

**NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC****World Food India 2019**

Union Minister for Food Processing Industries has inaugurated the World Food India 2019, the biggest gathering of all global and domestic stakeholders in Food Processing Sector. It is aimed to position India as Food Processing Destination of the World.

**World Food India**

- The government initiated a biennial event- World Food India to promote food processing sector at global level.
- The first such event was conducted in 2017 and received wide success.
- The event created Brand India in global food map by positioning India as a World Food Factory.
- It was for the first time in India that all major policy makers and top industrialists across the globe in Food Processing Industries were together under one roof.

**Food Processing Industry in India**

- Food processing is one of the six superstar sectors under the GoI's Make in India initiative and has the potential to transform India as a leading food processing destination of the World.
- It is critical to achieving the PM's vision of doubling the farmers' income in India and reducing food wastage.
- Indian Food Processing Industry has grown tremendously recording 11% growth rate, which is twice the pace of Global Industry.
- The sector has recorded double digit growth rate across all major sub-segments of the sectors both in terms of value and volume.
- Despite huge domestic market of 1.3 billion customers with the youngest population globally and an abundant agricultural base, the processing levels in India remain low at 7.7%.
- India lags behind several economies such as China, Malaysia and US. Its share in global exports of processed food is only 2%.
- Besides, India also has a high share of harvest and post-harvest losses from major agricultural produces on account of poor storage, transportation and logistics to the extent of \$13 Billion, 3 times the agricultural budget.

**CONSTITUTION AND POLITY****One Nation One Election**

PM Modi calls for all-party meet on 'one nation, one election'. Simultaneous elections refer to holding elections to Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, Panchayats and Urban local bodies simultaneously, once in five year.

**Problems associated with frequent elections:**

- The massive expenditure that is currently incurred for the conduct of separate elections.
- The policy paralysis that results from the imposition of the Model Code of Conduct during election time.
- Impact on delivery of essential services.
- Burden on crucial manpower that is deployed during election time.
- Frequent elections affect policymaking and governance as the government is trapped in short-term thinking.
- It also destabilises duly-elected governments and imposes a heavy burden on the exchequer.
- It also puts pressure on political parties, especially smaller ones, as elections are becoming increasingly expensive.
- The Model Code of Conduct (MCC) which comes into force with the announcement of poll dates, prevents government from announcing any new schemes, make any new appointments, transfers and postings without the approval of election commission. This brings normal work of the government to a standstill.
- It also increases the cost of management to the election commission.

**Merits of Simultaneous elections:**

- Governance and consistency: The ruling parties will be able to focus on legislation and governance rather than having to be in campaign mode forever.
- Reduced Expenditure of Money and Administration: The entire State and District level administrative and security machinery will be busy with the conduct of elections twice in a period of five years as per the current practice. Expenditure can be reduced by conducting simultaneous elections.
- Continuity in policies and programmes.
- Efficiency of Governance: Simultaneous elections can bring the much-needed operational efficiency in this exercise. Populist measures by governments will reduce.

- Simultaneous elections can also be a means to curb corruption and build a more conducive socio-economic ecosystem.
- The impact of black money on the voters will be reduced as all elections are held at a time.

But, why it is difficult to go for simultaneous elections?

- The biggest challenge is achieving political consensus, which seems to be “chimerical”.
- Regional parties will be more opposed to the idea than national parties because there is always a tendency for voters to vote the same party in power in the state and at the Centre in case the Lok Sabha polls and the state elections are held together.
- Also, according to IDFC, there is a 77% chance that the Indian voter will vote for the same party for both the state and Centre when elections are held simultaneously.

For simultaneous elections to be implemented, Changes to be made in Constitution and Legislations:

Amendments needed in the following articles:-

- Article 83 which deals with the duration of Houses of Parliament need an amendment
- Article 85 (on dissolution of Lok Sabha by the president)
- Article 172 (relating to the duration of state legislatures)
- Article 174 (relating to dissolution of state assemblies)
- Article 356 (on President’s Rule).
- The Representation of People Act, 1951 Act would have to be amended to build in provisions for stability of tenure for both parliament and assemblies. This should include the following crucial elements:
- Restructuring the powers and functions of the ECI to facilitate procedures required for simultaneous elections
- A definition of simultaneous election can be added to section 2 of the 1951 act.

**INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**

**United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)**

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in September 2019.

About United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

- Established in 1994, the UNCCD is the only legally binding international agreement linking environment and development issues to the land agenda.
- It addresses specifically the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, known as the drylands, where some of the most vulnerable ecosystems and peoples can be found.
- 2006 was declared “International Year of Deserts and Desertification”.

Desertification in India

- India faces a severe problem of land degradation, or soil becoming unfit for cultivation.
- A 2016 report by the ISRO found that about 29% of India’s land (in 2011-13) was degraded, this being a 0.57% increase from 2003-05.
- At the previous edition of the COP, India had committed to restore 13 million hectares of degraded and deforested land by the year 2020, and an additional 8 million hectares by 2030.

The Bonn Challenge

- Ahead of the COP-14, MoEFCC launched a flagship project, part of a larger international initiative called the Bonn Challenge, to enhance India’s capacity for forest landscape restoration (FLR).
- The Bonn Challenge is a global effort to bring 150 million hectares of the world’s deforested and degraded land under restoration by 2020, and 350 million hectares by 2030.
- It will be implemented during a pilot phase of three-and-a-half years in Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Nagaland and Karnataka.
- The project will aim to develop and adapt the best practices and monitoring protocols for the country, and build capacity within the five pilot States.

**G-20 Framework on Marine Plastic Waste**

Group of 20 environment ministers agreed to adopt a new implementation framework for actions to tackle the issue of marine plastic waste on a global scale.

About the Framework

- The new framework is aimed at facilitating further concrete action on marine waste, though on a voluntary basis, after the G20 Hamburg Summit in Germany adopted the “G20 action plan on marine litter” in 2017.
- Under the new framework, G20 members will promote a comprehensive life-cycle approach to prevent and reduce plastic litter discharge to the oceans through various measures and international cooperation.
- They will also share best practices, promote innovation and boost scientific monitoring and analytical methodologies.

**Operation Sunshine-2**

- In a coordinated military operation conducted by the armies of India and Myanmar on their respective sides of the border, several camps of NE-based militant groups inside Myanmar territory were destroyed.
- Called ‘Operation Sunshine-2’, the military action that took place between May 16 and June 8, is expected to give a debilitating jolt to insurgencies in the Northeastern states.
- At least seven to eight camps of the NSCN-K, NDFB, ULFA(I), KLO and NEFT in Myanmar’s Sagaing Region were destroyed by the Myanmar Army in mortar firing.
- Majority of these camps were in Hokayat, and were predominantly of the Naga rebel group, NSCN-K, which had abrogated its ceasefire with the Indian government in 2015.
- The operation included blocks by two battalions of the Indian Army — along with Special Forces, Assam Rifles and infantry Ghataks — on the Indian side of the border.
- This was a follow-up to ‘Operation Sunshine-1’ from February 22 to 26, when the Indian Army had acted against suspected Arakanese rebel camps inside Indian Territory.

**ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES****REN21’s Renewable 2019 Global Status Report**

The REN21’s Renewable 2019 Global Status Report (GSR) was recently released.

**Global prospects of the report**

- Renewables now supply around 26 per cent of global electricity production but the transport, cooling and heating sectors lag far behind in renewable adoption.
- Underlining the subsidy support being given to fossil fuel, the GSR read that lack of political will and fossil fuel subsidies are threatening to derail the crucial UN 2030 Climate and Development Goals.
- Renewable energy’s share in power consumption is increasing undoubtedly, but people would have consumed more had policy makers prioritized the sector.
- Erratic policy decisions kept the world from using the sector to its potential in meeting climate change targets, added the report.

**Indian case**

- India ranked fourth globally for new investment in renewable energy in 2018.
- India’s new power generation capacity from solar photovoltaic panels decreased compared to 2017, according to the report.
- However, India placed fifth, overtaking Italy, with 33 gigawatts (GW) total installed capacity.
- The report confirmed that installed renewable power capacity was more than that of fossil fuel and nuclear power combined for the fourth consecutive year.
- Around 100 GW of solar PV were added in 2018 which is enough to meet more than 25 per cent of electricity demand in France.

**Decrease in investments**

- Lack of ambitious and sustained policies to drive decarbonizing in heating, cooling and transport sectors indicates that countries are not trying to maximise the benefit of energy transition.
- The investment has decreased 16 per cent compared to 2017. It attributes this to factors like:
  - Land and transmission constraints,
  - 25 per cent safeguard duty on imports from China and Malaysia
  - Flaws in tender scheme
  - Tax uncertainties

**Dead Zone in the Gulf of Mexico**

Scientists say this year’s oceanic ‘dead zone’ in the Gulf of Mexico will be one of the largest in recorded history. It’s expected to grow to over 8,000 sq. miles, and scientists predict severe harm to marine habitat, impacting fish harvests.

**Dead Zone**

- Dead zones are hypoxic (low-oxygen) areas in the world’s oceans and large lakes.
- They are caused by “excessive nutrient pollution from human activities coupled with other factors that deplete the oxygen required to support most marine life in bottom and near-bottom water.
- Historically, many of these sites were naturally occurring.
- However, in the 1970s, oceanographers began noting increased instances and expanses of dead zones.
- These occur near inhabited coastlines, where aquatic life is most concentrated.
- The vast middle portions of the oceans, which naturally have little life, are not considered “dead zones”.

**Why do they occur?**

- Dead zones can be caused by natural and by anthropogenic factors.
- Natural causes include coastal upwelling and changes in wind and water circulation patterns.

- Use of chemical fertilizers is considered the major human-related cause of dead zones around the world.
- Runoff from sewage, urban land use, and fertilizers can also contribute to eutrophication
- They can be caused by an increase in nutrients (particularly nitrogen and phosphorus) in the water, known as eutrophication.
- These chemicals are the fundamental building blocks of single-celled, plant-like organisms that live in the water column, and whose growth is limited in part by the availability of these materials.
- Eutrophication can lead to rapid increases in the density of certain types of these phytoplankton, a phenomenon known as an algal bloom.

#### How is hypoxia created?

- The major groups of algae are Cyanobacteria, green algae, Dinoflagellates, Coccolithophores and Diatom algae.
- Cyanobacteria are not good food for zooplankton and fish and hence accumulate in water, die, and then decompose.
- The bacterial degradation of their biomass consumes the oxygen in the water, thereby creating the state of hypoxia.

### **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC**

#### **Controversial: BT Cotton**

Last week, a group of more than 1,000 farmers gathered in a village in Akola of Maharashtra to sow seeds of an unapproved variety of cotton. For defying its regulations the government is now investigating what was planted. The farmers in Akola planted a herbicide-tolerant variety of Bt cotton. This variety (HtBt) involves the addition of another gene, 'Cp4-Epsps' from another soil bacterium, *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*. It is not cleared by GEAC.

#### Why?

- The farmers claim that the HtBt variety can withstand the spray of glyphosate, a herbicide that is used to remove weeds, and thus it substantially saves them de-weeding costs.
- Farmers spend around Rs 3,000-5,000 per acre for de-weeding. Along with the uncertainty in finding labour, de-weeding threatens economic viability of their crops, they say.

#### It's a concern. Why?

- Genetic changes made in a plant can make it unsafe for consumption, have adverse impacts on human or animal health, or introduce problems in the soil or neighbouring crops.
- There is an elaborate process of tests and field trials to be followed.
- Critics of GM technology argue that some traits of genes start expressing themselves only after several generations, and thus one can never be sure about their safety.

#### Legal Provisions

- Legally, sale, storage, transportation and usage of unapproved GM seeds is a punishable offence under the Rules of Environmental Protection Act 1989.
- Also, sale of unapproved seeds can attract action under the Seed Act of 1966 and the Cotton Act of 1957.
- The Environmental Protection Act provides for a jail term of five years and a fine of Rs 1 lakh for violation of its provisions, and cases can be filed under the other two Acts.
- Farmers who assembled in Akola alleged that the HtBt variety is being surreptitiously used by farmers across the country, smuggled from abroad.

#### BT Cotton

- Bt cotton remains the only GM crop allowed to be cultivated in the country.
- Developed by US giant Bayer-Monsanto, it involves insertion of two genes viz 'Cry1Ab' and 'Cry2Bc' from the soil bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* into cotton seeds.
- This modification codes the plant to produce protein toxic to *Heliothis bollworm* (pink bollworm) thus making it resistant to their attack.
- The commercial release of this hybrid was sanctioned by the government in 2002.
- In India, it is the responsibility of the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) under the MoEFCC to assess the safety of a genetically modified plant, and decide whether it is fit for cultivation.
- The GEAC comprises experts and government representatives, and a decision it takes has to be approved by the Environment Minister before any crop is allowed for cultivation.
- Besides Bt cotton, the GEAC has cleared two other genetically modified crops — brinjal and mustard — but these have not received the consent of the MoEFCC.

**DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE**

**Qns. What are the challenges faced by Food processing industries? How can they help in easing the rural distress?**

The Indian agriculture sector, with the emergence of green revolution, has transformed itself from a country of shortages to a land of surpluses. Rapid growth of Indian economy has resulted in change in the consumption patterns, from cereals to more varied and nutritious diet of fruits and vegetable, milk, fish etc., which has given momentum to development of sunrise industry namely Food Processing Industries.

Food Processing refers to various techniques and operations by which raw foodstuffs are transformed into food that are suitable for consumption, cooking, or storage. It consists of processes like the basic preparation of foods, the alteration of a food product into another form (as in making preserves from fruit), and preservation and packaging techniques. The industry not only has potential to provide nation with food security but can also effectively tackle India's economic and employment woes.

**Challenges faced by India's food processing sector**

- Poor supply chain linkages: India's agriculture market has a long and fragmented supply chain that results in high wastage and high costs, especially due to seasonality, perishability, and variability of produce.
- Infrastructure bottlenecks: The export related infrastructure for agri-produce is grossly inadequate, especially at sea ports and airports. More than 30 percent of the produce from the fields gets spoiled due to poor post-harvesting facilities and lack of adequate storage infrastructure.
- Lack of skilled manpower: The agricultural workforce is inadequately skilled across different levels of food processing.
- Low adherence to quality standards: India lacks basic standardization and certification infrastructure. Given the size of the food processing industry, there is a huge gap in the availability of laboratories, trained manpower, and certification agencies.
- A significant amount of food produce gets wasted in India due to inadequate infrastructure such as packaging facilities, storage, transportation, cold chain, and low levels of processing to the tune of US\$1.5 billion (Rs 92,000 crores) annually.
- Less than 10 percent of the total food produced is processed into value added products in India. In comparison to US and China's 65 and 23% respectively.
- Similarly, other smaller developing countries such as Thailand, Philippines, and Brazil process as high as 30, 78, and 70 percent of their produce, respectively.

**Potential of the sector**

- Under the Make in India initiative, the Government plans to stimulate growth in the Food Processing sector through the creation of a strong infrastructure, reduction of food wastage and promotion of Ease of Doing Business (EODB) measures.
- A well-developed Food Processing sector will help facilitate crop diversification and generate employment opportunities.
- The introduction of modern processing techniques for food will result in improved shelf-life of the agricultural produce and ensure steady revenue to farmers.
- It will embolden the government's vision of doubling farmer's income by 2022 as it serves as a crucial link between industries and agriculture.
- Food processing has an important role to play in linking Indian farmers to consumers in the domestic and international markets.
- India's food ecosystem also offers huge opportunities for investments with stimulating growth in the food retail sector, favorable economic policies and attractive fiscal incentives.

**Way forward**

- Govt. has launched various schemes like (SAMPADA), Integrated Cold Chain and Value Addition Infrastructure scheme, Electronic National Agriculture Market (E-NAM), to integrate markets and provide impetus to the agricultural and food processing sector.
- The government also provides 100% FDI in food processing through automatic route. It has also opened up 12 Mega Food Parks to facilitate food processing in the nation.
- The Food Processing industry is critical to India's growth and the government should focus on providing adequate impetus to the sector.
- With the correct set of policy implementations and support, the industry can grow by leaps and bounds, taking India to a new position of strength and prosperity in the global economy.

**DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS BASED MCQS**

1. Consider the following statements w.r.t the Mega Food Parks.
  1. Mega Food Park is a well-defined agri/horticultural-processing zone containing state of the art processing facilities with support infrastructure and well established supply chain.
  2. Mega Food Park was launched in the Ninth Five Year Plan.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 

(a) **Only 1**                      (b) Only 2  
(c) Both 1 and 2                (d) Neither 1 nor 2
2. Consider the following statements w.r.t the Food Processing Industry in India.
  1. It is one of the key sectors under Make In India Project.
  2. Recent Govt report says Indian Food Processing Industry has grown recording a 11% growth rate.
  3. India is ahead of China in exporting processed food in 2019.
 Which of the statements is/are incorrect?
 

(a) 1 and 2                      (b) 1 only  
(c) 2 and 3                      (d) **3 only**
3. Which of the following electoral systems have not been adopted for various elections in India?
  1. System of direct elections on the basis of adult suffrage
  2. System of proportional representation by means of single transferrable vote
  3. List system of proportional representation
  4. Cumulative system of indirect election
 Select the correct answer using the codes given below:
 

(a) 1 and 2                      (b) 1 and 3  
(c) 2, 3 and 4                (d) **3 and 4**
4. Which among the following statements w.r.t to Elections is/are incorrect?
  1. For qualifying to the Lok Sabha, a person must be a at least 25 years of age
  2. A person can be a member of both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha at the same time
  3. A person belonging to Scheduled Caste of Scheduled Tribe can contest elections from a general seat also, and not just the reserved seat
  4. If a member of either of the Houses votes against the directions given by his party, he can be deemed to be disqualified
 Select the correct answer using the codes given below:
 

(a) Only 1                      (b) Only 2 and 4  
(c) Only 3                      (d) **Only 2**
5. What does the word "Democratic" mean?
  - (a) absolutely independent,
  - (b) system of political economy that ensures equitable distribution of wealth and protects from exploitation
  - (c) having no official state religion and granting every citizen the right to freely follow any religion of his or her choice
  - (d) **granting equal voting rights to every single citizen of the nation**
6. Which of the following statements is/are correct about the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)?
  1. It was established in 1994.
  2. It is the only legally binding international agreement linking environment and development issues to the land agenda.
  3. Germany is to host the 14th session of the Conference of Parties (COP-14) of the UNCCD this year.
 Select the correct answer using the codes given below:
 

(a) **1 and 2**                      (b) 2 and 3  
(c) 1 and 3                      (d) 1, 2 and 3
7. Which of the following Groups has recently agreed to implement to a framework on Marine Plastic Waste?
 

(a) G7                              (b) **G20**  
(c) SCO                            (d) BRICS
8. Operation Sunshine is a Military Operation between which countries of Asia?
 

(a) India and Bhutan  
(b) Indian and Nepal  
(c) China and Nepal  
(d) **India and Myanmar**
9. What has been India's rank in REN21's Renewable 2019 Global Status Report?
 

(a) **Fifth**                        (b) Eighth  
(c) Tenth                         (d) Nineteenth
10. Which of the following statements is/are incorrect about the Dead Zones?
  1. Dead zones are hypoxic (low-oxygen) areas in the world's oceans and large lakes.
  2. Dead zones can be caused only by anthropogenic factors.
  3. Eutrophication is a major cause of the formation of the Dead Zones.
 Select the correct answer using codes given below:
 

(a) 1 and 2                      (b) **1 and 3**  
(c) 2 and 3                      (d) 1, 2 and 3