



## JUNK FOODS - GS II AND III MAINS

Q. Discuss the rising health concerns with respect to consumption of junk food and also underscore the importance of fostering a grassroots movement backed by effective policy measures. (15 marks, 250 words)

**News:** *Toss out the junk food, bring back the healthy food plate*

### What's in the news?

- A recent article discusses the concerns associated with the consumption of junk food and underscores the importance of fostering a grassroots movement backed by effective policy measures.

### Concerns Related to Junk (Fast) Foods in India:

#### 1. Categorised as HFSS Foods:

- Junk foods are categorized as high in fats, salts, and sugars (HFSS), leading to adverse health effects like weakened immunity, hypertension, blood sugar spikes, weight gain, and increased cancer risk.
- Common examples of HFSS foods in India include cookies, cakes, chips, namkeen, instant noodles, sugary drinks, frozen meals, canned fruits, Indian sweets, and bakery products.

#### 2. Significant Rise in Lifestyle Diseases:

- Unhealthy diets contribute significantly to the surge in lifestyle diseases in India, with metabolic disorders affecting a significant portion of the population, including diabetes, hypertension, and abdominal obesity.

#### 3. Effects of Aggressive Advertising:

- Aggressive advertising of "tasty" and "affordable" junk foods, especially targeting younger consumers, influences dietary habits significantly, leading to increased consumption of packaged foods and sweetened beverages.

#### 4. High Glycemic Index (GI) and Glycemic Load:

- High GI diets, prevalent in India, contribute to health risks such as type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. Common high GI foods include sugar, white rice, maida, potato, sweetened drinks, jaggery, and cookies.

#### 5. Process of 'Malting' in Making Processed Foods:

- The process of malting, used in making processed foods, contributes to sugar content, leading to adverse health effects like fatty liver and insulin resistance.

#### 6. Concerns Due to 'Processed Baby Foods':



- Processed baby foods containing added sugar, like Cerelac, can lead to health issues like obesity and diabetes in infants due to excess sugar consumption.

## 7. Lack of Precise Definition for HFSS Foods:

- While regulations exist to limit HFSS food consumption, there's a lack of a precise definition or identification process, making effective regulation challenging.

## 8. FSSAI Using Rating Stars and Not Warning Labels:

- The FSSAI's regulation on HFSS foods lacks clarity regarding whether companies need to declare fat, sugar, and salt content on product labels, opting for health rating stars over warning labels.

## 9. Escaping Star Rating Systems:

- While the INR system rates packaged foods based on nutritional profiles, there are concerns that producers may manipulate ratings by adding healthy components while still selling unhealthy foods.

## Ways to Address the Concerns Arising out HFSS Foods:

### 1. Supreme Court's Ruling:

- The Supreme Court's emphasis on protecting public health provides a constitutional foundation for addressing concerns related to HFSS foods.

### 2. Ensuring Effective Implementation of FSSAI Regulations:

- Regulations restricting the sale of HFSS foods in school premises and enforcing regulations on misleading advertisements are crucial for effective implementation.

### 3. Relooking FSSAI Regulation:

- Regulations permitting sugar in infant foods need review to align with health objectives and minimize health risks.

### 4. Need for Comprehensive Legislation:

- Comprehensive regulations defining healthy and unhealthy foods and implementing front-of-pack labeling are essential to regulate HFSS food consumption effectively.

### 5. Preventing Unhindered Marketing of Unhealthy Products:

- Strong action against illegal advertisements and promotions of unhealthy products, particularly targeting children, is necessary.

### 6. Promoting Local and Seasonal Fruits and Vegetables:



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- Campaigns promoting local and seasonal foods and multimedia messaging on the health impacts of junk foods can encourage healthier dietary choices.

## 7. Four Strategies as Key to Translating Policy Intention Into Meaningful Change:

- Protecting children from harmful food influences, implementing front-of-pack labeling, subsidizing healthy foods, and promoting behavioral change campaigns are vital strategies for meaningful change.

Prioritizing healthy and diverse diets through policy interventions and public awareness campaigns is crucial for combating the adverse effects of HFSS foods and promoting better health outcomes.

