

# FARM SOP WILL BE HARD TO IMPLEMENT?

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Agriculture Issues and related constraints

## What does the scheme offer?

The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme, announced in the Budget earlier this month, aims to give Rs. 6,000 a year to 12 crore farmer families who own up to two hectares of cultivable land.

## What are the challenges?

The number of beneficiaries comes from the number of land holdings of two hectares or less, according to the last agricultural land census. However, the guidelines say a single family may hold multiple land parcels, which will be pooled to determine their eligibility for the benefit. Similarly, even landholdings bigger than two hectares, if owned by multiple families, will make them eligible for the scheme. For example, if five brothers jointly own a single 10 hectare holding, each of them will be eligible for the scheme. However, if the members of a single family unit each own three one-hectare holdings, they will not be eligible. “This is a mess,” says Vikas Rawal, a professor at JNU’s Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, who specialises in agriculture economics. He says it will be difficult to use existing land records to determine beneficiaries. “Land records are held individually. How do you know which family holds how much land?” For the purposes of this scheme, family units are being defined as a husband, wife and minor children. Local administrations are more familiar with the unit of the household — which is used by most other government surveys and schemes — defined as a group living together and eating meals from a common kitchen.

## What is the status of land records?

States have been implementing the Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme for more than a decade. While several States claim to have completed computerisation of their land records, others have not even begun the process. However, digitisation does not mean the data have been updated. Experts say many land records are updated only when the land is sold and only if the transaction is legally registered. Inherited land may still be registered in a parent or grandparent’s name. Multiple government departments hold the documents required to establish land ownership — the Registration Department maintains sale deeds, but maps are kept by the Survey Department, while the Revenue Department keeps property tax receipts. Verifying ownership claims is thus a daunting task. States have been asked to overhaul their land databases immediately in preparation for the scheme, which aims to pay out its first instalment of Rs. 2,000 by March 31, before the Lok Sabha election.

## What happened in Telangana?

However, the example of Telangana shows this may be an unrealistic time line. Despite an advanced state of progress in digitisation, the State took over three months to update its databases before implementing its own farmer income support scheme before its Assembly election last year. Since its payout was given per acre owned, rather than per family unit, it was a simpler process to identify beneficiaries on the basis of land records. Yet, researchers say almost 10 lakh beneficiaries — of a total 54 lakh — were left out of the initial instalment, as the State scrambled to update records.

## What about community farmers?

The scheme notes that land ownership rights are community-based in many northeastern States and promises that an alternative method of beneficiary identification will be developed. However, many Adivasi communities in other States also cultivate land without individual rights, and may be left out of the scheme, although they are among the most vulnerable. Tenant farmers are also not included in the scheme, as they do not own the land they cultivate. With tenancy being as high as 60% in some areas, this could lead to resentment if absentee landlords receive benefits under the scheme.

### **Is payment infrastructure in place?**

The government intends to pay beneficiaries through a direct transfer to their bank accounts. From the second instalment, Aadhaar numbers will be compulsory to access benefits. Previous welfare schemes requiring Aadhaar verification have faced significant hurdles in some rural areas.

Priscilla Jebaraj

**END**

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com