms through three ordinances & other initiatives:

- The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Ordinance 2020. (ECA)
- The Farming Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Ordinance, 2020.(FPTC)
- The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Ordinance, 2020.
- Besides earlier to it the Department of Agriculture & Cooperation formulated a Central Sector scheme for Promotion of National Agriculture Market through Agri-Tech Infrastructure Fund (ATIF) through provision of the common e-platform.
- Also, Pradhan Manthri Fasal Bima Yojana provides insurance coverage and financial support to the farmers in the event of failure of any of the notified crop as a result of natural calamities, pests & diseases.

It will help to create efficient nation-wide market in following ways:

- The amendment to ECA would deregulate the commodities such as cereals, edible oils, oilseeds, pulses, onions and potatoes. It will help to lessen the fears of private investors of excessive regulatory interference in their business operations.
- The freedom to produce, hold, move, distribute and supply will lead to harnessing economies of scale and attract private sector/foreign direct investment into the agriculture sector.
- It will help drive up investment in cold storages and modernization of the food supply chain.
- An amendment to FPTC will create an ecosystem where the farmers and traders would enjoy freedom of choice of sale and purchase of agri-produce.
- It will also promote barrier-free inter-state and intra-state trade and commerce outside the physical premises of markets notified under State agricultural produce marketing legislations.
- It empowers farmers for engaging with processors, wholesalers, aggregators, large retailers, exporters etc. and thus eliminating intermediaries resulting in full realization of price.
- It also provides an effective dispute resolution mechanism with clear timelines for redress.

- These reforms are expected to build necessary agrarian infrastructure in the country which will lead to build “One India, One Agriculture Market” i.e. an efficient nation-wide agricultural market.

These reforms will promote efficient nation-wide market under the slogan of one nation one market. But, there are some challenges which still persists:

- Agricultural marketing is mainly a state entitlement, as Union government introduced these reforms, it might keep away the state from its limited revenue resources.
- The peasantry may be at large will be at the mercy of the Agri Business Corporations since there will not be any arrangements for price support and price stabilisation for crop.

Conclusion:

As NITI Aayog’s three year agenda focuses on reforming the agricultural market so that farmers are empowered to sell their produce to whomsoever they wish. The recent measures are taken by the government in this light will be helpful to create an efficient nation-wide market and will also ensure rise in income of farmers in turn contributing to achieve the target to double farmers income by 2022.

2. How is technology adoption transforming agricultural efficiency in rural India? Illustrate.

Demand of the question:

It expects students to write in short about problems faced by agriculture sector while improving it’s efficiency, besides also expects more emphasis on how technology adoption has transformed agricultural efficiency in rural India.

Introduction:

India is one of the leading contributors to the domestic and global agriculture output demand. India is the world’s largest producer of milk, 2nd largest producer of fruit & vegetable in the world, and technology adoption has helped to improve these figures in various ways.

Body:

Issues involved to improve agricultural efficiency:

- Conversion of agricultural land for alternative uses, declining average size of farm holdings have drastically reduced the average land holding in turn posing a challenge to implement efficiently the traditional methods of farming.

- Dependence on rainfall and climate: Indian agriculture is heavily dependent on monsoon rain and ever-increasing global temperature has made agriculture more prone to extreme weather events.
- Absence of marketing infrastructure, Large gaps in storage, Cold chains Limited connectivity have posed transport & marketing challenges.
- Lack of Mechanisation: Introduction of latest technology has been limited due to various reasons like accessibility for credit and low awareness.
- Profiteering by middlemen is reducing farmers income in turn reducing farmers purchasing power for new technology adoption.
- Food processing efficiency is low in India, It's at 3% when compared to 30-70% in developed countries and wastage of agriculture produce is as high as 40%.

These issues were addressed by technology adoption in agriculture sector:

- Remote sensing (via satellites), GIS, crop and soil health monitoring, and technologies for livestock and farm management are the examples of technology which are helping to improve the agricultural efficiency.
- Seed quality enhancing: The quality enhancement can be done with advanced techniques, adopting seed management strategies resulted into creating high yield seed varieties.
- Solar-powered water pumps: These pumps use the abundant solar power available to pump water from the ground. These provide an energy-efficient way. Hence, reduce cost of production and increase profits for farmer.
- Per capita availability of fruits and vegetables is quite low because of post-harvest losses which account for about 25% to 30% of production. But, adoption of cold storage chain technology for perishable and other perishable allied agri – commodities has helped to reduce wastages and improve the gains to farmers and consumers substantially.
- ICT sectors such as e-choupal is an example of efficient supply chain system empowering the farmers with timely and relevant information enabling them to get better returns on their investment.
- E-governance in the areas like- maintenance of land records is a great step in removing the malpractices and creating assurance of rightful ownership.
- Aadhar linked bank accounts and government records provide access to monetary benefits by establishing the correct identity, in turn solving problem of access to credit.
- Direct farm to door connectivity through e-commerce and m-commerce platforms has facilitated large number of artisans to cut the middleman share and get fair price for their produce.
- Agro-based small enterprises such as providing tractor & other farm equipments on rents at reasonable rates in rural areas helped to reduce cost of production. e.g. : UBER enabled farm equipments on rent system through UBER apps.
- Better access to information through Kisan Suvidha app and DD Kisan Channel helped to improve efficiency in the agriculture.

- GPS mapping, which helps farmer in accessing the need i.e. where they need to put more fertilizer or less, as per requirement of the soil. GPS enabled services are also helping in field of documentation about yield, moisture, etc.

Though technology adoption has improved agricultural efficiency in Indian agricultural sector, some areas still need attention:

- As per FICCI's "Knowledge Paper on Indian farm equipment sector" Farm equipments use in India stands at about 40-45 percent. This is still low when compared to countries such as the US (95percent), Brazil (75 percent) and China (57percent).
- 'Tractor-isation' and not mechanisation of Industry is happening.
- As per National Digital literacy mission, digital literacy is almost no-existent among more than 90% of India's population.

Conclusion:

Technology adoption has proved that it has potential to improve agricultural efficiency by improving farmers knowledge, access to credit, and agriculture output in many ways. Hence, technology adoption can help the farm product to reach from "local to global" market in an efficient way. If addressed the remaining issues in the technology adoption, it will also help to convert the image of Indian "Peasant farmer" in to an "Entrepreneur farmer".

3. What are various decentralised irrigation techniques? Why are they beneficial for India's agro-climatic conditions? Explain.

Demand of the question:

It expects students to explain various decentralised irrigation techniques. It also expects students to write about the benefits of these irrigation techniques as per agro-climatic conditions of India.

Introduction:

Irrigation is the prime most component in the agriculture sector in India. As more than three quarters of the annual rainfall occurs during the four months of the summer monsoon season, decentralised irrigation techniques play the pivotal role to ensure water supply for agriculture & household needs round the year.

Body:

Decentralised irrigation refers to the small-scale, storage and distribution of water for agricultural and other needs in rural as well as urban areas. Various decentralised irrigation techniques are as follows:

- Farm ponds: Farm ponds are small tank or reservoir like constructions, are constructed for the purpose of storing the surface runoff, generated from the

catchment area. The farm ponds are the water harvesting structures, solve several purposes of farm needs such as supply of water for irrigation, cattle feed, fish production etc.

- Rain water harvesting: Rainwater harvesting has agricultural uses. It can be used to water crop plants in agricultural fields, improve ground water table. For instance, Work done by Paani foundation in selective rural areas has led to improvement in ground water table.
- Surface irrigation: Water is distributed over and across land by gravity, no mechanical pump involved.
- Localized irrigation: Water is distributed under low pressure, through a piped network and applied to each plant.
- Drip irrigation: A type of localized irrigation in which drops of water are delivered at or near the root of plants. In this type of irrigation, evaporation and runoff are minimized.
- Sprinkler irrigation: Water is distributed by overhead high-pressure sprinklers or guns from a central location in the field or from sprinklers on moving platforms.

Benefit of decentralised irrigation as per India's agro-climatic conditions:

- India accounts for only about 4 % of global water resources, where agriculture consumes more than 80 % of the total usable water available in the country.
- Decentralised irrigation offer the possibility to provide adequate water where centralised supply systems are not feasible due to technical, economical or institutional reasons. Ex: In rural communities or informal settlements.
- Small water bodies (mainly tanks) are less capital-intensive, user-friendly with fewer environmental problems and augment groundwater resources through sub-surface recharge. Ex: Existence of decentralised water storage systems in (Hebbal) Bengaluru, etc.
- Decentralised supply offers the possibility to provide clean, reliable drinking water to rural or informal settlements where centralised systems are not economically or technically possible.
- Wide range of simple, relatively inexpensive and cost effective options are available so people can choose the technologies most appropriate for them. Ex: Drip irrigation, Sprinkler technique, etc.,
- Traditional irrigation techniques such as tankas, khadins, vav, ahar pynes are significant in areas such as arid and semi-arid regions. Ex: Bikaner, Jaisalmer, South Bihar.
- They are independent from an institutional set-up or centralised systems. Hence do not carry the major drawbacks of centralised irrigation system.

Government initiatives to promote decentralised irrigation:

- Mission Kakatiya is a flagship program under Telangana government aimed at restoring minor irrigation sources of water like ponds and tanks.

- Jalyukt Shivar yojan in Maharashtra has played a prominent role in providing farm ponds to every farmer in her/his agriculture field.
- In Gujarat 'Bhungroo' a water management system that injects and stores excess rainfall water underground. This water is then used for irrigation during summers.

Conclusion:

World Banks report on "India's Water Economy: Bracing for a Turbulent Future" (2006), stated that dams in India have the capacity to store only about 30 days of rainfall, compared with 900 days in major river basins in arid areas of developed countries. Hence, it becomes important to focus more on decentralised irrigation as it will help the agriculture sector to be self reliant (Aatmnirbhar) in irrigation.

4. Give a brief analysis of the problems and challenges associated with the Minimum Support Price (MSP) regime in India.**Demand of the question:**

It expects students to analyse the problems and challenges associated with the minimum support price regime in India. It also expects students to analyse its impact (whether benefits or drawbacks) on agriculture sector.

Introduction:

MSP is the minimum price paid to the farmers for procuring food crops. They are recommended by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) and approved by Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs.

Body:

It acts like a buffer to protect the farmer in case the price of the commodity produced by the farmer falls below the market price due to bumper crop which causes a glut in the market, the Government agencies (usually the Food Corporation of India) procure the grains from the farmers at the prices announced by the Government. CACP recommends MSPs of 23 commodities.

Problems and challenges associated with the minimum support price regime:

- Stagnant rates of MSP: The government declaration of Minimum support prices do not increase at par with increase in cost of production. As CRISIL has pointed out that the increase in MSP has indeed fallen in the year between 2014-17.
- MSPs have unequal access: The benefits of this scheme do not reach all farmers and for all crops. There are many regions of the country like the north-eastern region where the implementation is too weak.

- Procurement problems: Almost 2/3rd of the total cereal production is taken through the route of MSP, leaving only 1/3rd for open market. Hence, farmer can't take benefit of market prices and has to depend solely on the MSP. It prevents the farmer from earning of profits.
- Higher MSP over-incentivise production leading to supply glut. Hikes in MSP also adversely affect the exports by making Indian farm goods non competitive especially when international market prices are lower.
- Free market principle distorted: It distorts the free market. It favours some particular crops over other crops.
- Degradation of natural agricultural components: MSP lead to non-scientific agricultural practices whereby the soil, water are stressed to an extent of degrading ground water table and salinisation of soil.
- Killing of competition: Any interference by the government kills the competition. This affects the agents who procure the crops at lower prices and sell them at higher prices and earn profits. This mainly disturbs the working of people who sell these outputs from farmers into the open market.
- Surplus storage: Surplus procurement without sufficient storage has resulted in huge piling of stocks in the warehouses. The stock has now become double the requirements under the schemes of PDS, Buffer stock etc.
- Issues in WTO: India's MSP scheme for many crops has been challenged by many countries in the WTO. For example, Australia has complained of the MSP on wheat, US and EU complained of sugarcane and pulses MSP.

Despite these numerous challenges posed by the MSP, it has proved beneficial in following aspects:

- The Minimum Support Price mechanism proved beneficial in transferring incomes to rural areas and to counter farm level inflation.
- It countered the agricultural distress brought on by natural hazards in the country.
- Higher profits for the farmer also helped them to invest in necessary infrastructure and equipment.
- Lack of sufficient penetration of agricultural insurance schemes for farming has made farming a risky profession exposed to weather and price fluctuations. The minimum support price to some extent protected the farmer by guaranteeing a minimum floor price so that they can plan in advance for the next season.
- MSP motivated farmers to grow targeted crops and increased production. It also incentivizes production of specific food crops which is short in supply.

Tackling the challenges associated with Minimum Support Price:

- The suggestion of the National Commission of farmers (Dr.M S Swaminathan committee, 2007) to fix the MSP at cost of production + 50% so as to have a definitive roadmap for fiscal expenditure and better remunerative output for farmers rather than ad hoc methods.
- Farmer awareness about the benefits of crop diversification so as to produce more pulses to ensure nutritional security and prevent supply-side shocks.

- Impetus to improve the agriculture infrastructure should be provide such as cold storage building, warehouses for perishable production, so in case of surplus production they will not be wasted. For instance, in this light a new pan India Central Sector Scheme-Agriculture Infrastructure Fund is established.
- NITI Aayog is working on alternative mechanism. A counterpart of the MSP is the Market Intervention Scheme (MIS), under which the state government procures perishable commodities like vegetable items.
- Price Deficiency Payment (PDP): Niti Aayog also proposed PDP; PDP is to support the farmers in case the market price falls below Minimum Support Price (MSP) is called, "Price Deficiency Payment". This system aims to provide a part (for example, 70-75 %) of the difference between the MSP and the market price to the farmers.
- Some states like, Haryana government launched Bhavantar Bharapai Yojan for vegetables, the government pays the farmers the difference between model rate (the average prices in major mandis) and the minimum support prices (MSPs). It can be better alternative.

Conclusion:

On the whole, it can be said that the MSP has succeeded in providing floor rate for major food grains and other produces. Most of the times it did not allow market prices to fall below the MSP fixed for them. Hence, the MSP should continue as it insulated farmer from an unfavourable market conditions by assuring them a minimum return for their produces but at the same time the newly emerged challenges should also needs to be addressed to increase its effectivity.

5. Is the mechanism of direct benefit transfer (DBT) scalable and replicable across different sectors? Critically examine.**Demand of the question:**

It expects students to analyse mechanism of direct benefit transfer (DBT). It also expects students to analyse both aspects of scalability and replicability of DBT across different sectors.

Introduction:

Direct Benefit Transfer or DBT is a part of the Indian government's anti-poverty programme where government is trying to alter the method of transferring subsidies. In DBT, benefit or subsidy will be directly transferred to citizens living below the poverty line. DBT is applied in programmes & schemes like Student Scholarship, LPG subsidy etc.

Body:

Direct benefit transfer reaches to beneficiary through following mechanism:

- First, Identification of beneficiaries and digitisation of beneficiary database takes place.
- Then, Opening of bank accounts if beneficiary doesn't have any bank account.
- Once bank account is opened up, Aadhaar enrolment of beneficiary should take place.
- The, Seeding of Aadhaar in beneficiary database and bank accounts.
- Initiating Last mile connectivity/service delivery as per the protocol through directly depositing the money in to beneficiaries account.

Reliability of mechanism of Direct Benefit transfer across different sectors:

- PAHAL is the first major programme in India that provided subsidies through DBT. With nearly 150 million registered beneficiaries, it is probably the world's largest DBT programme ever.
- The goal of the DBT is subsidy reform and not doing away with subsidies. It targets beneficiaries effectively so that they flow only to the intended beneficiaries.
- The problems of Public distribution system such as product adulteration, leakages, ghost ration cards and harassment of beneficiaries by the rationing bureaucracy can be avoided through DBT. Hence, its reliability can be measured on this ground that it ensure targeted subsidy delivery.
- With the help of the Aadhaar number, the identification of the beneficiary can be done better.
- It Reduces the need for large physical movement of goods. It Also reduces citizens hardships.

Scalability of Direct Benefit transfer across different sectors :

- Cash transfer: Under this scheme, cash is directly transferred from the government to the individual beneficiaries. For instance, Some of the examples are the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) and MGNREGA.
- In-kind benefits from the government to beneficiaries: Components of the schemes or the schemes itself are a part of this category. The government provides beneficiaries with in-kind benefits via an intermediate agency.
- The government usually bears the cost to buy the goods that can be used for public distribution as well as for providing them to the beneficiaries that they have targeted. The beneficiaries then get these services or goods for a very low price or for free. e.g. Manufacturers of fertilizers receive 100% of subsidy after fertiliser is delivered to the farmer.
- Other forms of transfers: Incentives, allowances, etc., that are provided to Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and community workers come under this category. They are provided such allowances because of the service they provide to other beneficiaries and to the community. e.g. NABARD agri-loan mechanisms.

- Hence, the flexibility of offering DBT via different methods ensures the scalability of the DBT, as DBT can be modified or moulded as per need of different sectors.

Despite its wide scale application and scalability DBT mechanism still poses some challenges:

- Aadhar registrations presently covered around 91% of population. Since DBT is linked with Aadhar for schemes, there is need to improve Aadhar linkage to 100% so that not a single person can be left out.
- Low level of digital literacy in the rural areas poses one of the major challenge in implementing this mechanism.
- India has reached 81% financial inclusion and this will potentially exclude people from the rural background. Lack of banking facilities will exclude people to access facilities. Here, governments PM- Jan dhan Yojna will play a pivotal role.
- Bank Correspondents face numerous challenges to reach people, who do not have bank account. Banking correspondents also struggle with connectivity and technical problems. Banking services at rural level needs to be improved to reach benefits to all.
- It can be said that DBT has some structural and organisational challenges. Which needs be addressed in a due period of time. Overall it seems that reliability and scalability of DBT mechanism can play a major role to ensure welfare of people in different sectors of economy.

Conclusion:

Hence, In a heterogeneous country like India different sectors have different objectives and challenges. Here, DBT mechanism due to its scalability and reliability can play a major role by fulfilling & addressing sector specific objectives and challenges to ensure good governance for all.

6. What are the main features of the ordinance related to APMCs, recently announced by the Government? How will it help the farmers? Discuss.

Demand of the question:

It expects students to write about the main features of the ordinances related to APMC's along with discussing its benefits and drawbacks for the farmer.

Introduction:

In order to revive the Indian economy, the Central government has announced the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. Agricultural reforms are part of the third tranche of the economic package announced under Atma nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan which may yield better income for farmer in coming days.

Body:

Government of India Intends to reform the marketing and regulation related to APMCs in agriculture field through following two ordinances:

The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Ordinance, 2020: (FPTC)

- It seeks to provide for barrier-free trade of farmers' produce outside the markets notified under the various state agricultural produce market laws (state APMC Acts). The Ordinance will prevail over state APMC Acts.
- Trade of farmers' produce: The Ordinance allows intra-state and inter-state trade of farmers' produce outside the physical premises of markets or deemed markets notified under various State agricultural produce market legislations.
- Besides, the Ordinance will provide a facilitative framework for electronic trading and matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- A farmer is defined as a person engaged in the production of farmers' produce by self or by hired labour.
- No fees to be levied by states: The Ordinance prohibits state governments from levying any market fee, cess or levy on farmers, traders, and electronic trading platforms for any trade under the Ordinance.
- Dispute resolution mechanism is explicitly structured out for efficient dispute resolution.
- The central government may prescribe modalities for such platforms procedure, norms, and manner of registration, code of conduct, quality assessments, and modes of payment.

The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Ordinance, 2020:

- It provides a framework for the protection and empowerment of farmers with reference to the sale and purchase of farm products. The provisions of the Ordinance will override all state APMC laws.
- Farming agreement: The Ordinance provides for a farming agreement prior to the production or rearing of any farm produce, aimed at facilitating farmers in selling farm produces to sponsors.
- It also specifies the Duration of agreement.
- Pricing of farming produce: The price to be paid for the purchase of a farming produce will be mentioned in the agreement.
- Delivery and payment: The Ordinance specifies that the sponsor will be responsible for all preparations for the timely acceptance of deliveries and will take deliveries within the agreed time.
- Dispute Settlement: The Ordinance requires a farming agreement to provide for a conciliation board as well as a conciliation process for settlement of disputes.

Benefit for farmer:

- The freedom to produce, hold, move, distribute and supply will lead to harnessing economies of scale and attract private sector/foreign direct investment into the agriculture sector.
- It will help drive up investment in cold storages and modernization of the food supply chain.
- An amendment to FPTC will create an ecosystem where the farmers and traders would enjoy freedom of choice of sale and purchase of agri-produce.
- It will also promote barrier-free inter-state and intra-state trade and commerce outside the physical premises of markets notified under State agricultural produce marketing legislations.
- It empowers farmers for engaging with processors, wholesalers, aggregators, large retailers, exporters etc. and thus eliminating intermediaries resulting in full realization of price.
- Farmers have been provided adequate protection. Sale, lease or mortgage of farmers' land is totally prohibited and farmers' land is also protected against any recovery.
- It also provides an effective dispute resolution mechanism with clear timelines for redress. Hence, farmer will not hesitate to take risk.

Though these kind of reforms will liberate the farmer from limited choices provided by state specific APMC regulation. There are some pitfalls too as pointed out by some experts:

- Rather than replicating Punjab's successful agriculture mandi model, now states will lose vital revenue to even upgrade and repair rural infrastructure.
- When farmers sell agricultural produce outside of APMC market yards, they cannot legally be charged commission on the sale of farm produce. To survive, the APMCs across the nation will have to radically standardise and rationalise their mandi fee structure and limit the commission charged by traders on sale of farmers' produce.
- The move seems to promote free trade under the slogan of one nation one market where some small and marginalised farmers need some state backed protection.
- The peasantry at large will be at the mercy of the Agri Business Corporations since there will not be any arrangements for price support and price stabilisation for crops.

Conclusion:

As these reforms are the most awaited reforms since Independence, they carry big potential to change the Indian agriculture sector by improving the income of farmer, large scale infrastructure investments, dispute resolution mechanism etc. Hence, if implemented in letter and spirit they can open the door of golden age for Indian farmers to promote the Indian farming sector as big farming business.

7. What are the institutional measures in place to ensure food security during pandemics? Examine.

Demand of the question:

It expects students to investigate and establish the key facts and issues related to institutional measures in place to ensure food security during pandemics. It also expects students to provide innovative ways and constructive solution to ensure food security.

Introduction:

The United Nations (UN) has warned that the world stands at the cusp of a food crisis not seen in at least 50 years and urged governments to act swiftly to avert the crisis. It also said that 820 million people in the world, or more than 10% of the world's population, were already 'chronically food insecure' prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Body:

As Food and Agricultural organisation estimates, even before COVID-19 Some 820 million people around the world are experiencing hunger – consuming an insufficient amount of calories (dietary energy) for a long period.

- COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated this situation by forcing the governments across the world to disrupt the global food supply chains as a containment measure.
- Informal labourers, pastoralists, children, women etc. will be hard hit by the risen food insecurity. Millions of children are already missing out on the school meals they have come to rely upon, many of them with no formal access to social protection, including health insurance.
- With respect to India, The continuing lockdowns across the country, affecting labour and input availability for agricultural operations, coupled with the stoppage of transport networks, will seriously disrupt food supplies.
- The consequent fall in rural incomes is expected to impact food demand and also the overall economic growth adversely.

Hence, there arouse the need to have a look on the institutional measures to ensure food security during pandemics:

- National Food Security Mission: It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme launched in 2007. It aims to increase production of rice, wheat, pulses, coarse cereals and commercial crops, through area expansion and productivity enhancement.
- Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana- it ensures insurance for crops against natural calamities hence, secures farmers income.
- E-marketplace: The government has created an electronic national agriculture market (eNAM) to connect all regulated wholesale produce markets through a pan-India trading portal. It will ensure farmer to sell her produce more easily during pandemics.
- The National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, legally entitles up to 75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population to receive subsidized food grains under the Targeted Public Distribution System.

- Also on international level, Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) Established as a specialized agency of the UN helps eliminate hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition by promoting cooperation between different countries.
- The High-Level Task Force (HLTF) on Global Food and Nutrition Security was established by the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in 2008. It aims to promote a comprehensive and unified response of the international community to the challenge of achieving global food and nutrition security.
- UN-SDG Goal 2 End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

As it seems there are adequate institutional measure in place to address food insecurity, some areas still need attention:

- Logistical problems in planting, harvesting and transporting food will leave poor countries exposed.
- The closure of schools amid lockdowns is also a part of this problem. Of the 1.6 billion young people who are currently not in school due to coronavirus, over a third of one billion are not receiving nutritious meals which are crucial to their immune systems.
- Particularly vulnerable are war-ravaged countries, already suffering from food crises and malnutrition.
- There are some NGO's, civil society groups who worked amidst this pandemic to ensure food for needy one, utilised their own money to supply food. Hence, help in terms of monetary support to them can also ensure food security amidst pandemic.

Conclusion:

As we have observed pandemics can cause great disruption to the global food system. To prevent a catastrophic food crisis, formulating comprehensive food security policies and creating a solidarity among Nations will ensure to strengthen institutional measures to ensure food security in pandemic.

8. In terms of global competitiveness, the livestock sector of India leaves a lot to be desired. Do you agree? Substantiate your views.

Demand of the question:

It expects students to express their views on competitiveness of livestock sector of India on global scale. It also expects students to substantiate their views by giving examples.

Introduction:

India is the highest livestock owner of the world. The overall contribution of livestock sector in total GDP is nearly 4.11% as per the 19th livestock census of 2012. Livestock provides livelihood to two-third of rural community.

Body:

The farmers in India maintain mixed farming system i.e. a combination of crop and livestock where the output of one enterprise becomes the input of another enterprise thereby realize the resource efficiency. Apart from providing food and non-food items to the people, livestock sector has a prominent role in farmer's economy.

- Livestock sectors growth has multidimensional potential. For instance, Operation Flood, launched in 1970, helped dairy farmers direct their own development, increased milk production ("a flood of milk"), augmented rural incomes and ensured reasonable prices for consumers.
- It provides self-employment to millions of people especially rural households. It has contributed significantly to the empowerment of women and has increased their income and role in society. So, it's one of the prominent keys for poverty reduction.
- The livestock products such as milk, meat and eggs are an important source of animal protein to the members of the livestock owners. It is producing about 95.22 billions of eggs, 7.70 million tonnes of meat in a year.
- The value of output of livestock sector at current prices was Rs 9,17,910 crores at current prices during 2016-17 which is about 31.25% of the value of output from agricultural and allied sector.
- Inclusive Growth: Livestock is more equitable than that of land. Small farmers possess more than half of the country's cattle as against 24% of land.

Here, we have observed that Indian livestock sector has tremendous growth and export potential, but despite this Indian livestock sector lacks in some aspects to meet some global standards and compete with the global livestock sector economy due to following reasons:

- The Frequent outbreaks of diseases like Food and Mouth Diseases, Black Quarter infection, Influenza etc. continue to affect Livestock health and lowers the productivity.
- Crossbreeding of indigenous species with exotic stocks to enhance genetic potential of different species has been successful only to a limited extent.
- The sector will also come under significant adjustment pressure to the emerging market forces. Though globalization will create avenues for increased participation in international trade, stringent food safety and quality norms would be required.
- Livestock sector did not receive the policy and financial attention it deserved. The sector received only about 12% of the total public expenditure on agriculture and allied sectors, which is disproportionately lesser than its contribution to agricultural GDP.
- The sector has been neglected by the financial institutions. The share of livestock in the total agricultural credit has hardly ever exceeded 4% in the total (short-term, medium-term and long-term). The institutional mechanisms to protect animals against risk are not strong enough.
- Access to markets is critical to speed up commercialization of livestock production. Lack of access to markets may act as a disincentive to farmers to adopt improved technologies and quality inputs.

Measures to promote livestock sector:

- Increasing commercialization of livestock products by improving technologies, increasing market connectivity, processing and storage centre, training etc.
- Cross breeding of indigenous species with exotic stocks to enhance genetic potential of different species. e.g. Artificial Insemination mission.
- Develop and conserve indigenous breeds of bovine population & enhance milk production and make it more remunerative to the farmers by infusing more funding in to missions such as Rashtriya Gokul Mission & Gokul grams.
- Ensure quantitative and qualitative improvement in livestock production systems and capacity building of all stakeholders giving impetus to missions such as National Livestock Mission.
- To appreciate innovations coming from the villages & to expand the dairy sector in India new start ups needs to be encouraged by launching initiatives such as Animal Husbandry Start up Grand Challenge.

Conclusion:

As we know from the experience of Operation flood that if steps are taken in the right direction then desired outcome can be achieved. Hence, we can say that Indian livestock sector can compete with the global livestock sector as it has tremendous potential for its growth and development provided the lacunas are addressed.

9. Examine the potential of contract farming in improving the condition of farmers. What recent measures have been announced by the Government to reform contract farming? Discuss.**Demand of the question:**

It expects students to write about the potential of contract farming in improving the conditions of farmers. It also expects to discuss the recent measures announced by the government to reform contract farming.

Introduction:

Contract farming can be defined as agricultural production carried out according to an agreement between a buyer and farmers, which establishes conditions for the production and marketing of a farm product or products.

Body:

Typically, the farmer agrees to provide agreed quantities of a specific agricultural product. These should meet the quality standards of the purchaser and be supplied at the time determined by the purchaser. In turn, the buyer commits to purchase the product and, in some cases, to support production through, for example, the supply of farm inputs, land preparation and the provision of technical advice.

Potential of contract farming to improve the condition of farmer:

- Inputs and production services are often supplied by the sponsor so reduction of burden to manage input and production services on farmer. Hence, it reduces cost of production for farmer.

- This is usually done on credit through advances from the sponsor, as credit is easily available, farmer doesn't need to take credit from the private money lender. Hence, it ensures farmer to focus on improving the quality of production & also addresses Rural indebtedness problem.
- Contract farming often introduces new technology and also enables farmers to learn new skills, it cumulatively increases the productions quantity, quality and hence, results in win-win situation for farmer.
- Farmers' price risk is often reduced as many contracts specify prices in advance which gives impetus to farmer to invest the money to improve agricultural production.
- It also ensures that the surplus money can be used to invest to maintain health family members and continuation of children's' education.
- Contract farming can open up new markets which would otherwise be unavailable to small farmers. Hence, it carries big potential to increase the income of farmer by expanding farmers choices to sell her/his product.

Considering, this potential of contract farming, Government of India with intention to improve the farmers income recently promulgated, "The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Ordinance, 2020".

- It provides a framework for the protection and empowerment of farmers with reference to the sale and purchase of farm products. The provisions of the Ordinance will override all state APMC laws.
- Farming agreement: The Ordinance provides for a farming agreement prior to the production or rearing of any farm produce, aimed at facilitating farmers in selling farm produces to sponsors.
- It also specifies the Duration of agreement.
- Pricing of farming produce: The price to be paid for the purchase of a farming produce will be mentioned in the agreement.
- Delivery and payment: The Ordinance specifies that the sponsor will be responsible for all preparations for the timely acceptance of deliveries and will take deliveries within the agreed time.
- Dispute Settlement: The Ordinance requires a farming agreement to provide for a conciliation board as well as a conciliation process for settlement of disputes.

These reforms will increase farmers income and will also expand farmers market choices. It will also ensure income security, insurance for investment. But at the same time there are some concerns raised by some experts:

- The move seems to promote free trade under the slogan of one nation one market where some small and marginalised farmers need some state backed protection.
- The peasantry at large will be at the mercy of the Agri Business Corporations since there will not be any arrangements for price support and price stabilisation for crops.

Conclusion:

The recent reforms announced by the government with respect to contract farming represent progressive approach and hence, they will surely culminate in improving farmers' economic and social life. Hence, these reforms by the government with respect to Contract farming truly has potential to improve farmers' conditions & contribute to achieve the ambitious target to double the farmers' income by 2022.

10. With the help of suitable examples, explain the concepts of backward and forward integration in the food processing industry.

Demand of the question:

It expects students to give a clear account of the concepts of backward and forward integration in the food processing industry. It also expects students to clarify with relevant examples.

Introduction:

The food processing industry is one of the sunrise (emerging) sectors in India considering its linkage to agriculture and food consumption. It employs 13 million people directly and about 35 million people indirectly. The Indian food processing market was worth INR 24,665 Billion in 2018. Looking forward, the market is projected to reach INR 50,571 Billion by 2024, exhibiting a CAGR of 12.4% during 2019-2024.

Body:

For any industry, backward linkages are directed towards suppliers; while the forward linkages are directed towards consumers. With respect to food processing industry, a Food Processing Unit sets up strong backward linkages with the farmers, farmer producer organizations, farmer's groups etc. Further, to be able to sell its processed food, it develops strong forward linkages with wholesalers, retailers, exporters etc.

Concepts of backward and forward integration in the food processing industry:

- In food processing industry, the inputs such as fruits, vegetables, dairy products, meat, poultry and fish are so much perishable that lack of transportation and backward links would result in their waste.
- Further, for industry players, effective links add value to the brand by ensuring high quality end to end and better control over the factors of production resulting in cost saving and enhanced efficiency.
- Backward Integration refers to that integration where Company expands its activities to upstream areas. Company aims to get raw material at cheap rates, uniform quality, steady supply and eliminate any middlemen. e.g. Starbucks (chain of coffee bars) buys coffee plantations in Central America.
- Forward Integration refers to that integration where Company expands its activities to downstream areas. Company aims to get more control over sales, consumer-contact and eliminate any middlemen, wholesaler, retailer. e.g. Amul has its own pizza outlets and ice cream parlours.

- For a broader understanding one more large scale example can be cited of Mega food parks promote the backward linkages while Rythu bazar scheme of Andhra Pradesh which helps farmers to directly sell their produce to customers promotes forward linkages.

Effective and seamless backward and forward integration in food processing industry plug gaps in supply chain in terms of availability of raw material and linkages with the market. Hence, It benefits the economy in following ways:

- Food processing industry drives rural economy by increasing consumption due to increased income, essential for sustaining economic growth. Decrease in post-harvest wastage losses due to better technologies and improved logistics.
- Better compliance to food quality standards and thus expand market base.
- Stabilize food prices in the economy (food inflation). Consumers will be benefited with access to larger variety of products at reasonable prices.
- However various challenges still remain owing to Lack of infrastructure, large no. Of intermediaries, lack of testing and grading facility and land reform issues.
- Food processing firms, particularly Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), have difficulties in accessing finance.

Government Policy around Forward and Backward Integration in Food Processing Industry:

- Currently, the government is running a scheme called Scheme for Creation of Backward and Forward Linkages to provide effective and seamless backward and forward integration for processed food industry.
- At the same time, NITI Aayog has consistently pushed for contract farming, opening of multi brand retail for 100% FDI through automatic route etc.
- Recently promulgated "The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Ordinance, 2020." is likely to strengthen the Food processing Industry by strengthening its forward and backward linkages.

Conclusion:

Rising per-capita income, changing life style and food habits provide significant opportunities for the growth of Food processing industry. Recently promulgated ordinances and the schemes such as SAMPADA, Mega food park etc. are likely to strengthen backward and forward linkages in turn help the Food processing industries to grow from present 2% of GDP to optimise high output of farming sector.

11. Examine the strength, potential and challenges of the organic food sector in India.

Demand of the question:

It expects students to expected to investigate and establish the key facts and issues related to the strength, potential and challenges of the organic food sector in India.

It also means to probe deeper into the topic i.e. organic food sector and elaborate it in detail.

Introduction:

In Organic food production synthetic inputs (such as fertilizers, pesticides, hormones, feed additives etc) are avoided and it relies upon crop rotation, crop residues, animal manures, off-farm organic waste, mineral grade rock additives and biological system of nutrient mobilization and plant protection.

Body:

Organic food sector primarily aims at cultivating the land and raising crops in such a way that it keeps the soil alive and in good health by use of organic wastes (crop, animal and farm wastes, aquatic wastes) and other biological materials along with beneficial microbes (bio fertilizers) to release nutrients to crops for increased sustainable production in an eco-friendly and pollution-free environment.

Strength & Potential of Organic food sector:

- It relies on traditional techniques such as crop rotation, green manure, compost and biological. It is accomplished by using farm agronomic, biological and mechanical methods in exclusion of all synthetic off farm inputs.
- It protects the long term fertility of soils by maintaining organic Matter levels and encouraging soil biological activity. It often involves vermiculture and vermi-composting too.
- The biological processes, driven by mycorrhiza, allow the natural production of nutrients in soil throughout growing season.
- Crop Rotation supports a wider range of beneficial insects, soil micro-organisms, and hence, protects species from going extinct.
- It improves soil health and fertility. It requires careful use of water resources hence lead to conservation of water.
- Sustainable and environmentally friendly production method, which has particular advantages for small-scale farmers.
- It helps in conserving bio-diversity and nature resources on the farm and in the surrounding area.
- Farmers in India's poorest region are recording record rice yields, organic banana yields, etc.
- India has the 9th largest World's Organic Agricultural Land and the largest number of producers Sikkim has become India's first fully organic state by converting around 75,000 hectares of agricultural land into sustainable cultivation.
- As per Economic Survey 2018-19 states that Size of the Indian organic food market is Rs. 100 crore & Number of organic food farmers in India are 570,000. Hence, India has great potential to expand the organic food market in coming future.

However, the emerging threats such as climate change induced global warming, flooding, relative market demand etc. pose serious challenge for the growth & development of organic food sector.

- The cost of cultivation increases as it takes more time and energy to produce than its synthetic input intensive counterpart.
- Specialised farmer training costs, higher processing and inventory holding costs, and increased packaging, logistics and distribution costs add to the price of end products.
- There is low awareness at the producer level on the difference between conventional farming and organic farming.
- At the consumer side there is confusion between natural and organic products and limited understanding of the health benefits of organic food products.
- Growing demand and low supply has further created an inflationary pressure on organic food products, it leads to customer opting for non-organic cheap products.

Hence, it becomes imperative to incentives farmers for input procurement, value addition including post-harvest infrastructure creation, packaging, branding, publicity, transportation, organic fairs etc. Some government initiatives and local level innovations can help to achieve this objective in following ways:

- Organic farming schemes such as the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) that promotes "location specific" farming systems, it helps make agriculture sustainable.
- Also, Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) that promotes various organic farming models through adoption of organic village by cluster approach and PGS certification.
- It is critical for companies involved in the organic food business to increase awareness among consumers in non-metro cities.
- Creating community-supported agricultural farms or with "grow your own food" programmes.
- Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North East Region (MOVCD-NER) is a Central Sector Scheme, a sub-mission under National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA), aims for development of certified organic production in a value chain mode to link growers with consumers and to support the development of entire value chain starting from inputs, seeds, certification, to the creation of facilities for collection, aggregation, processing, marketing and brand building initiative.
- Ministry of Food Processing and Ministry of Women and Child Development jointly initiated the National Organic Food Festival aimed at strengthening organic food produce in the country. It also aimed at encouraging women entrepreneurs in manufacturing organic produce

Conclusion:

Organic food production because of its innovative nature, less harm to environment ,and cost effectiveness holds immense potential in the time of rising environmental

and global market chain challenges. Hence, Organic food sector can be promoted as brand for "local to global" programme besides it will also help to give boost to rural economy and increase farmers income.

12. What role do progressive land laws play in the ease of doing business? Explain. What recent measures have been taken by the government in the area of land reforms. Examine.

Demand of the question:

It expects students to clarify with relevant facts and implications role played by progressive land laws in the ease of doing business. It also expects student to investigate and establish the key facts and issues related to the recent measures taken by the government in the area of land reforms.

Introduction:

At the time of independence ownership of land was concentrated in the hands of a few. This led to the exploitation of the farmers and was a major hindrance towards the socio-economic development of the rural population. Equal distribution of land was therefore an area of focus of Independent India's government, and land reforms were seen as an important pillar of a strong and prosperous country.

Body:

'Ease of doing business' refers to the regulatory environment in a country to set up and operate a business. India jumped to 63rd position in World Bank's Ease of Doing Business 2021 report from previous position of 100. In the same report, the World Bank placed India at 163 and 154 positions, respectively, on enforcing contracts and registering property.

Progressive land laws role in ease of doing business:

- Property registration and Land acquisition, is a cumbersome and costly process. Simplifying property registration and acquisition of land by introducing reforms can help companies set up or expand in India faster.
- This can be achieved by introducing reforms such as allowing industries to buy land directly from farmers; rationalising stamp duty across states; digitising and integrating land records at various levels; and setting up a single window in each state for all land-related information, transactions, digitised records and land titles.
- Land ceiling: With a cap on the size of land holding an individual/family could hold equitable distribution of land was possible to an extent. Land ceiling ensured that the poor destitute farmer can cultivate the land and get benefits from it.
- Land possession: Land is a source of economic income. So, when a marginal farmer once got the possession of the land comes in capacity to utilize the land as per her/his choice. e.g. Growth of MSME's through PM-MUDRA yojna.
- Increased productivity: More land came under cultivation and since tillers themselves became the landowners, productivity increased. It also ensured

that a tiller can be business oriented farmer or business person, by utilizing his non-agricultural land for the other entrepreneurial use.

- Developing cooperative farming-businesses: As land comes under cooperatives, farmers economic growth is ensured with the parallel growth of cooperatives.
- Land reforms were also for non-agricultural purposes like development and manufacturing. It helped to set up Industrial development cluster adjacent to cities. Culminating in to more employment generation, and regional economic development.
- Reforms in land management and enforcing contracts helps to expedite the process of land management and setting up businesses.
- With regard to land management reforms, digitisation of the land data and making the data readily available throughout India facilitates the buying and selling of land.

For a self-reliant, globally competitive India, the facilitative reforms for ease of doing business are the need of the hour. Hence, Under the Atmanirbhar Bharat package, Government of India has introduced some reforms for ease of doing business in India.

- At the state level Karnataka government introduced that Industries will get 3-yr window for approvals in Karnataka.
- Karnataka government also proposed to amend the Industrial Facilitation Act, as per the proposed amendment once an investor gets the acknowledgement of approval from any of these committees, he/she can start the operations without waiting for clearance from other departments.
- Also, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) identified enforcing contracts, resolving insolvency, starting a business, registering property, paying taxes and trading across borders as six areas that need improvement.
- The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade is also following reform activities related to registering property and starting a business in Kolkata and Bengaluru as these two cities are included by the World Bank this year besides Delhi and Mumbai for preparing the ease of doing business report, with a view to provide a holistic picture of business environment in India.
- Rs 10,000 crore scheme for formalization of Micro Food Enterprises. This scheme promotes 'Vocal for Local with Global Outreach' vision. The scheme, government said, will help 2 lakh MFEs, farmer producer organization, self help groups and cooperatives in technical up gradation, improved incomes, better health and safety standards and integration with retail markets.
- Similarly under the 'registering property' criterion, the focus would be on land titling legislation by all the four cities, land records to reflect actual ownership, and timely disposal of property disputes.
- The interventions listed for 'starting a business' include integrated registration for ESIC, EPFO, GST, profession tax with company registration.

The recent reforms exercise assumes significance as the government is targeting to take India among top 50 in the ease of doing business ranking.

Conclusion:

Hence, with respect to India land reforms played a crucial role in changing the economic & social structure of India and promoted ease of doing business. Proposed land reforms are the crucial steps in the right direction to give shape to the dream of 'Vocal for Local with Global Outreach' vision.

13. Can aptitude of social service be inculcated through training? Critically examine

Demand of the question:

It expects students to elaborate about the aptitude of social services. It also expects students to analyse both aspects of whether aptitude of social services be inculcated through training or not.

Introduction:

Global health workers, public servants, civil society groups and NGO's are toiling hard to tackle this unprecedented situation created by COVID-19. It's not just their academics & professional role but also the aptitude of social service which has played a prominent role to face this war like situation.

Body:

Aptitude of Social service:

- In general terms aptitude is a natural skill or talent and Social services include the benefits and facilities like education, food subsidies, health care, police, fire service, job training and subsidised housing, adoption, community management, policy research, and lobbying.
- For many of us having empathy, compassion for the fellow human beings, animals, and surrounding environment is a characteristic of having aptitude of social services.
- The quality of empathy, compassion, helping others are mostly natural qualities. e.g. Baba Amte started to help the leprosy infected people and established Anadvan organisation.
- A child's surrounding environment also plays a prominent role to inculcate the aptitude of social service in her/him. e.g. Prakash Amte, son of Baba Amte is a philanthropist who run the lok biradari prakalp.
- Educational institutions also play a prominent role in inculcating values of self less service to others.
- Various citizen led initiatives such as free meal to migrant workers, providing essential materials to the needy one's during the lockdown period etc. say that training is not the necessity to have the aptitude of social services.

Here, we can observe that aptitude of social service is an innate ability of person. However, we can't deny the role played by the specialised training to develop the aptitude of social services.

- For instance, as we know about the The Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, which is a research and training institute on public policy and public administration in India has a specialised training curriculum which strives to train the all India service officers, some of the characteristics of Social services through village visits.
- Values of social services such as helping the marginalised and vulnerable section of people while abiding to the law is one such example.
- For the students of medical field, there is a mandatory curriculum of doing a one year's practise at the village level. It's a kind of special training which helps the medical graduates to understand the nature of needs of people and take decisions accordingly.
- For graduate students The National Service Scheme (NSS) The sole aim of the NSS is to provide hands on experience to young students in delivering community service. It's in turn a kind of training for the students to make them aware about the problems in society and also developing the aptitude of social services.
- Various NGOS's , Civil society groups have developed their own training programme to train those people who want to work for the welfare of the society.

Conclusion:

It can be said that aptitude of social services be inculcated through the training but at the same time it is also true that aptitude of social service is an innate ability of a person too. But, in the end what matters is the social services, just like people have come together in this COVID-19 pandemic crisis and are helping each other.

14. During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we have witnessed the exemplar services being rendered by public servants. What lessons have you learnt from their conduct?

Demand of the question:

It expects students to observe and analyse the exemplar services being rendered by public servants during this pandemic. It also expects students to write about the lessons learnt from their conduct.

Introduction:

Public servants work tirelessly to ensure the smooth functioning of the public administration. But, when it comes to crisis situation like COVID-19, public servants show exemplary courage in rendering services to people.

Body:

Following are such examples of public servants who showed exemplary services & lessons learnt from their conduct:

- **Hard Work & Commitment:** To accomplish and outclass in any task an IAS Officer should be a hard worker and committed to his/her duty. Which can be seen from the exemplary service shown by top Odisha cadre IAS officer and state health secretary, Nikunja Dhal who returned to duty within 24 hours of his father's death. It emphasise his commitment to duty,
- **Decisive and Resilient in Approach:** In this COVID-19 Pandemic situation where the administrative machineries and health infrastructure are overburdened by the work, District collectors and Health officers are showing their decisive & resilient approach.
- **Compassion:** As a civil servant, an administrative Officers show compassion & motivates the people with a desire to help the sufferings or misfortune instead of just feeling sympathetic.
- For instance, Around 20 IRS officers in Bengaluru, Provided Meals to Migrant Workers. It's a sign of compassion. It also emphasised the importance of unity among colleagues.
- **CARUNA Initiative:** CARUNA stands for 'Civil Services Association Reach to Support National Disasters, which is an association formed by the above-mentioned services. It is a unique collaborative platform that brings together civil servants, industry leaders, NGO professionals, and IT professionals, among others in the fight against corona virus pandemic.
- This initiative give us a lesson that when it comes to crisis, administration doesn't works alone, it takes all the stakeholders together and work in harmony to tackle the situation.
- A major chunk of the population of the country is currently practising isolation and is working from home, or not working at all. During such a time, IAS officer and Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation Commissioner (GVMC) G Srijana, returned to work just 22 days after giving birth, cutting short her maternity break.
- This act of dedication by IAS officer G Srijana gives a lesson by showing the importance of handling such huge responsibility.
- **Out-of-the-Box Thinking for Excellence in Work:** Public servants in some of the districts have came up with new ideas to bring back the daily life of citizens such as odd even scheme to start the market, creating innovative advertisements etc.
- **Leadership:** Many of the public servants gave a lesson of how a leader should act in this unprecedented situation. e.g. Nagpur Municipal Commissioner Mr. Tukaram Mundhe initiated the door to door testing of the people to contain the spread of COVID-19.
- The exemplary services by the public servant not just have given us the lessons of what to do but it also gave us the lessons of what not to do, such as not taking hasty decisions, not thinking about particular strata of the society while rendering service etc.
- However, some public servants were also transferred, to handle other responsibilities, due to their failure to contain the spread of COVID-19.

- These failure should need to be carefully assessed and lessons from them should be learnt to understand what not to do.

While applauding these acts of exemplary service our President said that, "In the present times too, the steel frame of our country, the civil service, has shown its strength and resolve in handling COVID-19 situation, with sensitivity and professionalism."

Conclusion:

At this time, India is going through extreme crises because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The country has been in lockdown for more than 3 months, giving rise to a plethora of problems. The work burden has increased manifold on the administrative system of the country. But, India's efforts of fighting against the corona virus disease have been applauded globally and the undeniably credit for this goes to the bureaucrats of the country.

15. Should merit lists be scrapped from school examinations? Substantiate your views.

Demand of the question:

It expects students to express their view on whether the merit list be scrapped from school examinations or not. It also expects students to substantiate their views with examples.

Introduction:

The CBSE and CISCE boards declared the Class 10 and Class 12 results this year without a merit list due to the exceptional circumstances created by the corona virus pandemic. This move is seen as progressive by some people and regressive by some other hence, it becomes necessary to assess whether the merit list be scrapped from school examinations or not.

Body:

A progressive move:

- Merit list gives students warped ideas of what achievement means and external validation.
- It promote unhealthy competition among students.
- These lists, which rank students on the basis of their exam marks seems futile exercise. As we grow up, we realise how redundant these merit lists are, for that matter even exam marks are. e.g. Overall success can't be determined from how many marks a student has gained.
- Such lists have over the years put unnecessary pressure on students and intensified the rat race in our flawed education system.
- Stigma attached to low marks: The undue importance given to merit lists is actually a symptom of how India is obsessed with good grades in exams, and the stigma attached to low scores.

- Employers look for talent, not toppers: Now a days the employers recruitment criteria's are changed, they look for someone with talent, determination, ability to work with others, the right set of skills, and a hard-worker.
- These skills are unfortunately not what our education system builds in students. Instead of breaking their head over memorising history chapters or chemistry formulae, and obsessing over marks, students must strive to achieve skills and knowledge.
- In the process to train the student to follow rat race, school curriculum deprives students of vital cognitive life skills.
- Right after the CBSE results were declared, several people on social media platforms shared their old board exam marks to underline the fact that marks are not the be-all and end-all in life. IAS officer Nitin Sangwan wrote on Twitter that he barely managed to pass his chemistry exam in Class 12, but that didn't hinder him.

However, some academicians and rank holders emphasised the importance of merit list as follows:

- Once the merit list is scrapped, students might not take the board exams seriously.
- The thought to make it to the merit list instils a sense of competition among students.
- The token of appreciation received after securing a rank on the merit list gave them satisfaction.

Though merit list encourages students to do better, their overall effect has clear implications that a progressive approach needs to be adopted. Innovative Ideas for Better education outcomes can be applied to overcome the drawbacks of merit based system.

- Cooperative Learning: Working together on project teams and guided by trained teachers, students learn the skills of collaborating, managing emotions, and resolving conflicts in groups.
- Comprehensive Assessment: Assessment should be expanded beyond simple test scores to instead provide a detailed, continuous profile of student strengths and weaknesses. Teachers, parents, and individual students can closely monitor academic progress and use the assessment to focus on areas that need improvement.

Conclusion:

Hence, scrapping a merit list is a progressive approach as it reduces unnecessary burden of performing well from students mind. But, at the same time some other method should be devised so that a student's overall development can take place.