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Farmers' protests in India and agricultural reforms



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Summary

Laws introduced in June 2020, passed in September.

The Indian Central Government introduced three agricultural reform bills in June 2020. These Bills, known collectively as the farm laws, were passed by the Indian Parliament at the end of September.

Significant changes in the laws included:

- relaxing restrictions on the purchase and sale of farm produce that take place through state government-regulated marketplaces called mandis;
- loosening restrictions on the stocking and movement of food items that are classed as “essential commodities”, allowing stockpiling; and
- enabling farmers to enter into contract farming agreements with buyers directly, thus bypassing mandis and providing local dispute settlement mechanisms.

Opposition figures and protesting farmers complained there was little consultation over the legislation.

Mass protests

Indian farmers started mass-protests against the laws at the end of September 2020. The biggest activities centred on the capital, New Delhi. Many of the farmers at these protests are from the states of Punjab and Haryana, being major agricultural producers.

Direct action by farmers in India is not new, but nothing of this scale or duration has been seen for decades.

Laws repealed, November 2021

On 19 November 2021, after nearly a year of mass protests against the laws, the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, made a surprise announcement that his Government would repeal the farm laws.

Structural problems and farmers' suicides

There are deep-seated structural problems with the Indian agricultural sector. Landholdings are small, and Indian farms are much less productive than other countries. Most economists agree the sector requires reform, and greater efficiency.

Farmers face challenging circumstances. A significant number of farmers commit suicide each year, but this is not a new phenomenon. The issues that are causing farmer' distress go much wider than the ones these reforms are

trying to tackle, for example access to credit, technology and education, as well as severe weather.

Minimum Support Price

Protestors are also calling for the Minimum Support Price (MSP) to be preserved and given legal guarantees. MSP is a government scheme which selects certain crops as deserving support, and ensures government agencies pay a minimum price whenever they procure the particular crop. The MSP was not part of the three Acts. The Government have said they will preserve it, but it doesn't currently have a legislative base.

Supreme Court suspends the reforms

The Indian Supreme Court suspended the three Acts in January 2021, establishing a panel to review the legislation. This did not satisfy the protestors, who did not believe the panel would listen to their concerns. The panel's work was completed at the end of March 2021, but the recommendations were never published.

Violence at protests

The police and Government response to the protests have been criticised, including the blocking of the protestor's entry into Delhi, and the use of water cannon and tear gas.

On 26 January 2021, during the annual parade celebrating India's Republic Day, some protesting farmers using tractors broke through police barricades to storm Delhi's Red Fort complex. Clashes broke out with police, leading to the death of one protestor and more than 300 policemen were injured.

Leaders of the protests condemned the violence, [blaming](#) the chaos on "rogue elements" among an otherwise peaceful march. They said they would not call off the protests.

The Government have defended themselves, saying the protestors only represent a small group of farmers, that protestors have used violence against the police, and that the police have used restraint.

Criticism of curbs on mobile internet and social media

In late January 2021 the police restricted mobile internet access at protests sites, and in early February the Government asked Twitter to remove posts using certain hashtags relating to the protests. Human rights organisations criticised these moves and claimed these were part of wider intolerance by the Modi Government of those criticising its policies. The Government said users were posting content inciting violence.

International dimension

The Indian Government have expressed their frustration over how the protests have been portrayed in the international media and comments made on social media by those outside the country. In a [statement](#) it said

Before rushing to comment on such matters, we would urge that the facts be ascertained, and a proper understanding of the issues at hand be undertaken. The temptation of sensationalist social media hashtags and comments, especially when resorted to by celebrities and others, is neither accurate nor responsible.

UK Government response and debate in Parliament

The UK Government have [expressed](#) their support for “the right to peaceful protest, freedom of speech, and internet freedom vital in any democracy”, but that they also recognise that “governments have the power to enforce law and order if a protest crosses the line into illegality”. They have said that the protests have been discussed in meetings between UK ministers and their Indian counterparts, but that they also respect that agricultural reforms are “an internal matter for India”.

After a [Parliamentary e-petition](#) on the protests attracted over 100,000 signatures, the House of Commons Petitions Committee scheduled [a debate on the issue on 8 March 2021](#).

The Indian Government was unhappy with the contributions of some MPs during the debate, and, on 9 March, India's foreign ministry [summoned the British High Commissioner in Delhi](#), to express that sentiment.

Protests now ended?

Despite the repeal of the laws many protesting farmers remained camped outside the capital. They said they would not end their protests until the Government conceded to several demands, including passing a law guaranteeing the MSP mechanism, and compensation is given to the family of farmers who died during the protests. On 9 December 2021, the protestors said they would now return home after receiving assurances from the Government on these issues, but farmers' leaders said they will hold a review meeting on 15 January 2022, and [warned the Government](#) that if doesn't fulfil its promises they may “resume the protests”.

1 Farmers' difficulties, structural problems and Minimum Support Price

1.1 Laws passed in September 2020, Government announces repeal November 2021

The Indian Government introduced three agricultural reform laws in June 2020. These laws were passed by the Indian Parliament at the end of September. The political opposition and farmers opposed to the reforms claimed that these laws were rushed through with little consultation. Significant changes in the laws include:

- relaxing restrictions on the purchase and sale of farm produce that take place through state government-regulated marketplaces called mandis;
- loosening restrictions on the stocking and movement of food items that are classed as “essential commodities”, allowing stockpiling; and
- enabling farmers to enter into contract farming agreements with buyers directly, thus bypassing mandis and providing local dispute settlement mechanisms.

The laws were then suspended by the Indian Supreme Court after a ruling in January 2021.

The reforms sparked mass protests in late September 2021 that continued until November 2021, when the Government announced it was going to repeal the laws. The protests were the largest in decades. At first farmers' leaders said they would continue protesting, citing other demands such minimum support prices for crops and compensation for the families of farmers who died during the protests. However, on 9 December the protestors said they would start to return home after the Government gave them assurances that they would address these concerns.¹

¹ [‘Farm laws: India farmers end protest after government accepts demands’](#), BBC News, 9 December 2021.

1.2

Agriculture in the Indian economy & structural problems

Agriculture in the economy

Agriculture is central to the Indian economy. In 2019, around 43 per cent of workers in India [were employed](#) in the agricultural sector. In the same year agriculture [accounted for](#) around 16 per cent of India's GDP.

Many economists [agree that](#) the sector requires reform, and the issue has been much discussed by politicians from all parties in India, but this is the first time in a few decades that such major reforms were made into law.

India's agricultural sector faces many challenges.

It is dominated by smaller producers – 68 per cent of farmers [own landholdings](#) of less than one hectare. Its [agricultural labour productivity](#) is less than a third of that of China, and only about one per cent of that of the United States.

Lack of knowledge and skills among farmers, underinvestment in agriculture and fragmented land holdings (which makes it difficult to gain economies of scale) are some of the key reasons for India's low effective yield, according to Aman Hans, from the Indian Government-run public policy think tank NITI Aayog.²

The IMF explains insufficient agricultural infrastructure such as irrigation systems and cold storage lead to production waste and losses to farmers.³ Hans also points to inefficient supply chains of perishable goods, resulting in inflated prices which ends up in the pockets of multiple layers of middlemen rather than the farmer.⁴

In a policy paper advocating market reforms to the agricultural sector, the IMF argues the three main policy interventions pursued by the Government – input subsidies, minimum support prices (MSPs) and the Public Distribution System - have created significant distortions.⁵

² World Bank Blogs, '[PPPs and agriculture: driving India beyond the Green Revolution](#)', Aman Hans, 12 July 2018

³ IMF, '[India: Selected Issues](#)', IMF Country Report No. 18/255, August 2018, pp 39-44.

⁴ World Bank Blogs, '[PPPs and agriculture: driving India beyond the Green Revolution](#)', Aman Hans, 12 July 2018.

⁵ IMF, '[India: Selected Issues](#)', IMF Country Report No. 18/255, August 2018, pp 39-44.

Modi Government promise to double farmers' incomes

In 2016 the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who first took office in 2014, promised to double farmers' income by 2022.⁶ Mr Modi set up a committee in April 2016 to come up with a strategy to deliver this policy. The Committee delivered its [final report](#) in September 2018.

The report recommended [structural reforms](#), including “an overhaul of the Union agriculture ministry, setting up a three-tier planning and review mechanism through district, state and national level committees and an annual ease of doing agribusiness survey”.⁷

The committee also suggested the “adoption of a liberalized land leasing policy to recognize tenant farmers, contract farming, freeing up of agricultural markets and strengthening decentralized procurement of crops by states”.⁸ In February 2021, an Agriculture ministry official involved in the Committee's work, [stated that](#) the Covid-19 pandemic may impact the Government's work to meet the target.⁹

1.3

Difficulties for farmers

Historic problems

Farmers are a powerful political force in India, and there have been other examples of mass protests by farmers in recent Indian history. However, action on the scale of the current protests has not been seen in recent decades, and hasn't lasted as long. See Box 1 for comparisons.

Issues that have led to farmers protesting in the past include crop prices, the quality of irrigation systems and requests for loan waivers/debt relief.¹⁰ Farmers have marched, and taken to direct action including sit ins and dumping truckloads of vegetables onto highways to disrupt traffic.¹¹

⁶ [‘Budget 2016: Doubling farm income easier said than done, say experts’](#), Hindustan Times, 2 March 2016.

⁷ [Panel sets out an action plan to make agriculture profitable](#), Mint, 16 January 2018

⁸ [Panel sets out an action plan to make agriculture profitable](#), Mint, 16 January 2018.

⁹ [‘Pandemic may impact goal to ‘double farm income’ by 2022: Official’](#), The Hindu, 14 February 2021.

¹⁰ [Indian lawmakers pass farm bills amid uproar in Parliament](#), AP, 20 September 2020.

¹¹ Ibid.

Box 1: Examples of protests by farmers in previous decades

Between 2017 and 2018 there was a sustained period of protests by different farmers groups across the country, including:

- In May & June 2017, protests were held for several weeks in the central states of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra by farmers seeking debt relief. During one protest five farmers were shot dead by police in the city of Mandsaur in Madhya Pradesh.¹²
- In March 2018, over 35,000 farmers, labourers and indigenous people completed a six-day long 200 km march to Mumbai. The Maharashtra state government conceded to many of the protestors demands.¹³
- In November 2018, tens of thousands of farmers marched on Delhi, demanding debt waivers and higher crop prices ahead of the 2019 elections.¹⁴

In May 2011, thousands of farmers protested in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, after the forced acquisition of farming land to build a motorway, both a police officer and farmers were killed in clashes.¹⁵

In 1991, farmers in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh raided warehouses, looted trucks carrying fertilizers and demonstrated in front of government offices, in response to Indian government's proposal to cutback subsidies on fertilizers.¹⁶

Distress and suicides

More than half of India's farmers are reported to be in debt.¹⁷ Suicides in the farming sector are also frequently cited as a major issue. The most recent statistics from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) [state that in 2019](#) a total of 10,281 persons involved in farming sector (consisting of 5,957 farmers/cultivators and 4,324 agricultural labourers) committed suicide, accounting for 7.4 per cent of total suicides victims (139,123) in the country.

Many factors are believed to contribute to farmer suicides, including poor crop yields, financial devastation or debt, and a lack of community support.¹⁸

¹² [‘Protesting India farmers were killed in police firing’](#), BBC News, 9 June 2017

¹³ [‘Maharashtra farmers call off protest: Fadnavis bows to pressure: Highlights’](#), Business Standard, 12 March 2018

¹⁴ [‘Angry India farmers march to parliament to highlight farm crisis’](#), Al Jazeera, 30 November 2018

¹⁵ [‘India: Uttar Pradesh farmers protest spreads’](#), BBC News, 9 May 2011

¹⁶ [‘India: Powerful Farmers Protest Fertilizer Price Hike’](#), IPS-Inter Press Service, 2 August 1991.

¹⁷ [Indian lawmakers pass farm bills amid uproar in Parliament](#), AP, 20 September 2020.

¹⁸ [Indian lawmakers pass farm bills amid uproar in Parliament](#), AP, 20 September 2020.

Suicides and distress in the farming community are not a new problem.

In 2004, the Manmohan Singh Government set up a [National Commission on Farmers](#) that was tasked with finding solutions to the problems faced by the agricultural sector, including farmers' suicides. A summary of the reports' key findings were what factors lay behind farmer's distress:

Agrarian distress has led farmers to commit suicide in recent years. The major causes of the agrarian crisis are: unfinished agenda in land reform, quantity and quality of water, technology fatigue, access, adequacy and timeliness of institutional credit, and opportunities for assured and remunerative marketing. Adverse meteorological factors add to these problems.

Farmers need to have assured access and control over basic resources, which include land, water, bioresources, credit and insurance, technology and knowledge management, and markets.¹⁹

These findings suggest that even if the Government's reforms had been successful at tackling the market-access and institutional issues they were meant to address, other significant problems would have remained.

1.4

Minimum Support Price

One of the fears protesting farmers expressed was that the Government would remove the "Minimum Support Price" (MSP), and one of the protestors demands was the MSP be given legal guarantees.

The MSP is a minimum price for any crop that the government considers as remunerative for farmers and hence deserving of "support". It is also the price that government agencies pay whenever they procure the particular crop. The MSP applies to 23 crops at present.²⁰

The three reform Acts did not cover the MSP, and the Central Government have repeatedly stated they have no plans to change the policy. Mr Modi, on 20 September 2020, [tweeted](#) that the "system of MSP will remain" and "government procurement will continue".

However, as explained in Box 2, lacking a legal base, the MSP is in theory easier for the Government to make changes to without consultation.

¹⁹ PRS Legislative Research, '[Swaminathan Report: National Commission on Farmers](#)', accessed 17 May 2021.

²⁰ '[Explained: What is minimum support price \(MSP\), and how is it fixed?](#)', Indian Express, 25 September 2020

Box 2: Minimum Support Price: In detail

The Central Government currently fixes MSPs for 23 farm commodities — 7 cereals (paddy, wheat, maize, bajra, jowar, ragi and barley), 5 pulses (chana, arhar/tur, urad, moong and masur), 7 oilseeds (rapeseed-mustard, groundnut, soyabean, sunflower, sesamum, safflower and nigerseed) and 4 commercial crops (cotton, sugarcane, copra and raw jute).

The MSP is meant to “to incentivize the cultivators to adopt modern technology, and raise productivity and overall grain production in line with the emerging demand patterns in the country”.²¹

The Agricultural Prices Commission, now the Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP), was set up in 1965 to recommend to the Central Government what crops the MSP should apply to and at what price. However, it is the Government who has the final decision on how to set prices after consultation with the CACP and state governments.

This process is not set out in law, nor is the CACP a statutory body set up through an Act of Parliament. The Government is not compelled, therefore, to procure crops at the MSP. The Government cannot force private individuals or companies to pay the MSP either.²²

There are two mechanisms the Government could use to make the MSP legally binding. Firstly, ban private buyers from paying below MSP prices. Secondly it could mandate that the Government buys sufficient quantities of the crops to ensure prices don't drop below the floor price.²³

The Indian Express argues that giving the MSP legal guarantees would be “hugely challenging, fiscally and otherwise”. The paper also says “economists increasingly are in favour of guaranteeing minimum “incomes” rather than “prices” to farmers”.²⁴

²¹ Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices website, ‘[About us](#)’, accessed 17 May 2020.

²² [Explained: What is minimum support price \(MSP\), and how is it fixed?](#), Indian Express, 25 September 2020

²³ [Explained: The cost of guaranteed minimum support price \(MSP\)](#), Indian Express, 30 January 2021.

²⁴ Ibid.

2 Protests and initial Government response

The Indian Central Government first announced its plans for reforms to the agricultural sector and the [proposed legislation in June 2020](#). The Bills were introduced and [passed quickly through Parliament](#), becoming law by the end of September. Opposition parties claimed there was little consultation from the Government on the planned changes and asked for the legislation to be scrutinised by a select committee. However, the proposal did not have enough support in parliament.²⁵

2.1 Protests begin

Mass protests begin in November 2020

Mass protests against the reforms started at the end of November 2020, with the biggest protests centred on the capital New Delhi. Delhi is adjacent to the state of Haryana, whose farmer's organisations, along with those from the state of Punjab, have been among the most vocal in their criticism of the reforms.

These are two of the major agricultural producing states and are also [said to be](#) among the biggest beneficiaries of the current system of agricultural subsidies and price controls.²⁶

Police from Haryana tried to prevent protestors from entering the city by erecting barriers at the border. Police were also reported to have used tear gas and water cannon on protestors trying to enter Delhi.²⁷

On 27 November the police allowed protestors into the city escorting farmers to a protest site.²⁸ However, this was only a temporary change of approach, and by the beginning of December thousands of protestors remained massed on the outskirts of the capital, their entry blocked by the police.²⁹

²⁵ [‘Mic broken, papers thrown: Amid major ruckus, two farm bills passed in Rajya Sabha’](#), *Indian Express*, 20 September 2021.

²⁶ [‘India’s government is undermining its own agricultural reforms’](#), *The Economist*, 16 December 2020.

²⁷ [‘Delhi police back off after scuffle with farmers, allow peaceful protest’](#), Reuters, 27 November 2020.

²⁸ [‘India farmers allowed to protest in Delhi after clashes’](#), BBC News, 27 November 2020.

²⁹ [‘Indian farmers mass outside New Delhi to protest at Modi’s agricultural reforms’](#), *Financial Times*, 30 November 2020.

Early in December a nation-wide strike was called in support of the farmers, leading to severe road and rail traffic disruptions.³⁰

Protests continue into 2021, turn more violent

The protests continued into the new year, and at times escalated into violence.

On 26 January 2021, during the annual parade celebrating India's Republic Day, some protesting farmers using tractors broke through police barricades to storm Delhi's Red Fort complex. [Clashes broke out](#) with police, leading to the death of one protestor and more than 300 policemen were injured.³¹

Leaders of the protests condemned the violence, blaming the chaos on "rogue elements" among an otherwise peaceful march.³² They said they would not call off the protests.

On 30 January, the BBC [reported that](#) the Government had tried to cut off internet access to the protestors, and that some of them were staging a hunger strike.

Protests continue among surge in Covid cases

Cases of Covid-19 in India [began to surge](#) in April 2021.

In mid-April, Agriculture & Farmers Welfare Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, requested protesting farmer union leaders call off their demonstrations, to prevent a major outbreak of the disease at the three main protest sites near Delhi.³³

Protest leaders responded they had followed guidelines and had no plans to abandon their protests.

Rakesh Tikait, a prominent leader of one of the largest farmers' unions, said the protest leaders had drawn up plans to stay put "until at least November and December, or even beyond that if the government doesn't listen to us by then".³⁴

Another prominent farmers' leader from Punjab, Ramandeep Singh Mann, accused the Government of hypocrisy, stating that: "the ruling party

³⁰ ['Farmers' strike over agricultural reforms paralyses Indian transport'](#), Financial Times, 8 December 2020.

³¹ ['Red Fort violence: Delhi police detain 200 after farmer protests'](#), BBC News, 27 January 2021.

³² ['Farm laws: Are India's new reforms a 'death warrant' for farmers?'](#), BBC News, 16 February 2020.

³³ ['Indian farmers vow to carry on months-long protest despite concerns over coronavirus'](#), Reuters, 15 April 2021.

³⁴ Ibid.

marshalled large crowds at its political rallies during recent state assembly elections, and it should practise what it preaches."³⁵

2.2 Curbs on social media and internet access

Wireless internet access was blocked around some protest sites at the end of January 2021. The Indian Government also asked social media platforms to block some content relating to the protests in early February. According to the human rights NGO Amnesty International, hundreds of Indian twitter accounts were suspended after the government said users were posting content inciting violence due to their use of the hashtag #FarmersProtests. Twitter reversed its decision by the evening.³⁶

In response the Indian government served a notice on Twitter to comply with an order to remove content and accounts related to hashtags linked to the farmers' protest.³⁷

Twitter released [a statement](#) on 10 February, confirming that they had been "served with several separate blocking orders" by India's Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act.³⁸

Amnesty also claimed that journalists' access to the protest sites were being hindered by the police.³⁹

Human rights organisations response

In early February Human Rights Watch (HRW) [expressed concern](#) over the arrest of eight journalists at the end of January, who were covering the protests, and called for the authorities to drop the charges. Meenakshi Ganguly, South Asia director at HRW, went on to say:

The Indian authorities' response to protests has focused on discrediting peaceful protesters, harassing critics of the government, and prosecuting those reporting on the events.

And that "the government instead should conduct a transparent and impartial investigation into the January 26 violence in Delhi."

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ '[India: Government must stop crushing farmers' protests and demonizing dissenters](#)', Amnesty International, 9 February 2021.

³⁷ '[Govt puts Twitter on notice for unblocking 250 accounts, threatens prosecution](#)', Hindustan Times, 3 February 2021

³⁸ Twitter, '[Updates on our response to blocking orders from the Indian Government](#)', 10 February 2021.

³⁹ '[India: Government must stop crushing farmers' protests and demonizing dissenters](#)', Amnesty International, 9 February 2021.

HRW also condemned the shutting down of mobile internet services at protest sites, saying “officials should not use broad, indiscriminate shutdowns to curtail the flow of information or to harm people’s ability to freely assemble and express political views”.

In a [wider critique](#) of the Bharatiya Janata Party’s (BJP) Government response to political activism, HRW’s South Asia Director, Meenakshi Ganguly, said “the government of India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi is presiding over a dangerous regression in free speech rights in pursuit of its Hindu nationalist agenda”. On the farmers’ protests specifically, Ms Ganguly put forward further charges against the Government:

Now farmers, many of them Sikh, who have been peacefully protesting since November, are facing criticism for opposing controversial new farm laws. Authorities have made baseless claims against activists of incitement. Journalists and senior politicians are facing baseless criminal cases for reporting claims from a dead protester’s family members that he had died from gunshot injuries, presumably by the police.

Amnesty International echoed these concerns on the Government’s approach to human rights. Rajat Khosla, Senior Director of Research, Advocacy and Policy, described what he called “an alarming escalation in the Indian authorities’ targeting of anyone who dares to criticize or protest the government’s repressive laws and policies”. Mr Khosla warned that “the crushing of dissent leaves little space for people to peacefully exercise their human rights including the rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly in the country.”

The UN’s Human Rights Office (OCHR) [tweeted](#) a call for both sides to exercise restraint, and for the rights to peaceful protest to be respected:

We call on the authorities and protesters to exercise maximum restraint in ongoing farmers protests. The rights to peaceful assembly and expression should be protected both offline and online. It is crucial to find equitable solutions with due respect to human rights for all.

Indian Government response to criticism

On 3 February 2021, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs [put out a statement](#) on “on recent comments by foreign individuals and entities on the farmers’ protests”.⁴⁰

The statement said the legislation was passed by the Indian Parliament “after a full debate and discussion”, and that emphasised that “these protests must be seen in the context of India’s democratic ethos and polity”.

⁴⁰ Government of India Ministry of External Affairs, ‘[Press Statement on recent comments by foreign individuals and entities on the farmers’ protests](#)’, 3 February 2021.

The statement suggested that protesting farmers are in the minority saying a “very small section of farmers in parts of India have some reservations about these reforms”.

The Government said it had respected the “sentiments of the protestors” by initiating a series of talks with them, with “eleven rounds of talks [...] already been held”, and mentioned the offer by Prime Minister Modi to “keep the laws on hold”.

It defended the actions of the police during the protests saying they have “handled these protests with utmost restraint”, and that “hundreds of men and women serving in the police have been physically attacked, and in some cases stabbed and seriously wounded”.

The statement also talked of “vested interest groups trying to enforce their agenda on these protests”, and that these groups have “tried to mobilise international support against India”.

The Ministry also warned against the “temptation of sensationalist social media hashtags and comments, especially when resorted to by celebrities and others”, saying this was “neither accurate nor responsible”.

2.3

Government offers concessions, December 2020

In early December 2020 the Government was reported to have offered several concessions to farmers. It offered to amend the laws in some areas, though said it will not scrap them as many farmers have demanded. It also said it provided assurance that the MSP regime would continue, though it does not appear to offer to put this guarantee on a legal basis.⁴¹

Farmer unions rejected these concessions, and it was reported that Opposition leaders including Rahul Gandhi, the leader of the Congress Party, had backed them in their demands to fully repeal the laws. Mr Gandhi reiterated opposition claims that there was no consultation with them on the Bills as they passed through parliament.⁴²

On 21 January the BBC reported that the Government [offered to suspend the laws](#) for 18 months. The Farmers' unions rejected this offer also saying they wanted the laws fully repealed.⁴³

⁴¹ [‘What Modi govt proposed but farmers rejected — assurance on MSP, 7 amendments to new laws’](#), The Print, 9 December 2020.

⁴² [‘Farmers say will intensify stir: with you, don’t back down: Opposition’](#), The Indian Express, 10 December 2020,

⁴³ [‘Farm laws: Indian unions reject offer to suspend reforms’](#), BBC News, 21 January 2021.

2.4

Government claims on foreign influence

Early December 2020, Government claims

The Times of India [reported](#) on 10 December that Government minister, Raosaheb Danve, claimed that “other forces” might be behind the protests, and directly that “China and Pakistan have a hand behind this”.⁴⁴ In a press conference a few days later Mr Danve stated that his comments had been “misinterpreted for sake of news”.⁴⁵

A week earlier, JP Dalal, Agriculture Minister in the northern Indian state of Haryana, a member of the ruling BJP party, made similar comments reportedly saying “it is not related to the cause of farmers, as several foreign powers like China, Pakistan or other countries, which are hostile towards India, want to destabilise the country in the name of farmers agitation”.⁴⁶

On 4 December, India’s foreign ministry summoned Canadian diplomats⁴⁷ after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau voiced concern for the farmers during a Facebook Live session.⁴⁸ The ministry said the comments constituted “unacceptable interference” and risked damaging ties between the two nations.⁴⁹

International activists and arrest of Disha Ravi

As the protests created more international attention, international activists joined in calls to support the Indian farmers protesting.

The Indian Government have criticised what they have characterised as interference in a domestic political issue. On 15 February, police raided the home of and arrested an Indian activist, Disha Ravi, who used a “campaigning toolkit” provided by the environmental campaigner Greta Thunberg. Ravi was charged with “sedition”.⁵⁰

The toolkit was reported to have included campaigning tips such as suggested hashtags and advice on how to sign petitions.

⁴⁴ [‘China, Pakistan behind farmers’ protest: Union minister Raosaheb Danve’](#), , 10 December 2020.

⁴⁵ [‘My statement on farm protests ‘misinterpreted,’ says Union minister Raosaheb Danve’](#), *The Economic Times*, 15 December 2020.

⁴⁶ [‘Punjab: J P Dalal alleges foreign conspiracy behind farm protests’](#), Times of India, 4 December 2020.

⁴⁷ [‘Indian Farmers’ Protests Spread, in Challenge to Modi’](#), New York Times, 4 December 2020

⁴⁸ [‘Trudeau Expresses ‘Concern’ Over India’s Handling of Farmers’ Protest: New Delhi Hits Back’](#), The Wire, 1 December 2020.

⁴⁹ [‘Indian Farmers’ Protests Spread, in Challenge to Modi’](#), New York Times, 4 December 2020.

⁵⁰ [‘India: activist arrested over protest ‘toolkit’ shared by Greta Thunberg’](#), The Guardian, 15 February 2021.

According to The Guardian, leaders in the ruling BJP said the toolkit was “evidence of international plans for attacks against India”.⁵¹

⁵¹ Ibid.

3

Supreme Court suspension

Bills are passed into law in months

The Indian Central Government first announced its plans for reforms to the agricultural sector and the [proposed legislation in June 2020](#). The Bills were introduced and [passed quickly through Parliament](#), becoming law by the end of September. Opposition parties claimed there was little consultation from the Government on the planned changes and asked for the legislation to be scrutinised by a select committee. However, the proposal did not have enough support in parliament.⁵²

Supreme Court suspends laws in January 2021

On 12 January 2021, India's Supreme Court ruled that the three Acts be suspended, and that a four-person committee be formed to look into farmers' grievances over the laws.

The justices said they were "extremely disappointed" with how negotiations between the Government and activists had gone.⁵³ The judges also expressed concern at the lack of consultation with farmers when passing the law, the chief justice Sharad Bobde told the Court:

These are matters of life and death. We are concerned with laws. We are concerned with lives and property of people affected by the agitation. We are trying to solve the problem in the best way. One of the powers we have is to suspend the legislation.⁵⁴

The Guardian reported that while politicians opposed to the laws were happy with the ruling, it was not welcomed by farmers' leaders who said "now is not the time for a committee", and its members were "not dependable".⁵⁵ The farmers' unions said they would not participate in the process and would not call off their protest until the new legislation was repealed.⁵⁶

⁵² ['Mic broken, papers thrown: Amid major ruckus, two farm bills passed in Rajya Sabha'](#), *Indian Express*, 20 September 2021.

⁵³ ['Indian court suspends new agriculture laws after mass protests'](#), *The Guardian*, 12 January 2021.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

More details of Supreme Court Committee emerge

A [website](#) for the Committee stated that it had been tasked with reaching recommendations within two months.⁵⁷ The Committee said it would hear from both the Government and representative of the farmers' bodies.

The Court ordered the Committee should be comprised of the following four individuals:

1. Shri Bhupinder Singh Mann, National President, BhartiyaKisan Union and All India Kisan Coordination Committee (the BhartiyaKisan Union is an organisation representing farmers);
2. Dr Parmod Kumar Joshi, Agricultural Economist, Director for South Asia, International Food Policy Research Institute;
3. Shri Ashok Gulati, Agricultural Economist and Former Chairman of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices; and
4. Shri Anil Ghanwat, President, ShetkariSanghatana

Some Indian news media suggested that all members of the panel support market reforms to the agricultural sector, and some members had offered support for the aims of the new legislation.⁵⁸

The main opposition, the Congress party, [claimed](#) all four Panel members were pro-reform. The organisation co-ordinating the protests [said they would not participate](#) in the panel's work.

Former Agriculture Minister, Sharad Pawar, who served in a previous Congress-led Government, welcomed the court's decision, and called it a "big relief".⁵⁹

The national Government have [welcomed](#) the Committee and said it would participate when called upon by the Committee.

Committee member recuses himself

A few days after the Court ordered the Committee be formed, Bhupinder Singh Mann, one of the appointees, recused himself saying he couldn't serve on the Committee. It was reported that he did this in response to opposition from farmers' unions and the public.⁶⁰

Committee submits report

The Committee submitted its findings to the Court at the end of March. The contents of the report were not made public, however a covering document

⁵⁷ COMMITTEE ON FARM LAWS, [Overview](#), accessed, 07 December 2021.

⁵⁸ See ['To Resolve Impasse on Farm Laws, SC Has Formed a Panel of 4 of its Ardent Supporters'](#), The Wire, 12 January 2021; and ['All Members Chosen For Supreme Court Committee Had Backed Farm Laws'](#), NDTV, 12 January 2021; for example.

⁵⁹ ['Congress flays composition of court-appointed committee to examine farm laws'](#), The Hindu, 12 January 2021.

⁶⁰ ['BKU leader Mann recuses himself from SC committee on farm laws'](#), The Hindu, 14 January 2021

was said to have stated that the Committee had consulted with 85 farmer organisations.⁶¹ In February it was reported that the Committee had held discussions with the state governments of 18 states including Punjab, Maharashtra, Kerala, Delhi, Karnataka and others.⁶²

The report still has not been published. In September 2021, a member of the Committee, Anil Ghanwat, called on the Supreme Court to allow the report to be put in the public domain, saying it “has addressed all apprehensions of the farmers” and its “recommendations will pave the way to resolve the ongoing farmers’ agitation”.⁶³

⁶¹ [‘SC-appointed committee submits report on farm laws’](#), Times of India, 31 March 2021.

⁶² [‘Farm laws: SC-appointed panel holds consultations with 18 state govts including Punjab, Delhi’](#), India Today, 12 February 2021.

⁶³ [‘Release our report, it addresses farmer issue: Supreme Court panel member to CJI’](#), Indian Express, 8 September 2021.

4

Decision to repeal laws, November 2021

Protests continue throughout 2021

On 22 July, hundreds of farmers began a sit-in at Jantar Mantar, a large Mughal-era observatory near parliament in New Delhi, renewing a push for repeal. Police agreed to allow the demonstration when protestors assured them they would not march on parliament.⁶⁴ They were given permission to remain at the site until 9 August, but only on weekdays. On 5 August, MPs from several opposition parties joined the protestors at Jantar Mantar.⁶⁵

On 5 September, the largest rally to date occurred in the state of Uttar Pradesh. More than 500,000 farmers attended the rally in the city of Muzaffarnagar, according to local police.⁶⁶ Uttar Pradesh, a predominantly agricultural state, is also India's most populous, home to 240 million people.

October saw a further intensification of the protests, after eight people were killed in clashes in Uttar Pradesh between protesting farmers and supporters of the ruling BJP. Four of the eight were killed when a car that was part of a convoy of several, crashed into protestors. The protestors were in the area attempting to shadow senior BJP members, including Minister Ajay Mishra, as they began to campaign ahead of state elections next year.⁶⁷ The protestors claim that Mr Mishra's son, Ashish Mishra, was in the convoy, from which the car that crashed into the protestors came. The minister denied his family's involvement.

Days before the incident in Uttar Pradesh, Ajay Mishra, Mr. Modi's junior minister of home affairs, warned farmers in a speech to "behave, or we will teach you how to behave. It will take just two minutes".⁶⁸

After the car crashed into the crowd, the farmers attacked the convoy with bamboo sticks and set two of the vehicles ablaze. By the end of the day, eight people were dead, including three people in the convoy, and a local journalist.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ ['Farmer protest to begin at 11am, area around Jantar Mantar turns into a fortress'](#), Hindustan Times, 22 July 2021.

⁶⁵ ['Opposition MPs likely to protest at Jantar Mantar to show solidarity with farmers'](#), The Economic Times, 5 August 2020.

⁶⁶ 'Hundreds of thousands of Indian farmers rally against farm laws', Reuters, 5 September 2021.

⁶⁷ See ['Indian farmers to step up protests after eight killed in clashes'](#), Reuters, 4 October 2021 and ['Violence Strikes, and India's Farmers Want You to See It'](#) New York Times, 22 October 2021.

⁶⁸ ['Violence Strikes, and India's Farmers Want You to See It'](#) New York Times, 22 October 2021.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Government announcement to repeal the laws

On 19 November 2021, Narendra Modi announced in a surprise nationally-televised address that his Government would repeal the farm laws. Mr Modi said the laws were meant to strengthen the small farmers, "but despite several attempts to explain the benefits to the farmers, we have failed".⁷⁰ He urged farmers "to return to their homes, their farms and their families" and requested them "to start afresh".⁷¹

Response

Many of the protesting farmers were relieved at the announcement, but expressed anger it had taken so long. Some farmers said they would not return home until other demands, such as on the MSP, are met.

Some agriculture experts said Modi's reversal was unfortunate because the reforms would have brought new technology and investment. "It's a blow to India's agriculture", said Sandip Das, a New Delhi-based researcher and agricultural policy analyst. "The laws would have helped attract a lot of investment in agricultural and food processing - two sectors that need a lot of money for modernisation".⁷²

Many analysts suggested that upcoming legislative elections in several states next year, including Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, were part of the Prime Minister's calculus. Mr Modi hopes that reversing course will stave off the challenge of strong regional parties in those states. The incident in October in Uttar Pradesh (mentioned above), and the furious reaction to it, was also said to have "put the government on the back foot".⁷³

Repeal by Indian Parliament

The Farm Laws Repeal Bill, which scrapped the three agricultural reform laws, was passed on 29 November 2021. The Bill went through all its stages in both Houses of the Indian Parliament in one day. That morning the government reportedly made it clear to the opposition MPs during a meeting of the business advisory committee of the two Houses that no discussion on the bill would be held.⁷⁴

The opposition heavily criticised the move, arguing there should have been a proper debate on the issue, and that the curtailment of debate mirrored the Government's tactics when it first passed the farm laws.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ ['Farm laws: India PM Narendra Modi repeals controversial reforms'](#), BBC News, 19 November 2021.

⁷¹ ['India's Modi backs down on farm reforms in surprise victory for protesters'](#), Reuters, 19 November 2021.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ ['Farm laws: India PM Narendra Modi repeals controversial reforms'](#), BBC News, 19 November 2021.

⁷⁴ ['Parliament repeals farm laws without debate'](#), Economic Times, 29 November 2021.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Farmers agree to return home in December 2021 after further Government assurances

Despite the repeal of the laws, many farmers remained camped outside Delhi.

Farmers' unions leading the protests said they would not end their actions until the government agree to several demands; these include a law guaranteeing the MSP, withdrawal of legal cases against farmers, and financial compensation for the families of farmers who lost their lives during the agitation.⁷⁶

However, on 9 December, the protestors said they would now return home after receiving assurances from the Government on these issues. The Government was reported to have written a formal letter to farm leaders, accepting many of the demands, including on compensation.⁷⁷

Potential for protests to resume in 2022

There is potential for the protests to resume. Farmer leader Gurnam Singh Charuni told local media: "We will hold a review meeting on 15 January. If the government doesn't fulfil its promises, we may resume the protest".⁷⁸

Finding a solution for the compensation of families may also prove difficult. The protest leaders say nearly 700 farmers died during the protests "as they weathered bone-chilling cold, record rains, smog and heat".⁷⁹ Opposition leader, Rahul Gandhi, has endorsed these figures saying in the Indian Parliament that "the country knows that during the farmers' movement, 700 farmers were martyred".⁸⁰ The Government, however, have reportedly said in the past they do not have records of deceased farmers linked to the protests.⁸¹

The Supreme Court are also considering a complaint from a resident of a nearby city to Delhi that the farmer encampments on the highways outside Delhi create problems for motorists. In a ruling in a preliminary hearing the Court said that "the farmers have the right to protest, but (they) cannot keep the roads blocked indefinitely for that".⁸²

⁷⁶ ['Farmers protest: Supreme Court adjourns plea seeking removal of protesters from roads to January 2022'](#), Hindustan Times, 8 December 2021.

⁷⁷ ['Farm laws: India farmers end protest after government accepts demands'](#), BBC News, 9 December 2021.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ 'The human cost of India's yearlong farmers' protest', Al Jazeera, 30 November 2021.

⁸⁰ ['In Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi gives 'list of dead farmer protesters', seeks aid'](#), Indian Express, 8 December 2021.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² 'India's top court: Protesting farmers can't block roads indefinitely', Reuters, 21 October 2021.

The case was adjourned until January 2022, and farmer's groups were invited to submit their responses in the meantime. The case may now be moot, but should the protests return the legal action may become live again.⁸³

⁸³ ['Farmers protest: Supreme Court adjourns plea seeking removal of protesters from roads to January 2022'](#), Hindustan Times, 8 December 2021.

5

UK Government response & parliamentary debate, 2021

Petitions Committee debate March 2021

A Parliamentary e-petition titled "[urge the Indian Government to ensure safety of protestors & press freedom](#)", attracted over 100,000 signatures and so was scheduled for a debate by the House of Commons Petitions Committee.

The Government response to the petition was published on the [e-petition website](#). [The Government said that the UK's High Commission was monitoring "developments closely". It stated that](#) "the UK considers farming reform a matter for the Government of India".⁸⁴ It added, however, that:

We consider the right to peaceful protest, freedom of speech, and internet freedom vital in any democracy. We also recognise that governments have the power to enforce law and order if a protest crosses the line into illegality. We look to the Indian government to uphold all freedoms and rights guaranteed in India's strong constitution.⁸⁵

The [debate on the petition was held on 8 March 2021](#) under the motion, "That this House has considered e-petition 563473 relating to press freedoms and safety of protestors in India".⁸⁶ Speaking on behalf of their respective parties, Labour's Stephen Kinnock MP, and the SNP's Brendan O'Hara MP, expressed their concerns about the protest. Mr O'Hara said:

[H]ow India wants to organise its agricultural sector is entirely and exclusively a matter for the Indian Government and their people, but human rights abuses and the silencing of the press are a matter for us all.⁸⁷

Mr Kinnock expressed Labour's support for the "rights of Indian farmers to exercise their right to freedom of assembly, freedom of expression and the right to peaceful protest"⁸⁸, and that "Mr Modi needs to recognise that the world is watching and that what happens in India resonates here in our country".⁸⁹

⁸⁴ UK Parliament, '[Urge the Indian Government to ensure safety of protestors & press freedom](#)', Government response added 15 February 2021. Accessed 10 December 2021.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ [HC Deb 8 March 2021 \[Press Freedom and Safety of Protesters: India\]](#)

⁸⁷ '[Press Freedom and Safety of Protesters: India](#)', Volume 690, 8 March 2021, [Column 18WH](#).

⁸⁸ '[Press Freedom and Safety of Protesters: India](#)', Volume 690, 8 March 2021, [Column 19WH](#)

⁸⁹ 'Ibid, [Column 21WH](#).

The Minister for Asia, Nigel Adams MP, [responded on behalf of the Government](#) at the end of the debate. Mr Adams acknowledged that the events understandably “have caused alarm and uncertainty for many British people who have family ties to farming communities in India”.⁹⁰ He reiterated however the Government’s stance in its written response to the petition, “that agricultural policy is a domestic matter for the Indian Government” while reinforcing that the Government “firmly believe”, that “freedom of speech, internet freedom [...] and the right to peaceful protest, are vital to any democracy”.⁹¹

Response by the Indian Government

The Indian Government was unhappy with the contributions of some MPs during the debate mentioned above.

On 9 March, India's foreign ministry summoned the British High Commissioner in Delhi. The Times of India [reported that](#) India’s Foreign Secretary, Harsh Vardhan Shringla, described the debate as “a gross interference in the politics of another democratic country”, and reportedly advised UK high commissioner to India Alex Ellis that British MPs “should refrain from practising vote-bank politics”, by misrepresenting events, especially in relation to another democratic country.⁹²

India’s High Commission in London [released a statement](#) on Twitter after the debate, saying “We deeply regret that rather than a balanced debate, false assertions - without substantiation or facts - were made, casting aspersions on the largest functioning democracy in the world and its institutions”.⁹³

⁹⁰ [HC Deb 8 March 2021 \[Press Freedom and Safety of Protesters: India\]](#)

⁹¹ The Government response was published on 15 February 2021.

⁹² [‘India protests farmer protest debate in UK house, summons high commissioner’](#), The Times of India, 10 March 2021.

⁹³ Twitter, [@HCLondon, 10 March 2021](#). Access 10 December 2021.

6 Annex 1: Details of the Acts/reforms

6.1 Details of the three laws

There were three Acts that made up the agricultural reforms. The section below was written when the laws had been passed, and gives details of how they would have reformed agriculture in India:

The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020.

This act enables farmers to enter into contract farming agreements with buyers directly, thus bypassing mandis, and providing local dispute settlement mechanisms.

Contract farming already exists in India, and did have some legal backing, however it is “clear that contract farming is not yet mainstream”.⁹⁴ This Act should increase its use by providing it with a comprehensive national legal basis, and removing restrictions that exist in a few states where contract farming requires registration with the states’ Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees (APMC).

APMCs regulate trade at mandis or marketplaces.

The Government press statement released when the Act was first published says the law will provide:

[A] national framework on farming agreements that protects and empowers farmers to engage with agri-business firms, processors, wholesalers, exporters or large retailers for farm services and sale of future farming produce at a mutually agreed remunerative price framework in a fair and transparent manner.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ [‘Will India’s Contract Farming Ordinance Be a Corporate Lifeline for Agriculture?’](#), The Wire, 16 June 2020.

⁹⁵ Indian Government Press Information Bureau, [‘President promulgates two Ordinances with the aim of giving a boost to rural India and agriculture’](#), 5 June 2020

The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion And Facilitation) Bill, 2020

This Act will allow farmers to sell their produce directly to customers, without going through state government-controlled marketplaces, or mandis. It will also allow trading on electronic platforms.

The mandis exist in part to ensure farmers are not exploited and forced to sell their produce at low prices. However, the markets are complex, according to the BBC:

[They are] run by committees made up of farmers, often large land-owners, and traders or "commission agents" who act as middle men for brokering sales, organising storage and transport, or even financing deals.

It's a complex system underpinned by regulations, and a host of personal and business relationships.⁹⁶

These layers of middlemen are seen by some to add extra costs that fall more on smaller farmers.

The Act will have a bigger impact in some states than others, with some already allowing farmers to [sell directly to cash and carry retailers](#).⁹⁷ However, most Indian farmers currently sell the majority of their produce at mandis at assured floor prices.⁹⁸

Siraj Hussain, a former agricultural official in the Modi Government, argues that this Act "has the most far reaching implications".⁹⁹ Mr Hussain suggests that the most important provision in the Act "is that there will be no market fee, cess or levy on the transactions in the trade area". He states that "presently various taxes/fee/commission in APMCs in various states range from 1% in some states to 8.5% in Punjab".¹⁰⁰

The Government in their press statement, suggested the Act would have the following effects:

Will provide for the creation of an ecosystem where the farmers and traders enjoy the freedom of choice relating to sale and purchase of farmers' produce which facilitates remunerative prices through competitive alternative trading channels. It will promote efficient, transparent and barrier-free inter-State and intra-State trade and commerce of farmers' produce outside the physical premises of markets or deemed markets notified under various State agricultural produce

⁹⁶ ['Farm laws: Are India's new reforms a 'death warrant' for farmers?'](#), BBC News, 16 February 2021.

⁹⁷ ['Farmers can directly sell their produce to cash and carry retailers: Consumer Affairs Secretary'](#), Economic Times, 3 April 2020

⁹⁸ ['Farm laws: Are India's new reforms a 'death warrant' for farmers?'](#), BBC News, 16 February 2021.

⁹⁹ ['What Will the End of the Road for APMCs Look Like?'](#), The Wire, 8 June 2020.

¹⁰⁰ ['What Will the End of the Road for APMCs Look Like?'](#), The Wire, 8 June 2020.

market legislations. Besides, the Ordinance will provide a facilitative framework for electronic trading and matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.¹⁰¹

The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020

- This law amends the existing Essential Commodities Act 1955

The 1955 Act gives power to the Central government and states to issue 'control orders' that regulate the movement of goods within and across states and fix stock limits for "essential commodities". The list of essential commodities has been changed over the years. Most recently between March and July 2020 hand sanitisers and face masks were added to the list after supply shortages.¹⁰²

According to the Wire Magazine states make full use of these powers and thousands of police cases are registered every year for alleged violations of 'control orders'.¹⁰³

The new Act will remove food items such cereals, pulses, onions, potatoes and oils from these regulations, allowing buyers to purchase, store and distribute them without restriction, except under emergencies like war or famine.

The Government believe these changes will drive up private sector investment in cold storage and modernise the food supply chain through greater economies of scale.¹⁰⁴

Some farmers fear this will give greater advantage to larger agribusinesses who will have the capacity to hoard large quantities of produce, while they will usually have to sell theirs within a few days of harvest, lacking their own storage facilities.¹⁰⁵

6.2

Further reading and views on the reforms

Siraj Hussain, a former agricultural official in the Modi Government, quoted above, has written a detailed analysis on each of the three pieces of legislation:

¹⁰¹ Indian Government Press Information Bureau, '[President promulgates two Ordinances with the aim of giving a boost to rural India and agriculture](#)', 5 June 2020

¹⁰² '[Face masks, hand sanitisers no more under Essential Commodities Act: Government](#)', The Economic Times, 7 July 2020.

¹⁰³ '[The Fine Print of the Essential Commodities Act Ordinance Must be Carefully Parsed](#)', The Wire Magazine, 22 June 2020.

¹⁰⁴ Indian Government Press Information Bureau, '[PM chairs Cabinet Meeting to give historic boost to Rural India](#)', 3 June 2020.

¹⁰⁵ '[Why are Indian farmers protesting?](#)', The Economist, 5 February 2020

- [‘What Will the End of the Road for APMCs Look Like?’](#), The Wire, 8 June 2020.
- [‘Will India's Contract Farming Ordinance Be a Corporate Lifeline for Agriculture?’](#), The Wire Magazine, 16 June 2020
- [‘The Fine Print of the Essential Commodities Act Ordinance Must be Carefully Parsed’](#), The Wire Magazine, 22 June 2020.

A detailed overview of the reforms taken as a whole is given by Sudha Narayanan, Associate Professor at the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, Mumbai, a piece in the Indian Forum Magazine:

- [‘The Three Farm Bills: Is This the Market Reform Indian Agriculture Needs?’](#) The India Forum, 27 November 2020.

Overviews of the reforms

The following news articles contain overviews of the legislation including criticism of the reforms and the views of supporters of the laws:

- [‘Bharat bandh: India farmers strike to press for repeal of laws’](#), BBC News, 27 September 2020.
- [‘Farm laws: Are India's new reforms a 'death warrant' for farmers?’](#), BBC News, 16 February 2021.
- [‘What are farm bills, who are opposing and why - an explainer’](#), Business Toda India, 10 December 2021.

Critics of the reforms:

Aljazeera, presented a range of (largely critical) views on the Bills in an [online article](#):

- [‘Why Indian farmers are protesting against new farm bills’](#), Al Jazeera, 25 September 2020.

Supporters of the reforms:

Sanju Verma, Chief Spokesperson for BJP Mumbai, defends the reforms in an opinion piece in FirstPost:

- [‘MSP is an admin mechanism, not legislative one; new agro laws will unshackle farmers, boost competition: BJP economist’](#), FirstPost, 2 December 2020.

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, is quoted at length by the Tribune news site, advocating for the reforms he is leading:

- [‘Cabinet approves amendment to Essential Commodities Act’](#), The Tribune, 3 June 2020

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