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# A STORY OF PERSEVERANCE: HOW INDIA'S FARMERS ARE FIGHTING BACK

[Agriculture \(/full-blog/category/Agriculture\)](/full-blog/category/Agriculture), [Impact! \(/full-blog/category/Impact%21\)](/full-blog/category/Impact%21)

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Surrounding the city of New Delhi, India, farmers set up camp cities, where they have been protesting the passage of new agricultural laws.[i] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_edn1) Farmers, mostly Sikhs from the states of Punjab and Haryana, have been protesting since November, with no plan of retreating.[ii] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_edn2) Despite months of negotiations, government leaders remain unable to reach any agreements with more than 30 farmer unions.[iii] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_edn3) In January, India's Supreme Court temporarily suspended the new laws. [iv] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_edn4) Farmers have rejected proposals, citing the government's insincere efforts. [v] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_edn5) They have made it clear that the protest will continue until the laws are fully repealed.[vi] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_edn6)

While the Protest has been mostly peaceful, farmers and police clashed on what is known as Republic Day.[vii] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_edn7)“Police, carrying assault rifles, stood in the middle of roads, tear gas swirling around them with their rifles aimed at the crowds.”[viii] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_edn8) During these clashes, at least one farmer died, and hundreds of police officers and farmers were wounded.[ix] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_edn9) Since then, police have set up barricades and barbed wire, planting spikes in concrete to prevent farmers from entering New Delhi.[x] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_edn10)

The laws, passed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, are meant to “open India's agricultural industry to global markets, and attract private investors” by minimizing the government's role in agriculture.[xi] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_edn11) Yet farmers are worried, fearing a removal of government protections would leave farmers defenseless against the greed of private corporations. [xii] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_edn12) For the past several decades, farmers would sell their crops at auctions organized by their state's Agricultural Produce Market Committee. [xiii] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_edn13) Here, they were provided guaranteed prices for certain crops.[xiv] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_edn14) This created, a “stable guide [for farmers] to make decisions and investments for the following crop cycle.”[xv] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_edn15)

The new laws permit farmers to sell to “anyone anywhere,” but there is no mention of “minimum support prices.”[xvi] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_edn16) For small farmers, like Dalvir Singh, these new laws could have detrimental effects. Small farmers have emphasized their lack of ability to distribute their crops to different states and countries.[xvii] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_edn17) Other farmers argue the laws could create a situation where farmers would struggle to sell their crops at a decent price if there is too much supply.[xviii] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_edn18) Prime Minister Modi disagrees. Modi argues these laws will “boost farmers' income and productivity and lure private investment into an agricultural sector...”[xix] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_edn19)



(II. Photo II Link- <https://twitter.com/JimmyKahlon2/status/1360817690466607109>)

Seeing as farmers are one of the largest voting blocs in India, Modi, along with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), continually try to gain the support of farmers by passing several policy proposals. In 2016 the government set a target to double the income of farmers by 2022. [xx] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_edn20) However, the data paints a different picture. Data from the Reserve Bank of India shows the growth rate for agricultural

wages is slowing down.[xxi] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_edn21) Additionally, World Bank Data shows that consumer price inflation more than tripled between 2017 to 2019.[xxii] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_edn22) Coupled together, these statistics show that wage gains are respectively decreasing.

While the data acknowledges the need to reform India's agricultural industry, many criticize the fast-paced adoption of these new laws. Rohini Kurup, an associate editor for lawfare, writes, “the bills were rushed through Parliament without significant debate and were passed in a dubious voice vote, and farmers say they were not consulted in the process.”[xxiii] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_edn23) United Sikhs Gurvinder Singh, perfectly describes the lack of transparency on behalf of the government stating, “There is no safety net... There's no planning. And, unbelievably this was done without any consultation, without any studies, without any engagement with those who you're going to impact.”[xxiv] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_edn24)

The root of the problem is the small-scale farmer's ability to survive this new market approach. Sumit Ganguly, a political science professor at Indiana University, stated, “Over the longer haul, one could see a more successful agricultural bounty. But it will probably come at some cost. A number of these small farmers, they will probably get wiped out.”[xxv] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_edn25) To further exasperate this issue, critics note that unlike other industrialized countries, “India does not have factories to absorb displaced farmers or social programs to retrain them in, say, entrepreneurship or specialty farming.”[xxvi] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_edn26) If the government has the interest of its citizens in mind, it should refrain from hastily passing any legislation without considering the farmers. If it wishes to implement a new agricultural system, it should implement protections for the most vulnerable farmers. Without these parameters in mind, the government would be doing a great injustice to one of its most assiduous populations.

[i] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_ednref1) Mujib Mashal, Emily Schmall & Russell Goldman, *Why Are Farmers Protesting in India?*, N.Y. Times (Jan. 27, 2021).

- [ii] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_ednref2) *Id.*; See Jessie Yeung, *Farmers across India have been protesting for months. Here's why*, CNN (Feb. 14, 2021).
- [iii] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_ednref3) Jessie Yeung, *Farmers across India have been protesting for months. Here's why*, CNN (Feb. 14, 2021).
- [iv] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_ednref4) *Id.*
- [v] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_ednref5) *Id.*
- [vi] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_ednref6) *Id.*
- [vii] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_ednref7) Mashal, *supra* note i.
- [viii] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_ednref8) *Id.*
- [ix] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_ednref9) *Id.*
- [x] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_ednref10) *Id.*
- [xi] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_ednref11) *Id.*
- [xii] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_ednref12) Mujib Mashal, Emily Schmall & Russell Goldman, *Why Are Farmers Protesting in India?*, N.Y. Times (Jan. 27, 2021).
- [xiii] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_ednref13) Yeung, *supra* note iii.
- [xiv] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_ednref14) Jessie Yeung, *Farmers across India have been protesting for months. Here's why*, CNN (Feb. 14, 2021); Mujib Mashal, Emily Schmall & Russell Goldman, *Why Are Farmers Protesting in India?*, N.Y. Times (Jan. 27, 2021).
- [xv] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_ednref15) Yeung, *supra* note iii.
- [xvi] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_ednref16) *PBS News Hour: Indian farmers converge on Delhi to protest agricultural deregulation* (KET Television Broad. Jan. 25, 2021).

[xvii] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_ednref17) *Id.*

[xviii] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_ednref18) Yeung, *supra* note iii.

[xix] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_ednref19) *Id.*

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[xxi] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_ednref21) Shruti Menon, *India farmer protests: How rural incomes have struggled to keep up*, BBC News (Feb. 08, 2021).

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[xxiii] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_ednref23) Rohini Kurup, *Why Are Farmers Protesting in India?*, Lawfare (Feb. 18, 2021).

[xxiv] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_ednref24) *Id.*

[xxv] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_ednref25) *PBS News Hour*, *supra* note xvi.

[xxvi] (applewebdata://E8860630-FD75-41D7-AD9F-9ACC43899C53#\_ednref26) *Id.*

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