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Q17

From being net food importer in 1960s, India has emerged as a net food exporter to the world. Provide reasons.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · GS I · 15 marks · World's Physical Geography

Salient features of world's physical geography.

Core demand of the question

- From being net food importer in 1960s, India has emerged as a net food exporter to the world. Provide reasons
- Keep the focus on why the trade balance in food reversed

Revision summary

The mid-1960s droughts forced concessional wheat imports.

HYV wheat and rice, irrigation, and fertiliser created a grain surplus in north-west India and then beyond.

CACP, MSP, and FCI turned surplus into stocks that could be eaten or sold abroad.

Milk, horticulture, marine products, and meat widened the export basket after 1991.

Net exporter status is real for many years, with nutrition and groundwater as unfinished costs.

Flow diagram

1960s drought PL-480 -> Green Revolution HYV

Green Revolution HYV -> Irrigation fertiliser

Irrigation fertiliser -> MSP FCI stocks

MSP FCI stocks -> Net export rice sugar marine

Operation Flood horticulture -> Net export rice sugar marine

Conclusion

- Shift surplus toward pulses, oilseeds, and climate-resilient millets so export and nutrition are not only a rice-wheat story.
- Use the [National Food Security Act, 2013](#), stocks for the poor first, then export the residual.

India moved from 1960s grain ships to net food export because HYV seed, water, MSP-FCI stocks, and later trade opened a surplus. The way forward is to keep that surplus without exhausting aquifers or ignoring protein and oilseed gaps.

Facts & figures

PL-480

Concessional US food aid that India relied on in the 1960s import years.

FCI, 1965

Food Corporation of India, created to procure and stock grain for national distribution.

Green Revolution HYV

Semi-dwarf wheat and new rice varieties that raised yields with water and fertiliser.

Operation Flood, 1970

National dairy programme that built cooperative milk supply from Anand's model.

National Food Security Act, 2013

Legal PDS entitlement that still uses the grain surplus the revolution created.

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