Farmers' protests

Why in news?

Farmers' protests have erupted once again in north India.

Why farmers' Punjab and Haryana are protesting?

- They claim that recently enacted **Farm Acts** has provisions of withdrawing the MSP & dismantling the public procurement of food grains.
- Farmers in Punjab and Haryana are heavily dependent on public procurement and assured price through MSP than farmers in any other State.
- According to Agricultural Statistics, nearly 88% of the paddy production & 70% of the wheat production in these states are procured by public agencies(in 2017-18 and 2018-19).
- On the other hand, only 44% of the rice production is procured by public agencies in other major paddy States such as Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh. In the case of wheat, this is even lower.
- Therefore, any disruption to the system will ruin livelihood of small and marginal farmers.
- They are also concerned that making farmers dependent on the open market will make large private players to take over agriculture.

What does the Government say?

- It says that these acts will only increase options for farmers in the output markets & MSP-procurement system will continue.
- It also says that there is no mention of either MSP or procurement in the acts.

Will Government stop public procurement of grains?

- The National Food Security Act (NFSA) has 80 crore beneficiaries and an additional eight crore migrants who need to be supported under the PDS.
- Due to the onset of the novel coronavirus pandemic and the migrant crisis,

the government has earmarked about 58 million tons of rice and 37 million tons of wheat.

- If the government intends to procure such huge quantities of grains, then it needs to depend on these two States in supplying grains to procurement agencies.
- As these states account for 35% of the rice and 62% of the wheat public procurement in the last three years.
- Thus, the government has little option but to continue its procurement from these States in the foreseeable future.
- Therefore, it is imperative that the government reaches out to the farmer groups and assures them of the indispensability of MSP-procurement system.

Source: The Hindu

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