



According to the draft farmers' policy, unveiled by the Punjab State Farmers' and Farm Workers' Commission, "power subsidy will be strictly restricted to non-income tax payee farmers".

After more than two decades, the Punjab government may start charging the state's rich farmers for the electricity consumed for farming, a move that could also curb excessive use of groundwater for cultivation of rice and wheat in the state. According to the draft farmers' policy, unveiled by the Punjab State Farmers' and Farm Workers' Commission, "power subsidy will be strictly restricted to non-income tax payee farmers".

It added that initially, farmers owing 4 hectares of land or more will have to pay a flat rate of Rs 100 per BHP per month for electricity; subsequently, it suggested, power subsidy should be rationed to such farmers subject to a "financial cap". The commission's chairman Ajay Vir Jakhar told FE: "We are not asking the government for any additional expenditure."

Once the feedback is received from the public by end of this month, the suggestions will be examined and those found suitable would be incorporated in the final report, he added. The Comptroller and Auditor General had pulled up the state government for huge state subsidy for power; the annual cost of such support is estimated to be over Rs 6,000 crore currently.

The draft policy also calls for a law to enable land leasing and making 'takseem' mandatory at the time of inheritance of property. "Make the administration liable for ensuring that common lands are maintained for community use," it said.

According to the commission, area-specific crop production plans based on natural endowments and market demand should be evolved. It proposed the setting up of market intelligence cell and promotion of "Food of Punjab". "Reorganise Markfed and PSIC to ensure processing and marketing of farmers' produce," the panel said.

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