

Massive Farmer Rally in Mumbai

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- The “long march of the farmers” (protest) in Maharashtra has brought back the attention on the crisis that beholds the Indian agriculture.

\n

- It is important to recognize that the issues raised aren’t merely superficial and they question the very socio-economic framework of our society.

\n

\n\n

What were the broader contours of the protest?

\n\n

\n

- A series of long-standing demands like - Loan waivers increased MSP, wider diffusion of effective property rights, improvements in irrigation.

\n

- The rally was a deeply emotional reminder of how much the farmer has become an invisible entity in our larger political mesh.

\n

- While most farmer movements were pressure tactics against governments and is dominated by the landed and well off castes, the current is very different.

\n

- This seems largely like a march of the most marginalised in dire desperation to liberate themselves from the fringes of the economic spectrum.

\n

- Hence, it would be a mistake to see the current voices as mere screams that could be shunted with unsustainable populist handouts.

\n

\n\n

What are the nuances that need special attention?

\n\n

\n

- **MSP** - The farmers have asserted the need to reform the way “Minimum Support Price” (MSP) is fixed, which is a prudent economic demand.
- The demand is to assess the true estimate of costs, and commission a cost plus model to secure farmer earnings after months of hard labour.
- While farmers are thought to be pampered with waivers, this debate highlights how consumers have been subsidised in invisible ways by farmers for long.
- **Loans** - While loan waivers in a well-functional system won't be necessary, considering the extent of distress in the sector, it is in fact not all that bad.
- There is a moral hazard in disputing desperate financial waivers as this would mean dismissing distributive justice that forms the core of our democracy.
- **Irrigation** - Part of the crisis has been induced by failures of irrigation projects, which calls for a rethink on our approach in this regard.
- Additionally, with increased focus on - roads, ports, power capacity etc, irrigation network up gradation has taken a backseat.
- **Marketing** - Agriculture is not a business in the conventional sense and faces production and price risks and a great deal of market regulations.
- The interventionist role of the state in farming and random subsidisation policies are some serious issues that need streamlining.
- **Rural Neglect** - The urban bias of public policy, media's incapacity to capture and highlight rural distress work congruently to worsen farmer woes.
- Rural India also faces a double social disadvantage due to our failures in health and education sectors, which envelops farmers almost completely.

\n

\n\n

What is the way ahead?

\n\n

\n

- It would be morally obtuse and analytically misleading to see this long march

as simply a demand for palliatives, subsidies, waivers.

\n

- Those constructions are often used to disguise the questions of distributive justice at play, and they reinforce the stereotype of the farmer as a mere victim.

\n

- The long march is instead a claim for economic agency and rationality, human dignity, political representation, and cultural visibility.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: Indian Express

\n

