

FARMER PROTESTS INCREASED FIVEFOLD SINCE 2017: CSE REPORT

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

Farmers from Punjab arriving at the Singhu border on Monday. **SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA**
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Apart from the three contentious Central farm laws, procurement and agricultural market price-related failures have contributed to a fivefold increase in major farmers' protests since 2017, according to data collated by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE).

In 2017, there were 34 major protests across 15 States. The number has now shot up to 165 protests across 22 States and Union Territories.

The CSE's State of Environment in Figures 2021 report records that 12 of these are pan-India protests, including 11 agitations against the three farm reform laws introduced last year. Along with protests against State legislation and inadequate Budget allocations for the agricultural sector, such anti-policy agitations account for 96 major protests across the country.

However, large numbers of farmers are also fighting against market failures and demanding fair prices, which have led to 38 major protests. Battles against acquisition of farm land for development projects, including highway and airport construction, are the prime cause of 17 agitations.

At least seven agitations have been to demand loan waivers or to protest poor insurance coverage and delayed compensation. Farmers have gathered at least four times to protest the unavailability or increased prices of farm inputs and infrastructure. The arrests of protesting farm leaders have also led to further stirs.

Although Punjab and Haryana farmers have caught the limelight for the recent protests outside Delhi, data shows that the largest number of recent protests have taken place in Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

The report notes that India now has more farm labourers than landowning farmers and cultivators. This is true in 52% of the country's districts, as well as in all districts of Bihar and Kerala. More than 28 agricultural workers and cultivators end their lives every day. The latest data available shows that 5,957 farmers and an additional 4,324 farm labourers died by suicide in 2019.

The CSE has called for better maintenance of agricultural data, noting that 14 States had actually witnessed a deterioration in the quality of their land records. "India is sitting atop a massive time-bomb of agrarian crisis and disquiet, and the clock is ticking away," it said.

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