

# HELPFUL PAUSE: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON CENTRE'S OFFER TO SUSPEND FARM LAWS

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

The Centre's offer to [suspend for 18 months](#) the implementation of the [three laws](#) that are at the heart of the farmers' unrest is a conciliatory gesture. It is regrettable that the farmers protesting against the laws that encourage market forces in the sector have [rejected the government offer](#). They have been demanding the repeal of the three laws and a legal guarantee of Minimum Support Price for their produce. The government has refused to concede these demands, but its willingness to put off the implementation of the laws is a right step that could lead to a viable reform package for the agriculture sector. A toxic combination of the Centre's intransigence, ignorance and insensitivity led to the current flare-up. That India's agriculture sector requires reforms is not in dispute. The challenge is in identifying the viable measures from the economic, environmental and scientific perspectives and building a wide political agreement for them. The government has now shown wisdom and sagacity by offering to start consultations. Farmers should now not allow their maximalism to obstruct the path to an agreement. It is a case of better late than never.

By creating an environment of trust with the aggrieved farmers, the government can reclaim its authority and role. Further consultations must be through a government-led political process, and the Supreme Court which has [assumed an unwarranted role](#) for itself must step back. As Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar pointed out, if the agitation can be ended with this concession from the government, it will be a victory for democracy. The government should do more. Harassment of farmer leaders by investigative agencies must immediately stop. The BJP should restrain its functionaries from labelling protesters as anti-nationals. The farmers, who are being represented by several organisations, must arrive at a common platform for talks with the government. Having been successful in winning the attention of the government and the larger society towards their grievances, the farmers must now suspend their protest, including the plan for [a tractor rally in Delhi on Republic Day](#). The consultations on the three laws and reforms in general must take place in an ambience of mutual trust and a spirit of give and take. The talks must be without preconditions but with an agreed premise that agriculture and farmers cannot be left at the mercy of market forces, and the current crop and remuneration patterns are not sustainable. This requires both sides to be more open-minded than they have been so far. A pause of the laws can be helpful.

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