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Draft NFSA Amendment Ties Antyodaya Ration to Family Size

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Draft NFSA Amendment Ties Antyodaya Ration to Family Size

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WHY IN NEWS

Around June 26, 2026, the Department of Food and Public Distribution proposed a draft amendment to the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, that would change the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) entitlement (<https://ujyari.com/vocab/entitlement/>) from a flat 35 kg per household to 7 kg per person, capped at 35 kg per household.

The Centre has invited public comments on the draft till **July 13, 2026**. The change reframes a key welfare entitlement from a per-household basis to a per-capita basis, reopening a long-standing debate on targeting efficiency versus protection for small poor households.

WHAT IS CHANGING?

The **Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY)** covers the “poorest of the poor”, around **2.5 crore families**. At present, every AAY household receives a flat **35 kg of foodgrains per month**, irrespective of family size.

CATEGORY	CURRENT ENTITLEMENT	PROPOSED ENTITLEMENT
AAY household (2 members)	35 kg (flat)	14 kg (7 kg per person)
AAY household (4 members)	35 kg (flat)	28 kg (7 kg per person)
AAY household (5+ members)	35 kg (flat)	35 kg (capped)

Under the proposal, smaller AAY families would receive less, while families of five or more would continue to get the full 35 kg because of the per-household cap. The government’s stated rationale is to rationalise entitlements and improve targeting so that grain is distributed in proportion to actual household need.

UNDERSTANDING THE NFSA FRAMEWORK

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The **National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013** is the legal backbone of India's food security architecture and converts food access into a legal right.

FEATURE	DETAIL
Coverage	Up to 75% of the rural and 50% of the urban population
Antyodaya (AAY)	35 kg per household per month (current); the poorest of the poor
Priority Households (PHH)	5 kg per person per month
Issue prices	Rice, wheat and coarse grains at highly subsidised central issue prices
Delivery	Through the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) and fair-price shops

The system is implemented through **One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC)**, which allows *portability* (<https://ujyari.com/vocab/portability/>) of ration entitlements across the country. Free foodgrains to NFSA beneficiaries continue under the **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana** (<https://ujyari.com/schemes/pmgkay/>) (**PMGKAY**).

ANALYSIS AND WAY FORWARD

The proposal pits two welfare-design principles against each other. **Per-capita allocation** is more equitable (<https://ujyari.com/vocab/equitable/>) across households of different sizes and avoids over-provisioning to very small families. **Per-household allocation**, however, protects small but extremely poor households, such as elderly couples and single-parent families, who may need a buffer beyond mere headcount.

Food-rights advocates have raised three concerns: that smaller AAY families, often the most vulnerable, would see their grain cut; that the 35 kg cap still disadvantages large families relative to true per-capita need; and that the reform addresses only cereals, leaving out pulses, edible oils and other nutrition support.

The way forward lies in calibrating the change with safeguards: a floor entitlement for very small AAY households, accurate and updated beneficiary databases to prevent exclusion errors, and a parallel move toward nutrition security (pulses, millets, fortified foods) rather than calorie security alone. Wide public consultation till the July 13 deadline is essential before any *statutory* (<https://ujyari.com/vocab/statutory/>) amendment.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 2 (Governance and Social Justice): Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections; issues relating to poverty and hunger; food security as a right.

GS Paper 3 (Economy): Public Distribution System, food subsidy and buffer stocks; issues of food security.

Prelims pointers:

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- The **NFSA, 2013** covers up to **75% rural** and **50% urban** population.
- **AAY**: current entitlement **35 kg per household**; proposed **7 kg per person, capped at 35 kg**.
- **PHH (Priority Households)**: **5 kg per person** per month.
- AAY covers roughly **2.5 crore families**, the “poorest of the poor”.
- Implemented via **One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC)**; free grains under **PMGKAY**.
- Draft by the **Department of Food and Public Distribution**; comments open till **July 13, 2026**.

Mains question: “A shift from per-household to per-capita ration entitlements raises questions of equity, targeting and protection of the most vulnerable. Critically examine the proposed amendment to the National Food Security Act, 2013 (<https://ujyari.com/legislation/food-security-act-2013/>).” (15 marks, 250 words)

FACTS CORNER

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Proposal: Change AAY entitlement from a flat 35 kg per household to 7 kg per person, capped at 35 kg.

Mover: The Department of Food and Public Distribution, amending the NFSA, 2013.

Comments open till: July 13, 2026.

Impact: A 2-member AAY family gets 14 kg; families of 5 or more keep 35 kg.

AAY: The “poorest of the poor” category, around 2.5 crore families.

NFSA coverage: Up to 75% rural and 50% urban population; PHH get 5 kg per person.

Delivery: Through ONORC; free grains continue under PMGKAY.

Sources: *Department of Food and Public Distribution* (<https://dfpd.gov.in/>), *Press Information Bureau* (<https://pi.b.gov.in/>), *The Tribune* (<https://www.tribuneindia.com/>)

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