

21 Dec 2021: PIB Summary & Analysis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. [Mainstreaming of Millets](#)
2. [Backward Region Grant Fund](#)
3. [First Agri-tech cohort under South-South Innovation Platform](#)
4. [Livelihood Opportunities for Transgenders](#)
5. [MoU with UNWFP](#)

1. Mainstreaming of Millets

Topic: GS III, Economy

Major crops: Marketing of Agricultural produce

Prelims: About the Partnership between NITI Aayog and UNWFP, about Millets

Mains: Significance in bettering the nutritional status of women and children

Context:

NITI Aayog signed a Statement of Intent with the United Nations World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) in order to promote the production of millets. This would be a preliminary step heading towards the resolution of the [UNGA](#) to declare 2023 as the International Year of Millets.

Background:

- The year 2018 was observed as the year of millets by the Government of India followed by which the government took numerous steps to encourage the production of millets.
- The centre for excellence was established along with the integration of Nutri-cereals in the [National Food Security Act](#).
- Millet missions have been launched in various states.
- Despite multiple initiatives taken by the government to boost the production of millets, there were challenges in terms of production, distribution and adaptability among consumers.
- The need to have a more diversified food basket with the inclusion of coarse grains and millets was realized with the objective of improving the nutritional status of pre-school children and women of reproductive age.
- [NITI Aayog](#) and UNWFP came together to address the challenges pertaining to millet production in an effective manner.

Focus areas of the Partnership:

- The statement of intent has been signed between NITI Aayog and UNWFP with the key objective of mainstreaming millets and making India the global leader in knowledge exchange.
- The aim of the partnership is to create resilient livelihood opportunities for small scale farmers.
- To improve adaptive capacities to climate change and changing food systems.
- Therefore, this is a strategic and technical collaboration that intends to strengthen climate-resilient agriculture for enhanced food and nutrition security in India.

Four Phases of the Partnership:

- **Phase I:** Development of a best practice compendium around millet mainstreaming and a scale-up strategy.
- **Phase II:** Support scale-up of millet mainstreaming through knowledge sharing and intense engagement with select states.
- **Phase III:** Leverage India's expertise to support developing countries for millet mainstreaming.
- **Phase IV:** Working on building capacities for climate-resilient and adaptive livelihood practices.

Read more about [Millets in India](#) in the linked article.

2. Backward Region Grant Fund

Topic: GS III; Indian Economy

Mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment

Prelims: About the BRGF scheme

Mains: Role of the BRGF initiative in strengthening grassroots level democracy

Context: The effectiveness of the Backward Region Grant Fund implemented by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj for the holistic development of the districts with the flow of financial resources has been discussed in the Lok Sabha.

About the Fund:

- The Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF) was launched in 2006-07 and it is now excluded from central support and is left to the state governments to operate. This was done in accordance with the recommendations of the fourteenth [Finance Commission](#) under which states were given greater autonomy for financing the developmental projects with a net share of 42% in the Union taxes.
- BRGF scheme is implemented in 272 backward districts.
- The fund aims to reverse regional imbalances by providing funds for infrastructure projects.

Significance of the Fund:

- The BRGF fund is a welcome initiative to offer professional support to the local bodies for planning, functioning and improving their efficiency in implementing developmental programmes.
- It follows a top-down approach in planning that involves participation at the grassroots level with the Panchayats and Municipalities at the central stage of planning and implementation.
- This scheme has adopted the national capacity building framework that empowered institutional arrangements like infrastructure and software support along with the capacity building of the elected representatives and other members associated with the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

3. First Agri-tech cohort under South-South Innovation Platform

Topic: *GS II; International Relations*

Regional and global groupings and agreements involving India

Prelims: *About the Partnership*

Mains: *Effectiveness of AgriTech challenge in benefitting the small-scale farmers*

Context: The ambitious and innovative Agritech Challenge cohort has been initiated by the joint collaboration of the NITI Aayog, [Atal Innovation Mission](#) (AIM) and the United Nations Capital Development Fund.

Aim of the Programme:

- The Agritech initiative aims to assist small scale farmers across Asia and Africa and address their challenges due to the pandemic.

- The AIM, NITI Aayog along with UNCDF, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Rabo Foundation formed a partnership that paved the way for a South-South innovation platform. The objective of such a partnership is to enable the cross border exchange of innovations, insights and investments.
- This platform will bring together the emerging agricultural markets of India, Indonesia, Malawi, Malaysia, Kenya, Uganda and Zambia.

About the Programme:

- This is the first platform of the AgriTech challenge cohort and Agri-Fintech innovators that invited the applications to help in the expansion of the innovation ideas to the international market through two tracks namely Main track and AIM track.
- The main track enables the expansion of support solutions to agricultural issues in the chosen international market.
- This AgriTech challenge represents varieties of assistance to farmers like soil analysis, farm management and intelligence, dairy ecosystem, carbon credits, solar-based cold storage, digital marketplace, fintech, livestock insurance and so on.
- The selected participants of the challenge will get the opportunity to expand their innovative solutions internationally through direct industry linkages, target market and sector understanding, investor connections and financial grants.
- So far 130 innovators have applied for the challenge including their solutions to the areas like productivity, climate risk and gaps in the supply chain of small scale farmers. The solutions will be assessed by a global jury involving leaders from industries, banking and ecosystem from Asia and Africa.

Significance:

- The AgriTech Challenge will help improve the financial health of the farmers with aid provided by the UNCDF which would also expand the solutions put forth by the participants of the challenge.
- This will ensure an Asia-Africa engagement to achieve the [SDGs](#) as agriculture acts as the cornerstone of development that requires proper assistance and framework especially in a country like India that is majorly dependent on agriculture.
- The agriculture sector usually suffers due to factors like unpredictable prices, policies, diseases, unusual weather events and climate change. To address such challenges, a collaborative initiative like the AgriTech challenge will invite an innovative ecosystem that engages innovators across various sectors coming together with their solutions and result in a self-reliant and shock responsive agriculture that would benefit the farmers.

4. Livelihood Opportunities for Transgenders

Topic: GS II; Social Justice

Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and the States

Mains: Initiatives of the government for the well being of the Transgenders

Context: The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has formulated the SMILE (Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise) scheme which will include the sub-scheme, Comprehensive Rehabilitation for Welfare of Transgender Persons.

Objectives of the Scheme:

1. Facility of rehabilitation to the transgenders
2. Medical care and interventions
3. Counseling
4. Education
5. Skill development
6. Economic linkages for transgenders

Important Facts:

- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has built 12 pilot shelter homes named 'Garima Greh' for the transgenders and provided financial support to community-based organizations for setting up shelter homes in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Bihar, Chattisgarh, Tamil Nadu and Odisha.
- Skill Development Training has been conducted through PM - DAKSH which is a skill development programme of the ministry.

PM - DAKSH:

- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment initiated an action plan for the socially, educationally and economically backward sections of the society that include SC, ST, OBC, senior citizens, victims of alcoholism and substances abuse, Denotified tribes, Safai karamcharis, waste pickers and transgenders. PM-DAKSH operates as a portal under the ministry.
- It is being implemented from the year 2020-21.
- The training programmes are operated by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and other skill development institutes and councils.
- The scheme is implemented by three key corporations under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment:

- National Scheduled Castes Finances and Development Corporation
 - National Backward Classes Finance & Development Corporation
 - National Safai Karamcharis Finance & Development Corporation
 - It aims to offer in situ training and the trainers will approach the artisans in their work locations.
- Vocational training would be given on pottery, weaving, clay and bamboo, metal work, carpentry, waste segregation, financial and digital literacy. The trainers will have to be a master who is well associated with the vocation.
- The major aim is to enhance the skills of the vulnerable sections which would make them employable and double their income.
- The duration of the training would be 32 to 80 hours which continues over a month catering to the occupational hours of the trainees.
- The training cost would be limited to the extent of common cost norms as applicable from time to time.
- During the training period, the trainees will be paid a stipend of Rs. 2500/- per person per programme.
- There will be other short-term courses on self-employment, Entrepreneurial Development Programmes and global class skills.
- The scheme is largely dependent on the State Skill Development Missions that are supposed to possess the knowledge of the ground level skill aspirations and employment opportunities.

5. MoU with UNWFP

Topic: *GS II; International Relations*

Global Grouping and agreements involving India

Mains: *Significance of the CSP in the improvement of food security*

Context: The Government of India signed an MoU on cooperation for 2019-2023 with the UNWFP in February 2019 which offered a basic agreement on the Country Strategic Plan (CSP) for the betterment of agricultural produce, seed variety and food security of the country and improve the funding and mobilization of resources. This was discussed in the Parliament.

Read more about the [Food Security of India](#) in the linked article.

