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Food ministry to convert 212K PDS shops into common service centres

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FOR ECONOMIC VIABILITY of fair price shops (FPS) through generation of additional revenues, the food ministry is aiming to convert around 212,000 of these outlets into common service centres (CSCs) which are expected to provide a host of services:

Currently, 38,000 public distribution system (PDS) outlets have been turned into CSCs following a memorandum of understanding between the department of food and public distribution and the ministry of electronics and information

technology in September 2021.

Sources told *FE* that 212,000 FPS have been shortlisted for onboarding as CSC soon. Most of the revamped PDS outlets are in Gujarat, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu.

These PDS outlets, along with supplying food grains to 800 million beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), provide a host of services such as registrations for Aadhaar and PAN cards, booking of train tickets, checking of bank balance and accessing information relating to eligibility of various schemes.

Food ministry officials told *FE* that many of these outlets revamped as CSC are also providing services such as selling FMCG products and booking offices for auto manufacturers.

Currently, there are 5.34 lakh FPS in the country, distributing on an average 60-70 million tonne of subsidised food-grain annually under NFSA to more than 800 million benefi-

ciaries. Official sources said there is scope of generating additional income from FPS as a large number of people visit these outlets for getting their monthly entitlement of grains.

FPS owners currently get a commission of ₹143/quintal for food grain supplied under NFSA in hilly and N-E states while they receive ₹70/quintal in rest of the states.