

## Punjab

### Punjab assembly passes new bills, invalidating Centre's Farmer Bills

October 20, 2020

Relevant to M&M- FES, FAAS

#### Background

- After over a month of protests by farmers against the three farm laws enacted by the central government, a special session of the Punjab Assembly on October 20 not only rejected the laws by a unanimous resolution but also passed three farm amendment Bills removing Punjab from the ambit of the central laws.
- In each of the three Bills, the Punjab government has claimed that the application of central laws to the state is being changed to "restore the agricultural safeguards for the farmers through the regulatory framework of Punjab Agricultural Produce Markets Act, 1961 to secure and protect the interests and livelihoods of farmers and farm labourers as also all others engaged in agriculture and related activities".
- The three Bills mention the agriculture census 2015-16 to underline that 86.2 per cent of farmers in the state are small and marginal, with the majority owning less than two acres of land. Consequently, they have limited access to multiple markets, and lack the negotiation power needed to operate in a private market.

#### Understanding the changes made by the Punjab Assembly

- One of the bills provides for imprisonment of not less than three years for the sale or purchase of wheat or paddy below the minimum support price.
- The bill also makes forcing farmers to sell below MSP punishable.
- Another bill cleared by Punjab prevents black-marketing of food grains. Farmers owning up to 2.5 acres have also been given protection against the attachment of their land.

#### Punjab Government vs Central Government

- The chief minister alleged that the new laws were a direct attack to encroach upon the Constitutionally guaranteed functions and powers of states.

- He said the draft resolution explains how the farm laws are also against the Constitution that categorises agriculture as a state subject.
- Ahead of the session, the Punjab Cabinet on Sunday had authorised Singh to take any legislative or legal decision he may deem fit without “caring for the consequences”.
- The Cabinet meeting was held after a meeting of the Congress Legislature Party in which the legislators unanimously stressed the need to reject the farm laws, even if Centre “dismisses” the state governments demands.

## References

1. <https://scroll.in/latest/976245/punjab-cm-moves-resolution-against-centres-farm-laws-introduces-three-bills-to-oppose-them>
2. <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-what-punjab-three-new-farm-bills-say-what-they-look-to-achieve-6813386/>
3. <https://theprint.in/india/governance/punjab-assembly-passes-bills-negating-centres-farm-laws-now-waits-presidents-assent/527581/>