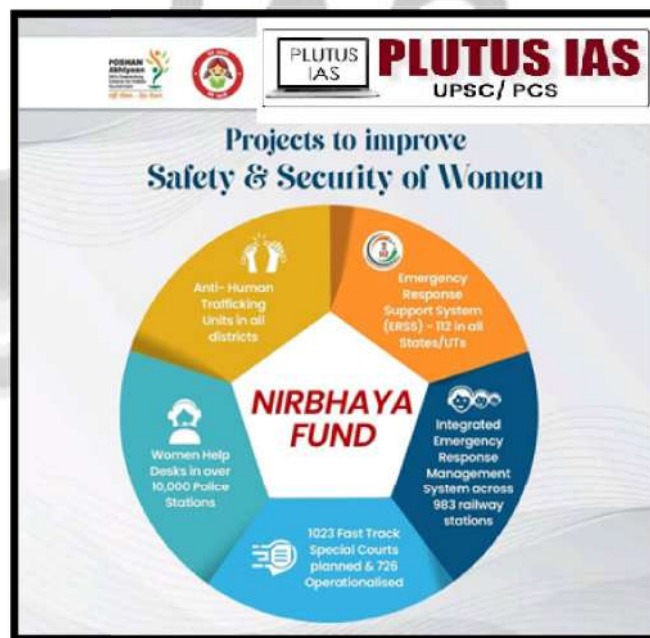**Date –03-April 2025**

WOMEN SAFETY: A CRITICAL CONCERN

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Ensuring women's safety remains a critical priority for the Indian government. The Ministry of Women and Child Development has recently reinforced its commitment to improving women's security through various initiatives. In March , the government highlighted its efforts, including legal reforms, financial initiatives such as the Nirbhaya Fund, and helpline services like Women Helpline 181. New developments such as expanded One Stop Centres (OSCs), the Emergency Response Support System (112), and trauma-informed care under Project Stree Manoraksha by NIMHANS have further strengthened women's safety mechanisms. These initiatives reflect India's multipronged approach to addressing crimes against women and ensuring their dignity, security,and empowerment.

Projects to improve
Safety & Security of Women

PLUTUS IAS
UPSC/ PCS

NIRBHAYA FUND

- Anti- Human Trafficking Units in all districts
- Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) - 112 in all States/UTs
- Women Help Desks in over 10,000 Police Stations
- Integrated Emergency Response Management System across 983 railway stations
- 1023 Fast Track Special Courts planned & 726 Operationalised

WOMEN SAFETY IN INDIA

Women's safety remains a pressing issue in India, despite legal frameworks and policy interventions. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report, crimes against women have shown an increasing trend. In 2021 alone, over 4.3 lakh cases of crimes against women were reported, with rape, domestic violence, and sexual harassment being the most prevalent. Shockingly, rape cases were recorded at

an alarming rate of 88 per day. Furthermore, workplace harassment, human trafficking, and dowry deaths continue to threaten women's security. As of April 2025, the most recent data on crimes against women in India is available up to the year 2022. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), 445,256 cases of crimes against women were registered in 2022, an increase from 428,278 cases in 2021. The NCRB's annual 'Crime in India' report provides detailed statistics on various forms of crimes against women, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, and dowry deaths. However, specific data for 2023 and 2024 have not yet been published.

CONSTITUTIONAL MANDATE FOR WOMEN SAFETY

The Indian Constitution provides several provisions to safeguard women's rights and ensure their safety:

1. Article 14: Guarantees equality before the law.

2. Article 15(3): Empowers the state to make special provisions for women and children.

3. Article 21: Ensures the right to life and personal liberty, interpreted by courts to include the right to dignity and protection from violence.

4. Article 39(a) & 39(d): Mandates equal access to justice and equal pay for equal work.

5. Article 51A(e): Calls for renouncing practices derogatory to women's dignity.

Several landmark Supreme Court judgments have reinforced women's safety:

1. Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan (1997): Laid the foundation for workplace harassment laws, leading to the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013.

2. Laxmi v. Union of India (2006): Led to stricter regulation of acid sales to curb acid attacks.

3. Nirbhaya Case (2012): Catalyzed amendments in criminal laws, leading to the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, which introduced stricter punishments for sexual offenses.

More recently, in We The **Women of India v. Union of India (2023),** the Supreme Court addressed the implementation of the **Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH Act)**. The Court emphasized the need for effective enforcement of the Act and issued directives to ensure its proper implementation.

In another significant case, **Bhawna v. Bhay Ram and Ors. (2023)**, the Supreme Court reiterated that appellate courts cannot impose penalties on appellants for not proceeding with the trial, highlighting the importance of fair trial procedures.

These constitutional provisions and judicial pronouncements collectively aim to create a legal framework that upholds and protects the safety and dignity of women in India

Other Important Initiatives for Women Safety

01 Safe City Project
02 Investigation Tracking System for Sexual Offences (iTSSO)
03 National Database on Sexual Offenders
04 Mission Shakti
05 Cyber Crime Reporting Portal
06 Meri Saheli Initiative
07 Mahila Police Volunteers
08 Special Women Police Cells

GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND MEASURES FOR WOMEN SAFETY

The Indian government has implemented various policies and schemes aimed at ensuring women's safety:

Legislative Measures

1. Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013: Strengthened laws against sexual offenses by increasing punishment and fast-tracking cases.

2. Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005: Provides legal recourse for domestic violence victims, ensuring protection and shelter.

3. Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013: Ensures a safe working environment for women and mandates Internal Complaints Committees in organizations.

4. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015: Redefined the treatment of juvenile offenders in heinous crimes, allowing stricter penalties.

5. The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961: Criminalizes the practice of dowry, with stringent penalties for violations.

6. The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006: Aims to prevent early and forced marriages by imposing legal consequences on offenders.

Safety Initiatives and Programs

1. One Stop Centre Scheme (2015): Offers integrated support to women facing violence, providing medical, legal, and psychological assistance.

2. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (2015): Aims to address gender discrimination and improve female welfare by encouraging education and awareness.

3. Nirbhaya Fund (2013): Allocates resources to implement safety measures such as panic buttons in transport and CCTV surveillance in public spaces.

4. Mahila Police Volunteers (MPV) Scheme: Engages community women to act as a bridge between police and society, enhancing safety.

5. Safe City Projects: Implemented in major cities to improve women's safety through technological interventions such as AI-based monitoring and smart policing.

6. Sakhi Helpline: A dedicated helpline for women in distress, providing immediate assistance, shelter, and counseling services.

7. Cyber Crime Reporting Portal: A platform for reporting online harassment, blackmail, and other cybercrimes against women, ensuring prompt action.

8. Women's Helpline (181): A nationwide toll-free helpline providing emergency support for women in distress, operating 24/7.

9. She-Box Portal: A government initiative that allows women to file workplace harassment complaints online, ensuring anonymity and faster redressal.

Financial and Economic Empowerment

1. Stand-Up India Scheme: Encourages entrepreneurship among women by providing financial assistance and skill development opportunities.

2. Mahila E-Haat: A digital marketing platform for women entrepreneurs to showcase and sell their products, promoting economic independence.

3. Rashtriya Mahila Kosh: A scheme offering micro-financing options to women to enhance their financial independence and reduce vulnerability.

4. Ujjwala Yojana: Provides free LPG connections to empower women and improve their health and safety by reducing indoor pollution and fire hazards.

Capacity Building and Sensitization

1. **Gender Sensitization Programs:** Conducted in schools, colleges, and workplaces to promote gender equality and eliminate biases.

2. **Self-Defense Training Programs:** Organized for women in schools and community centers to empower them against physical attacks and threats.

3. **Police Training on Gender Sensitivity:** Law enforcement officers are regularly trained to handle women's complaints with empathy and efficiency, ensuring justice. By implementing these policies and measures, the government aims to create a safer and more inclusive environment for women in India. However, continuous monitoring, awareness campaigns, and public participation are crucial to ensuring their effective implementation.

Legislative Measures

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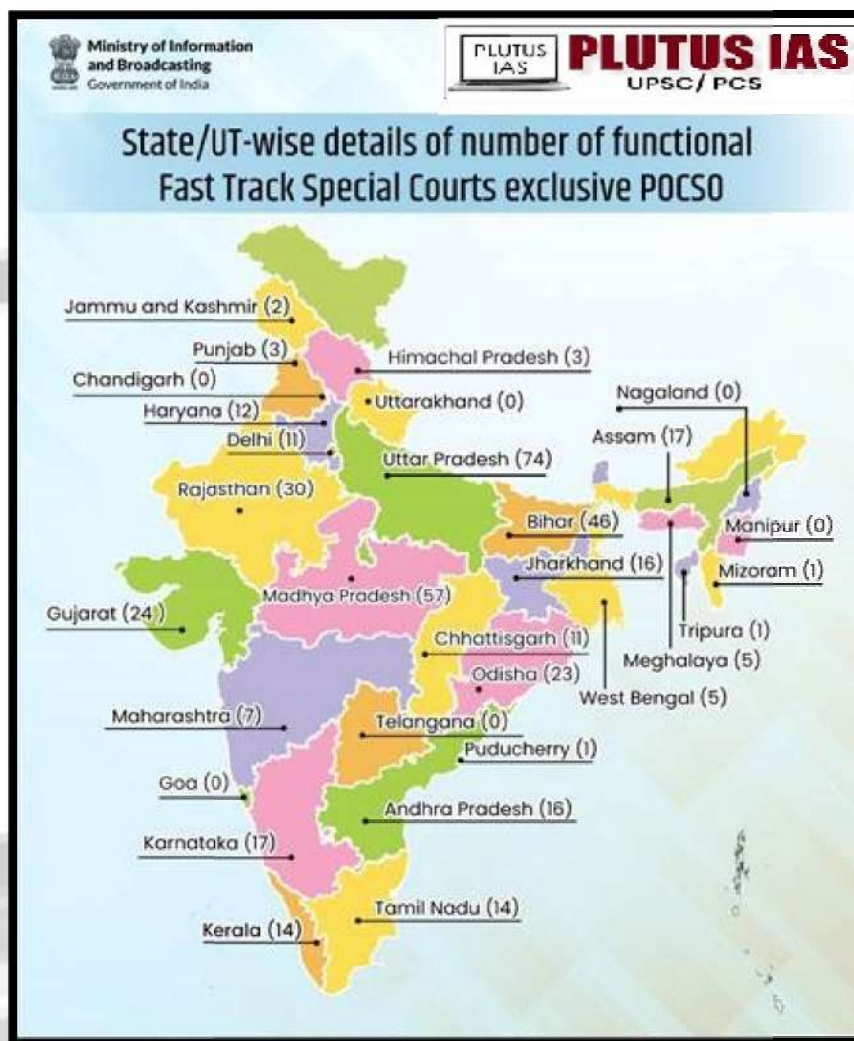
Safety Initiatives and Programs

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5. **Safe City Projects:** Implemented in major cities to improve women's safety through technological interventions.

CHALLENGES RELATED TO WOMEN SAFETY

1. **Underreporting of Crimes:** Fear of stigma and lack of trust in law enforcement prevents victims from reporting crimes, leading to a justice gap. Many cases remain unreported due to family and societal pressures.

2. **Delays in Justice Delivery:** Prolonged trials discourage victims from seeking legal recourse, reducing confidence in the legal system. Fast-track courts are often overburdened, delaying verdicts.

3. **Insufficient Policing:** Inadequate representation of women in police forces (only about 10% of total personnel) affects the sensitivity of investigations and response times. Many police stations lack dedicated women help desks or female officers.

4. **Societal Mindset and Patriarchy:** Deep-rooted gender biases hinder the effectiveness of laws and policies, perpetuating discrimination. Victim-blaming attitudes and honor-based restrictions worsen the situation.

5. **Lack of Proper Implementation:** Many government schemes fail due to poor execution and lack of awareness, reducing their impact. Corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies further hinder the effective utilization of funds.

6. **Cyber Harassment:** Increasing cases of online stalking, revenge porn, and cyberbullying pose a new-age challenge, requiring stronger digital security measures. The anonymity of the internet emboldens perpetrators and makes enforcement difficult.

7. **Workplace Discrimination and Harassment:** Despite legal frameworks, many women still face harassment at workplaces. Fear of retaliation discourages complaints, and internal committees often fail to act promptly.

8. Lack of Safe Public Spaces: Poor urban planning, dimly lit streets, and insufficient public transport security make women vulnerable to street crimes. Many cities lack sufficient women-friendly infrastructure, such as well-monitored bus stops and emergency response systems.

9. Economic Vulnerability: Financial dependence makes women more susceptible to abuse, as they often lack the resources to leave abusive situations. Gender pay gaps and employment biases further restrict their autonomy.

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Government of India

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State/UT-wise details of number of functional Fast Track Special Courts exclusive POCSO

Jammu and Kashmir (2)
Punjab (3)
Chandigarh (0)
Haryana (12)
Delhi (11)
Rajasthan (30)
Gujarat (24)
Maharashtra (7)
Goa (0)
Karnataka (17)
Kerala (14)
Himachal Pradesh (3)
Uttarakhand (0)
Uttar Pradesh (74)
Madhya Pradesh (57)
Chhattisgarh (11)
Odisha (23)
Telangana (0)
Puducherry (1)
Andhra Pradesh (16)
Tamil Nadu (14)
Nagaland (0)
Assam (17)
Bihar (46)
Jharkhand (16)
Manipur (0)
Mizoram (1)
Tripura (1)
Meghalaya (5)
West Bengal (5)

RECOMMENDATIONS TO BOOST WOMEN SAFETY

To ensure a safer environment for women, the following measures can be undertaken:

1. Strengthening Law Enforcement: Increasing the number of women personnel in police forces. Implementing fast-track courts for speedy trials of gender-based crimes. Ensuring proper training of law enforcement personnel on gender sensitivity.

2. Enhancing Public Infrastructure: Installing better lighting and surveillance in public areas.Ensuring safe and reliable public transport with female security personnel. Establishing help desks in police stations dedicated to women's issues.

3. Education and Awareness: Conducting gender sensitization programs in schools and colleges. Encouraging bystander intervention training for the public to help prevent crimes. Running awareness campaigns on legal rights and support mechanisms.

4. Cybersecurity and Digital Safety: Strengthening cyber laws and enforcement against online harassment. Providing digital literacy training to women for self-protection.

5. Community Engagement and Support Systems: Strengthening neighborhood watch programs and self-defense training for women. Encouraging the role of NGOs and women's groups in supporting victims.

CONCLUSION

Women's safety is an issue that requires a multi-pronged approach encompassing legal, social, economic, and technological interventions. While India has made progress in enacting laws and policies, challenges in implementation and societal attitudes continue to hinder women's security. A collaborative effort involving the government, law enforcement, civil society, and individuals is essential to create a society where women feel safe, empowered, and equal. Only through continued vigilance and commitment can we ensure a future where women's safety is not just a concern but a guaranteed right.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q. Which landmark Supreme Court judgment laid the foundation for workplace harassment laws in India?
a) Laxmi v. Union of India
b) Nirbhaya Case
c) Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan
d) Shah Bano Case
ANSWER: C

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q. What are the major challenges hindering the implementation of women's safety laws and policies? Provide real-life examples or case studies to support your answer (250 words, 15marks)

FROM FARM TO RETAIL: MAKE IN INDIA'S PUSH FOR FOOD PROCESSING EXCELLENCE

WHY IN THE NEWS?

India's food processing industry has undergone rapid transformation, driven by its vast agricultural base, rising domestic demand, and supportive government policies. India is poised to emerge as a global leader in the food processing sector, with an impressive growth trajectory. The agriculture sector forms the backbone of India's food processing industry, India being the largest producer of fruits, vegetables, millet, tea, and food grains, as well as milk and livestock globally. The food processing sector is a priority under the Make in India initiative, with the Ministry of Food Processing Industries implementing schemes to attract investment and develop infrastructure. Mega Food Parks with essential utilities and common processing facilities are being established in agriculturally rich areas, offering a plug-and-play model for entrepreneurs. Investment in these parks is recognized under the Harmonized List of Infrastructure Sub-sectors (HLIS), enabling easier access to infrastructure lending.
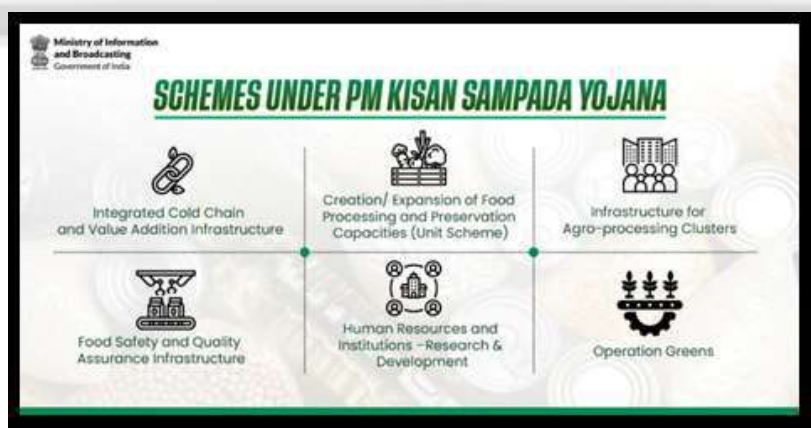
Food Processing Industry: An overview

Gross Value Added (GVA) has increased from 1.61 lakh crore in 2015-16 to 1.92 lakh crore in 2022-23

(as per First Revised Estimates of Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

Average Annual Growth Rate (AAGR) of around 5.35% since 8 years until 2022-23

Employment increased from 17.73 lakh in 2014-15 to 20.68 lakh in 2021-22

As per latest Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) report

GOVT SCHEME FOR PROMOTIONS OF THE FOOD INDUSTRY

1. PM Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY)

The umbrella Central sector scheme, SAMPADA Scheme for Agro-marine processing and Development of Agro-processing Clusters was approved in May 2017, with a total allocation of Rs.6000 crore for the implementation period. The continuation of the Central Sector Scheme Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana (Scheme for Agro-Marine Processing and Development of Agro-Processing Clusters) with an allocation of Rs. 4600 Crore has been further approved until March 31, 2026. As of February 28, 2025, MoFPI has sanctioned 1608 projects, including 41 Mega Food Parks, 394 Cold Chain projects, 75 Agro-processing Clusters projects, 536 Food Processing Units, 61 Creation of Backward & Forward Linkages and 44 Operation Greens projects under corresponding component schemes of PMKSY across the country. A total sum of ₹ 6198.76 crore has been disbursed as grants in aid/ subsidy since the inception of component schemes of PMKSY.
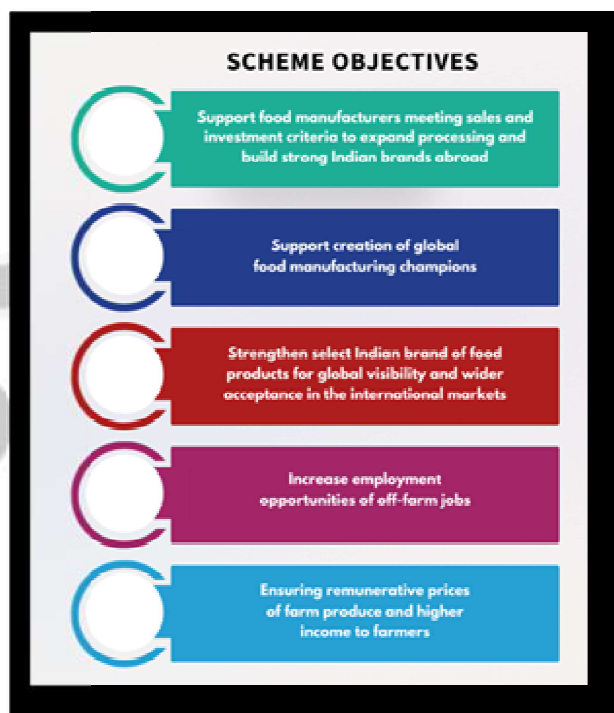
The PMKSY scheme aims at the following:

1. A comprehensive package for modern infrastructure and efficient supply chain management, from farm gate to retail outlet
2. Aims to boost the food processing sector in India
3. Helps farmers get better returns and supports a doubling of farmers' income
4. Creates huge employment opportunities, especially in rural areas
5. Reduces wastage of agricultural produce
6. Increases processing levels of food products
7. Enhances exports of processed foods

SCHEMES UNDER PM KISAN SAMPADA YOJANA

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
Government of India

Integrated Cold Chain and Value Addition Infrastructure

Creation/ Expansion of Food Processing and Preservation Capacities (Unit Scheme)

Infrastructure for Agro-processing Clusters

Food Safety and Quality Assurance Infrastructure

Human Resources and Institutions –Research & Development

Operation Greens

- -

2. PLISFPI- Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Food Processing Industry

The Central Sector Scheme, Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Food Processing Industry (PLISFPI) was approved by the Union Cabinet in **March 2021**, with an outlay of **₹10,900 Crore**. The Scheme is being implemented over a six-year period from 2021-22 to 2026-27.

SCHEME OBJECTIVES

- Support food manufacturers meeting sales and investment criteria to expand processing and build strong Indian brands abroad
- Support creation of global food manufacturing champions
- Strengthen select Indian brand of food products for global visibility and wider acceptance in the international markets
- Increase employment opportunities of off-farm jobs
- Ensuring remunerative prices of farm produce and higher income to farmers

The components of the Scheme are –

1. Incentivising manufacturing of four major food product segments viz. Ready to Cook/ Ready to Eat (RTC/RTE) foods, including Millet based products, Processed Fruits & Vegetables, Marine Products and Mozzarella Cheese (Category I)

2. Production of Innovative / Organic products of SMEs (Category II)

3. The third component related to support for branding and marketing abroad (Category III) to incentivize the emergence of strong Indian brands for in-store Branding, shelf space renting and marketing.

4. From the savings under PLISFPI, a component for the Production Linked Incentives Scheme for Millet Based Products (PLISMBP) was also carved out from the scheme to encourage the use of Millets in RTC/RTE products and incentivise them under the PLI Scheme to promote its production, value addition and sale.
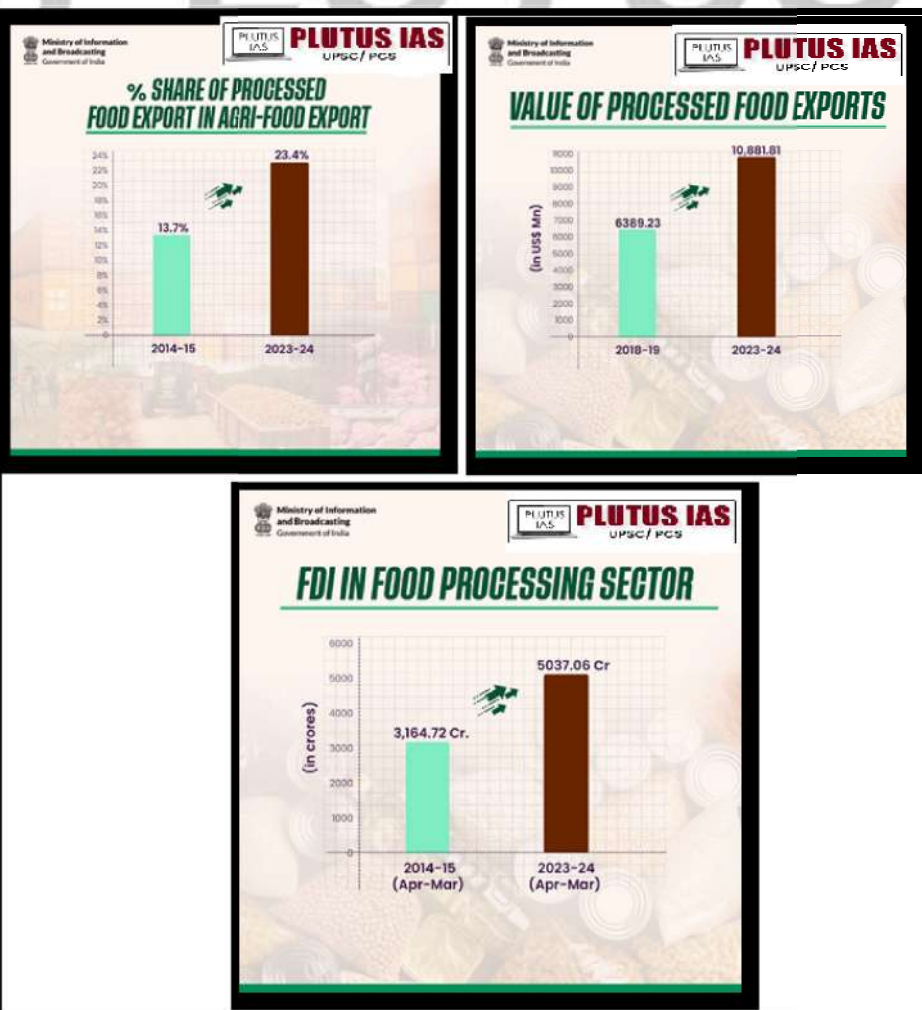
3. PMFME- Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme

Launched in June 2020, the scheme aims to encourage 'Vocal for Local' in the sector in a total outlay of Rs. 10,000 crore in the period of FY 2020-2025 for this scheme. The scheme has been extended up to FY 2025-26. This is the first ever Government scheme for Micro Food Processing enterprises and is targeted to benefit 2 lakh enterprises through credit-linked subsidy and adopting the approach of One District One Product.

Salient features of the Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme

- Common Infrastructure
- Credit Linked Subsidy
- Seed Capital for SHGs (Self-Help Groups)
- Capacity Building
- One District One Product (ODOP)
- Marketing & Branding

FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRY IN INDIA

% SHARE OF PROCESSED FOOD EXPORT IN AGRI-FOOD EXPORT

13.7% (2014-15)
23.4% (2023-24)

VALUE OF PROCESSED FOOD EXPORTS
(in US$ Mn)

6389.23 (2018-19)
10,881.81 (2023-24)

FDI IN FOOD PROCESSING SECTOR
(in crores)

3,164.72 Cr. (2014-15 Apr-Mar)
5037.06 Cr (2023-24 Apr-Mar)

Aspect	Details
Economic Importance	Significant contributor to **GDP, employment, and exports**.
Growth Projections	Expected **CAGR of 8.8%** from **2023 to 2032**.
Sectoral Contribution	**8.8% of manufacturing GDP** and **8.39% of agriculture GDP**.
Market Size (2023)	Valued at **US$ 336.4 billion**.
Government Initiatives	**MOFPI** oversees policies, investments, and regulations.
Expansion	Growth in **Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities** due to rising incomes.
Exports (FY 2023-24)	Agricultural exports reached **USD 48.15 billion**.
AAGR (2015-2022)	Average Annual Growth Rate of **7.26%**.
Global Ranking	**6th largest** food processing industry in the world.
Contribution to GVA	**9% of Gross Value Added (GVA)** in the agriculture sector.
Employment Generation	Provides jobs to **over 11 million people**.
Foreign Direct Investment	**USD 11.79 billion** received (April 2000 – March 2023).
Food Parks & Infrastructure	**23 Mega Food Parks** were established for modern processing facilities.
E-commerce & Retail Growth	Online food delivery and retail chains boosting processed food demand.

CHALLENGES TO INDIA FARM TO RETAIL FOOD

1. Post-Harvest Losses: Around 30-40% of perishable food is wasted due to inadequate storage, poor handling, and transportation issues.

2. Cold Storage & Infrastructure Gaps: Limited cold chain facilities lead to spoilage of fresh produce, especially fruits, vegetables, and dairy products.

3. Middlemen & Price Exploitation: Farmers rely on intermediaries, leading to low farm-gate prices while consumers pay higher prices.

4. Logistics & Transportation Issues: Poor road networks, lack of refrigerated trucks, and high fuel costs increase food wastage and delivery delays.

5. Regulatory Hurdles: Complex licensing, food safety laws, and taxation policies create barriers for small businesses and retailers.

6. Inconsistent Quality & Standards: Lack of standardized grading and packaging affects food quality, making exports and retail operations challenging.

7. Limited Food Processing Facilities: Low investment in food processing reduces value addition and leads to higher food wastage.

8. E-commerce & Retail Challenges: Issues like last-mile delivery, perishability, and consumer trust make online food retail difficult to scale.

WAY TO STRENGTHING FARM TO RETAIL CHAIN

1. Improve Cold Storage & Warehousing: Invest in cold chains, refrigerated trucks, and modern warehouses to reduce post-harvest losses.

2. Enhance Logistics & Transportation: Develop better road networks, rail connectivity, and efficient supply chains to ensure faster delivery of perishable goods.

3. Promote Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs): Encourage FPOs and cooperatives to help farmers sell directly to retailers, reducing dependency on middlemen.

4. Increase Food Processing Capacity: Set up more food processing units to add value to raw produce and extend shelf life.

5. Adopt Digital & Smart Technologies: Use AI, blockchain, and IoT for real-time tracking, quality control, and better supply chain management.

6. Encourage Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) & E-commerce Models: Strengthen farm-to-fork platforms to help farmers sell directly to consumers and retailers.

7. Streamline Government Policies & Regulations: Simplify food safety laws, licensing, and tax structures to encourage private investment and innovation.

8. Expand Financial Support & Credit Access: Provide subsidies, low-interest loans, and insurance to farmers and small retailers for better infrastructure development.

CONCLUSION

India's food processing industry is undergoing rapid transformation, driven by strong agricultural production, increasing consumer demand, and favourable government policies. With initiatives like PMKSY, PLISFPI, and PMFME, the government is focusing on enhancing infrastructure, boosting investments, and promoting value addition in the sector. Despite challenges such as supply chain inefficiencies, post-harvest losses, and regulatory hurdles, the industry holds immense potential for growth. Strengthening cold storage, logistics, and digital technologies, along with empowering Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) and promoting direct-to-consumer models, will be crucial in making the farm-to-retail supply chain more efficient.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q.With reference to India's food processing industry, consider the following statements:

1. India is the largest producer of fruits, vegetables, and milk globally.

2. The Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Food Processing Industry (PLISFPI) was launched in 2020 to support food processing units.

3. The Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) is responsible for implementing the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY).

How many of the above-given statements are correct?

A. Only one

B. Only two

C. All three

D. None

Answer: B

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q. Analyze the key challenges facing India's farm-to-retail food supply chain and suggest measures to strengthen it. (250 words, 15marks)