



## Agricultural Distress and Farmers Protest: A study of case study of Western India

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**Abstract** - This research paper is a case study on the agriculture distress and farmers' protest in western India. The problems of Indian farmers have been rising ever since the start of agriculture activities in India. There have been many reports of farmers' suicide every year in India, and daily it takes the toll of 10 farmers. So, this time the scenario is different as the farmers of India take up a fight against the government of India and protests the change of the farm bills. The amendment of the three farm bills infuriated the farmers of the whole of India, and major protests came from the western part of India especially, the farmers of Punjab and Haryana. 50 major protests were reported across 20 states in 9 months between January and September 2020. So, this case study will analyze and give authentic details, facts, and a conclusion of the farmers' and agricultural distress in India.

**Keywords:** farmers, farm bills, agriculture

### I. INTRODUCTION

This research paper will give abundant information and knowledge of the ongoing farmers' protests in India. With the help of secondary resources, data are collected through the internet like journal articles, videos, and news. This very research is aimed at bringing a conclusion of why the farmers of India are protesting against the three farm bills, so-called-farmer bills by the Indian farmers, and by the opposition party. After the Indian Parliament passed the new farm laws in September 2020, a nationwide protest broke out mainly from the farmers' union of Punjab, Haryana, and western Uttar Pradesh with the slogan "Delhi Chalo" meaning let us head to Delhi, which is the capital of India. Farmers of India are struggling in the cold winter nights and the scorching heat of summer on the outskirts of Delhi, protesting and insisting the government revoke the new farm bills which they feel, is against the farmers and favors the giant corporates businessmen. This research paper will answer why the farmers are infuriated by the three new farm bills and their reasons to protest against the government of India to repeal the three farm bills. Even after eleven rounds of talks between Indian farmers' union leaders and the government of India over the issue of the three farm bills, both sides have not yet come to an agreement and the farmers' protest is still going on outside the outskirts of Delhi, 2021, as the Indian farmers fight for their rights to revoke the farm bills. The very purpose of this research paper is to find out why the Indian farmers are against the three farm bills, why the farmers are infuriated by these three farm bills, and why the Indian government has introduced such types of bills, and for what reason. The aim or the objective of this research paper is mainly to answer these questions and shower knowledge to the people of the world and make them aware of why the Indian farmers are protesting against the Indian government for the three new farm bills. So, detailed information will be provided about the protest and a solution will be provided at the end to ease the situation of the protest by providing logical reasoning with the help of secondary sources.

### II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The journal articles that are circulated on the internet about the farmers' protest give the idea or the information about what the farmers' protest is all about, and why are the farmers against the farm bills. Most of the articles talk about the three farm laws and why the farm bills are against the Indian farmers

but have not talked in-depth about why the government of India should repeal the three farm bills. So, this research paper will provide every data that is related to the protest, and portray how the Indian government is being biased to the Indian farmers and exploiting them. This research paper will answer why the government should take back their three farm bills and should stop exploiting their innocent farmers. With the help of secondary data that has been collected through the internet, data analysis and interpretations will be made.

### III. DISCUSS

#### Background history of Indian agriculture system

Followed by the Independence of India in 1947, Indian farmers used to sell their products directly to the consumers but due to the zamindari system, many Indian farmers were in debt because the farmers needed money for the inputs and they had to borrow money, and so the money lenders charged high-interest rates for the loans taken by the farmers. The money lenders bought the outputs of the farmers at a very cheap price when the farmers could not pay back their debts. Again, for the next production farmers had to borrow money from the landowners. So, this chain of cycle prevailed at that time and farmers became the victim of that process not being able to pay the debts and this is how Indian farmers were exploited at the beginning itself. To save the farmers from exploitation, the government in that time intervened in the matter and introduced the APMC Act (Agricultural Produce Market Committee). So, this act stated that farmers should not sell their products directly to the consumer nor anyone should buy the products from the farmers directly. All the sales should be done only through MANDI or the market which was established through the APMC Act. These so-called "Mandis", were run and controlled by the state government. Each state's government had its APMC and division of mandis' were done according to their area and each area had its specific mandi. The trader had to acquire the license of that specific mandi to purchase things from the Mandi. Similarly, the farmers of that area were only allowed to sell their products on that specific mandi. So, it was a mandatory system for both traders and farmers to sell and purchase things from the specific mandi. The products of farmers are sold in auction in two ways that are the MSP (minimum support price) which is decided by the government of India and the other is the price discovery which is decided by the demand and supply of that product in the market. The minimum support price is not there for all the crops and it includes only 22 crops for which the government of India decides the minimum selling price. MSP means that the auction price cannot go down from that minimum price and MSP will be the starting price of the product where the auction will start. In the price discovery system, the price of the other crops apart from 22 crops is determined by the force of supply and demand in the market. So as a whole, the process was that the farmers had to sell their products at the APMC mandi, which secured the farmers with a minimum support price of their product decided by their state government, but the drawbacks of this APMC mandi system was that the farmers had to sell their produce in a very low price which was fixed and there were so many middlemen in between the farmers and consumers which inflates the price in the market. For example, a potato per kilogram is sold at 3 rupees at the mandi by the farmers, whereas the consumer buys it at rupees 35 or 40 in the market. The second flaw from the APMC mandi was, most of the middlemen were those people who had an affiliation with the state government. However, this APMC mandi system secured the farmers with a fixed minimum price at which their products were sold at, so the farmers were at least satisfied with this system though it had loopholes. Soon some states abolished this system like in Bihar and the farmers of those states suffered loss and farmers' suicides became a fashion. Now the government of India plans to get rid of this APMC system from all the states by passing three new farm bills, and thus massive farmers' protest is going on in India especially at Delhi, which is the capital of India.

#### The three new farm bills

1. Farmers produce trade and commerce (promotion and facilitation) ordinance, 2020  
Under this act, it states that the farmers can sell their products anywhere they wish to because earlier they were compelled to sell their produce only at the approved mandi. Now the farmers have the freedom to sell their product outside the mandi like anywhere inside the state, outside the state, or even online without any taxes under this act.

2. Farmers (empowerment and protection agreement on price assurance and farm services) ordinance, 2020

Under these acts, the farmers can have a contract with any companies, wholesalers, retailers, and exporter to sell their products for a set period of time. The companies can set the price, standard, and qualities for the product by having a written contract with the farmers.

3. The Essential commodities (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020

Under this act, it states that it will remove commodities like cereals, pulses, oilseeds, onions, and potatoes from the list of essential commodities and do away with the imposition of stock holding limits on such items except under extraordinary circumstances like war.

The major farmers' union leading the protest

- All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee
- Bharatiya Kisan Union
- Kisan Swaraj Sangathan Farmers Organization
- All India Kisan Subha
- Jai Kisan Andolan

As of 21st March 2021, according to Haryana police, there are around 40,000 protesters camped at Singh and Tikri at Delhi border; 18,000-19,000 protesters at Singhu border, and 20,000- 22,000 at Tikri. Farmers of Punjab and Harayana state leading the major protest at the Delhi border that is Singhu, Tikri, and Ghazipur border. The protest is mainly led by the farmer unions of Punjab and Harayana as these two states receive the maximum benefits from the APMC with minimum support price. (MSP).



Figure number 1. This figure shows the major protest from the states of India

## The reasons for the agitation of the farmers against the bill

The farmers of India are infuriated and not satisfied with the three new farm bills that have been passed by the parliament of India in September 2020. As the new farm bills did not benefit the farmers in anyways, farmers claim this law to be anti-farmer laws because these farm bills were putting the farmers at risk as it did not mention anything about the assurance of the minimum support price (MSP), which is the very reason the farmers are protesting for and against the bill, and that is why the farmers want the government of India to repeal these three farm bills.

- The first bill that is the farmers produce trade and commerce (promotion and facilitation) ordinance which allows the farmers to sell their produce outside their agricultural produce market committee's mandi, but the farmers are against it because 85 percent of Indian farmers own the land below two hectares which makes the underprivileged farmers vulnerable to exploitation from the big corporates and companies as these giant companies have the bargaining power and abundant resources. In addition to it, two more reasons are the opening of private APMCs which is tax-free, which will eventually lead to the closure of Major protest Legendstate APMCs as it survives on the taxes imposed on each transaction from the middlemen and farmers. And the last reason is that the poor farmers will face difficulties selling their products because they need to travel to the designated area to sell their products and even the prices of diesel have risen, which makes input costs much expensive. Under this farm bill, the government aims to eliminate middlemen and taxes levied upon the farmers. This sounds great but the question here is how well and smooth this system will run and benefit the farmers, and this is what makes the farmers doubt the bill.

- The second bill is the farmer's (empowerment and protection agreement on price assurance and farm services) ordinance, which allows the farmers to have a contract with any traders or companies with pre-agreed prices for the produce. However, the farmers object to this bill because there is no mention of the minimum support price (MSP) and involvement of the government which is a big threat to the farmers as the government has not assured the farmers with a guaranteed price for their produce, and the price will be decided and fixed by the Giant buyers.

- The third bill is the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Ordinance which allows economic traders to have unlimited food stock provisions without the fear of being prosecuted for hoarding. The provision of unlimited food stock offered to the traders and companies paves a path to price fluctuation and increases their bargaining power on the farmers. Thus, there are high chances of farmers landing up selling their produce at a very low price.

## Farmers' union criticism on the three farm bills

1) The first criticism by the farmers on these three farm bills is that the bills are more advantageous to the companies rather than to the farmers. The bills favor more towards the companies, and empowering the farmers seems vague by these bills.

2) Minimum support price (MSP) is not mentioned in any of the farm bills for the 23 crops, which earlier the farmers had been receiving.

3) The removal of the agricultural produce market committee (APMC) puts the farmers' business flow at risk. The farmers had been benefiting from the APMC because of the minimum support price though it had loopholes that is, there were so many middlemen in between during the transaction at the APMC which leads to farmers getting a low profit and farmers even had to pay the mandi fees. The farmers question the government that there is no need for the complete removal of APMC because it is the few drawbacks of the APMC that needs to be fixed.

4) The removal of middlemen, which farmers considered middlemen as a bridge between the government and them.

5) The investments should be made from the government side in the agriculture sector, not from the private sector.

## The exploitation of farmers by the government of India

India is an agrarian country with around 70% of its people depending upon agriculture directly or indirectly. Agriculture had a 15.4% share in the economy of India in the year 2017. Around 41.49% of total labor is associated with agriculture in the year 2020. Farmer suicides account for 11.2% of all suicides in India. Activists and scholars have offered several conflicting reasons for farmer suicides, such



as anti-farmer laws, high debt burdens, poor government policies, corruption in subsidies, crop failure, mental health, personal issues, and family problems. The farmers are the victim of suicides and farmers are continuing to take their lives because of crop failure and loan debt burden. Now, who do you think is to be blamed for all this; it is those people running the country and why are they not looking over these issues of farmers' suicide when farmers of India are doing their best for the country and trying to survive on the very low income that they receive. The average income of Indian farmers is estimated on an average to be rupees 8000, which hardly cover up their cost of production and the big question is how are the farmers even surviving on this very little income to meet their daily expenditure.

SUICIDES IN FARM SECTOR					
SUICIDES BY	2016	2017	2018	2019	% CHANGE OVER 2016
Farmers	6,270	5,955	5,763	5,957	-5%
Labourers	5,109	4,700	4,586	4,324	-15%
<b>Total suicides</b>	<b>11,379</b>	<b>10,655</b>	<b>10,349</b>	<b>10,281</b>	<b>-10%</b>

SUICIDES IN STATES IN 2019	FARMERS		LABOURERS		TOTAL	
Maharashtra	2,680		1,247		3,927	
Karnataka	1,331		661		1,992	
Andhra Pradesh	628		401		1,029	
Madhya Pradesh	142		399		541	
Telangana	491		8		499	
Punjab	239		63		302	

*\* Detailed state-wise data for 2017 and 2018 has not been made available by NCRB*

Figure number 2. Number of farmers' suicide data in India

Figure number 2, shows the farmers' suicide data recorded between the years 2016 till 2019 by the national crime record bureau (NCRB) of India, which portrays that only a slight decrease in the farmers' suicides rate over the years and still the rate of farmers' suicides is high though it had dropped down a little bit in the recent year

Figure – 2A.2

### Percentage Share of Major Causes of Suicides among Farmers/Cultivators during 2015

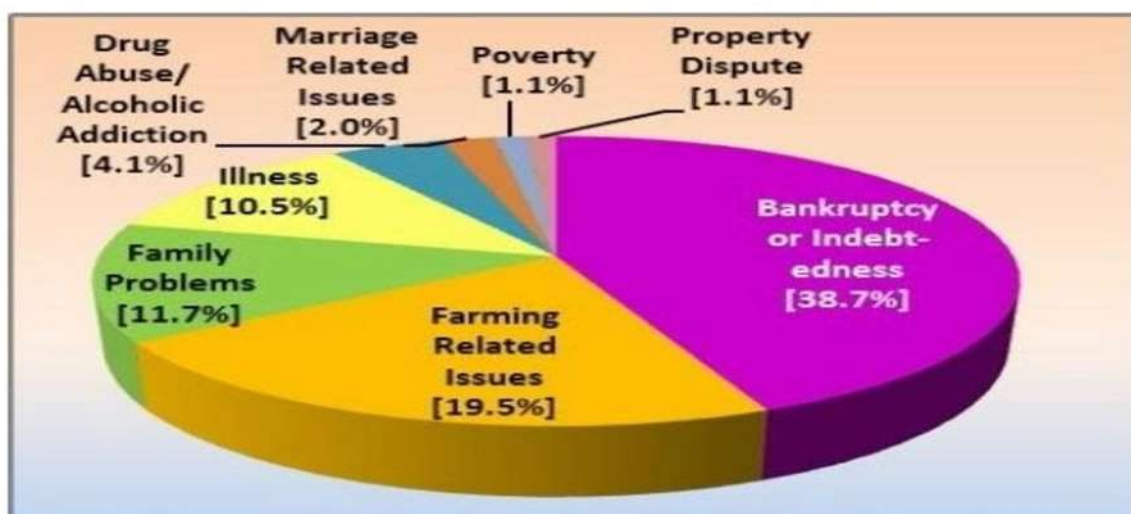


Figure 2A.2. Cause of Farmers' suicides

The figure shows that the major cause of farmers' suicides is related to farm-related issues and Indebtedness. 57.12 percent of suicides are related to these two causes and the rest of the percentage is related to family problems, illness, alcoholic addiction or drug abuse, marriage-related issues, and poverty. So more than 50 percent of farmers' suicides are related to farm issues and bankruptcy, and the government of India is to be blamed for this percentage of farmer's deaths because they could have saved these innocent lives by changing and making amendments to the brutal farm laws which burdened the farmers. The income or the profits of the farmers are too low that they can hardly meet the production cost and daily expenditure. The data below will show the income of the farmers and input costs and this will give a clearer picture of the farmers' situation.

### More Labor, Less Reward

Farmers seek 50% above production cost, get disappointed



Figure number 3. Cost of production and minimum support price

The data from figure number 3 shows that the profits of the farmers are very less or too low. The agricultural produce and market committees (APMCs) which are monitored by the state government which assures the minimum support price to the farmers is an unfair system and being injustice to the farmers by setting up a low price on the produce. For example, the APMCs buy a kilogram of potatoes at 3 rupees and when it is sold to the consumers, the price goes up to 35 to 40 rupees per kg. Thus, you can see the discrimination of prices on the farmers' produce, and the government till now has not done anything about it and instead of improving and covering up the loopholes in the already existing APMCs system, they think of a new system by passing new three farm bills. When the government is already failing on the old system, why would they want to even switch onto a new system which is unpredictable.

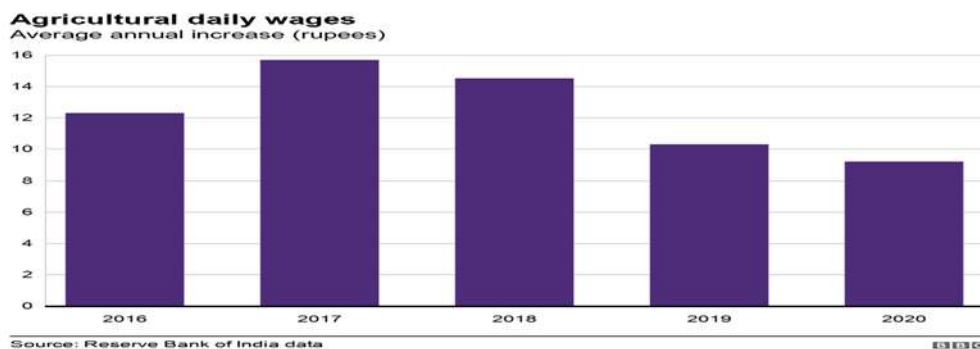


Figure number 4. Monthly wages of the Indian farmers

Figure number 4 shows the average daily wages of the farmers. In the year 2017, the income of the farmers has peaked up to 15,000 rupees but soon in the year 2020, it has dropped down to rupees 9,000. Just question yourself that whether the government is being fair enough to the farmers who are working in the mud to feed the nation. The government instead of bringing changes and development in the already existing farm systems, now are thinking of switching onto a new strategy that could fail just like the old system.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The farmers protesting on the three farm bills passed by the parliament of India is a right decision made by the farmers because when the government is already failing on the old farm system, how can they even try thinking of a new system and this is the very reason why the farmers doubt on the new bills and are against it. The farmers' union insists the government repeal the three farm bills, but the Indian government rejects the proposal of the farmers, and now there is a huge ongoing protest by the farmers' union outside the outskirts of Delhi, which is the capital of India. A country should have a sense of oneness but the situation of India is getting different as the government and the people are against each other and fighting for their rights. Neither the government nor the farmers are planning on backing down. The farmers' union is not going to shut down the protest until and unless the government repeals the three farm laws, and the fight between them is still going on which started in September 2020, lasting to date. Casualties from both sides have been recorded, and the government using its armed forces against the common people is too brutal and unacceptable in a democratic country. The Indian farmers' have said that it is going to be a do-or-die protest until and unless the government repeals the three farm bills, and on the other side the government has made the bills stay and ignoring the voices of the people. As a democratic system country, the voices of the people should be heard and respected, but the present government of India has failed to do so by hurting their innocent citizens using force.

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