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Q3

What are the methods used by the Farmers organizations to influence the policy- makers in India and how effective are these methods?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2019 · GS II · 10 marks · Governance and Policy

Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Core demand of the question

- State the methods used by farmers' organisations to influence policy-makers in India
- Assess how effective these methods are

Revision summary

Article 19 speech, assembly and association frame farmers' methods.

Protest, memoranda, elections, media and writs are the main tools.

The 2021 repeal of the three farm laws shows high effectiveness of united, long agitation.

Short and split protests usually win a bonus, not a stable MSP law.

Tenant and women farmers remain poorly reached, so method success is real but uneven.

Introduction

Farmers' organisations try to move the Union and the States on prices, credit, power, water, and trade. They use the rights of speech, assembly, and association in **Article 19**, and they use elections, courts, and the street. Effectiveness depends on unity, duration, and whether the demand can be written into a statute or a budget line.

Body

Methods of influence

- Peaceful protest, sit-ins, rail and highway blockades, and long marches put a visible cost on governments; the 2020-21 farm-law agitation around Delhi is the largest recent example.
- Unions such as the Bharatiya Kisan Union, All India Kisan Sabha, and later coalitions submit memoranda, meet ministers, and depose before parliamentary standing committees.
- Election-time voting blocs in States with a strong kisan identity, and support or boycott of parties, turn rural numbers into a whip on policy-makers.
- Public-interest litigation, challenges to land-acquisition notifications, and petitions on drought or sugarcane arrears move the dispute into **Articles 32 and 226**.
- Media campaigns, social media, and alliance with traders or labour unions widen the issue beyond the village.
- Expert reports - the **National Commission on Farmers** chaired by M.S. **Swaminathan**, and later committee talks on minimum support price - give organisations a technical file to hand to the

ministry.

How effective they are

- **Sustained, united protest can change statute:** the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, and the two companion farm laws were repealed in 2021 after months of mobilisation.
- Methods work better on a single, national, easy-to-name demand (repeal, loan waiver, a price announcement) than on slow reforms of marketing, storage, and tenancy.
- Fragmented unions, caste and crop splits, and short harvest-season protests often win a one-time bonus or a delayed payment, not a stable MSP statute or a full **Swaminathan** cost-plus formula.
- Litigation can stay a notification, but courts do not run procurement; the Food Corporation of India and State agencies still decide who actually sells at MSP.
- Small and tenant farmers, and women in agriculture, are weakly organised, so methods that look effective on television can miss those who need the **National Food Security Act, 2013**, and MGNREGA the most.

Short way forward

- Institutionalise consultation through a standing farmers' council linked to the Ministry of Agriculture, so protest is not the only channel.
- Protect **Article 19** protest while keeping essential services, and publish a time-bound reply to committee depositions.
- Tie MSP, PM-KISAN, and crop-insurance talk to tenant and women farmers, not only to title-holding union members.

Flow diagram

Farmers organisations -> Protest lobbying votes
 Farmers organisations -> Committees and courts
 Protest lobbying votes -> Policy-makers Union and States
 Committees and courts -> Policy-makers Union and States
 Policy-makers Union and States -> Repeal MSP waiver or delay
 Repeal MSP waiver or delay -> Uneven reach to small tenants

Conclusion

Farmers' organisations influence policy through protest, lobbying, votes, media, and courts. Those methods are highly effective when unity lasts long enough to threaten a national law or an election; they are weak at delivering slow, inclusive agricultural reform for the least organised cultivators.

Facts & figures

Article 19(1)(a)-(c)

Speech, assembly and association rights that lawful farmers' protests and unions rely on, subject to reasonable restrictions.

National Commission on Farmers (Swaminathan)

Recommended a comprehensive farmer policy, including an MSP related to weighted cost; a frequent demand in union charters.

Farm laws, 2020, repealed 2021

Three Union statutes on trade, contract farming and essential commodities were repealed after nationwide farmer mobilisation.

National Food Security Act, 2013

Legal entitlement to subsidised grain; farm organisations also lobby procurement that feeds the NFSA pool.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005

Rural wage floor that farm households use in the lean season; often part of agrarian demand charters.

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