

# SEEDS OF HOPE: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON FARM LAWS REPEAL

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

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has done the right thing by [announcing the repeal of the three farm laws](#) that are at the centre of a protracted confrontation between his government and a section of farmers for a year. The laws sought to reorganise India's agriculture sector more in accordance with the principles of market economy. They would have redesigned the country's food procurement and distribution mechanisms, triggering fears that the producers and consumers would be adversely affected, to the benefit of big companies. Such fears were aggravated by the undemocratic manner in which these laws were brought about, through ordinances, and passed in Parliament without deliberations, or consultations with the States. The decision to repeal them is a triumph of democracy. On the one hand, the tenacity of the agitating farmers that the BJP and state agencies could not break while on the other, the looming Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, [forced the ruling party's hand](#). In bowing to public demand, Mr. Modi has shown flexibility and pragmatism. Farmers should not only withdraw the protest now but also show a more flexible approach regarding the path ahead to reform the sector.

Flexibility is not a bad trait in democracy, which is about constant negotiations, but it should not be merely political expediency. In this instance, the agitators were socially dominant, and economically and politically powerful groups whose hostility the BJP found difficult to handle. This should be an occasion for the Government to revisit its general attitude towards protest mobilisation. The reflex of the current dispensation has been to paint opponents and critics as traitors or anti-nationals — a tactic that was tried even in the case of the farmers. A consultative decision making would always be more sustainable and easier to enforce. Further moves on agriculture sector reforms must draw from the experience of the making, and now the repeal, of the three farm laws. Their repeal does not invalidate the urgent case for reforms in the agriculture sector, in which incentive mechanisms are skewed, and environmental costs are unsustainable. Those will have to be pursued in a manner suitable to a federal democratic polity as India's. The repeal of these laws will likely spur a realignment of politics in U.P. and Punjab, where Assembly elections are round the corner. The RLD, which is influential among the Jat farmers in western U.P., might now see the BJP in a different light. The Congress has been supporting the protesting farmers, and can claim victory. But by repealing the laws the BJP has increased its political space in both States, more so in Punjab where the Congress is in power. The BJP's estranged ally, the Akali Dal, and Amarinder Singh, former Congress CM who was humiliated by the party, will also look for new opportunities in the situation.

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