

# PRAYAS4IAS

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**SPECIAL ISSUE JANUARY WEEK 3**



## **Special Issue**

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### **Contents**

The kind of an agri-food policy that India need .....	2
Youth protests in Tunisia .....	2







## **The kind of an agri-food policy that India need**

(Source: [Indian Express](#) )

**Context:** According to Ashok Gulati, the Infosys Chair Professor for Agriculture at ICRIER and member of the Supreme Court-appointed expert panel to discuss the three contentious farm laws with protesting farmers, India needs to frame an optimal agri-food policy to address both short-run and long-term challenges.

### **How does one design an optimal agri-food policy?**

- Such a policy must have at least four touchstones.
  - One, it should be able to produce enough food, feed and fibre for its large population. In this regard, the best step is to invest in R&D for agriculture, and its extension from laboratories to farms and irrigation facilities. It is believed that developing countries should invest at least one per cent of their agri-GDP in agri-R&D and extension. India invests about half.
  - Two, it should do so in a manner that not only protects the environment — soil, water, air, and biodiversity — but achieves higher production with global competitiveness. This can be done by switching from the highly subsidised input price policy (power, water, fertilisers) and MSP/FRP policy for paddy, wheat and sugarcane, to more income support policies linked to saving water, soil and air quality.
  - Third, it should enable seamless movement of food from farm to fork, keeping marketing costs low, save on food losses in supply chains and provide safe and fresh food to consumers. This segment has been crying for reforms for decades, especially with respect to bringing about efficiency in agri-marketing and lowering transaction costs.
  - And, finally, consumers should get safe and nutritious food at affordable prices. The public distribution of food, through PDS, that relies on rice and wheat, and that too at more than 90 per cent subsidy over costs of procurement, stocking and distribution, is not helping much, .

## **Youth protests in Tunisia**

(Source: [Indian Express](#) )

**Context:** A growing groundswell of youth unrest, tapping into a well of economic frustration, is sweeping Tunisia and worrying its leadership all the way to the top. It is, after all, the country that triggered the 2011 Arab Spring revolutions.

### **What are they protesting?**

- The precise causes are unclear, but the dire economic outlook of the stagnant North African country is at the heart of the dissatisfaction.
- Carrying placards such as “Employment is a right, not a favor,” the protesters are angry over the broken promises of democratically elected President Kaïs Saïed and his government, which hasn’t been able to turn around an economy on the verge of bankruptcy.
- Ten years after the history-making revolution, whose slogan was “employment, freedom and dignity,” Tunisians feel they have anything but that. A third of Tunisia’s youth are unemployed and a fifth of the country lives under the poverty line, according to the National Institute of Statistics.



- Young people don't remember the repression under Ben Ali, and want job opportunities. They're communicating this common frustration via social media, like in neighboring Algeria, where a youth-led protest movement forced its longtime leader out of power in 2019.

#### **Why has the pandemic made things worse?**

- The country's disparate lockdown restrictions and a nightly curfew since October to contain the spread of COVID-19 has exacerbated tensions.
- The pandemic has especially hurt Tunisia's key tourism sector, once powered by its beautiful historic cities and white sandy beaches.
- Flights have been grounded and potential tourists face lockdowns at home and a general reluctance to travel when contagious virus variants are racing through nations and continents.

#### **How are authorities responding?**

- Amnesty International has implored Tunisian authorities to use restraint in calming tensions and uphold the rights of the many hundreds who have been detained, but authorities have been increasingly reliant on the army for help and have used tear gas against protesters.
- The Interior Ministry has justified the robust police response as necessary "to protect the physical integrity of citizens and public and private goods."

#### **Are Islamist forces behind the protests?**

- Saied, the conservative president, tried to speak directly to the protesters.
- He warned the protesters against extremist Islamist forces "acting in the shadows" who he claimed are trying to ferment chaos and destabilize the democratically elected government.
- It's unclear if this is simply a way to shift blame away from his government for the unrest, or if Islamist forces are really behind the movement. Saied himself is an outsider who won with support from moderate Islamists.
- The leader of Tunisia's influential Islamist-inspired Ennahda party, Rached Ghannouchi, has condemned the recent "acts of looting and vandalism."