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Q5(e)

What is your assessment about the recent farmers' movement in India? Elaborate.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2024 · Sociology GS 2 · 10 marks · Social Movements in Modern India

Social Movements in Modern India: Peasants and farmers movements; Women's movement; Backward classes and Dalit movement; Environmental movements; Ethnicity and Identity movements.

Core demand of the question

- Identify the 2020-21 farmers' movement against the three farm laws
- Assess organisation, social base, methods, achievements and limits
- **Be sociological:** class, caste, region, gender, and the state; not a partisan scorecard

Revision summary

The 2020-21 movement opposed three Union farm laws and won repeal in 2021.

Its core was organised cultivators of the north-western grain belt, including strong women's support work.

It used sit-ins, highways and a food-producer moral claim.

It succeeded as a veto; it did not transform landless labour's condition.

It continues the New Farmers' Movement tradition at a national scale.

Introduction

The **farmers' movement of 2020-21** was a prolonged sit-in, mainly at Delhi's borders, against three Union farm laws on trade, contract farming and stock limits. The laws were **repealed in 2021**. Assessment means asking who moved, how, what they won, and what agrarian structure they could not change.

Body**Who and how**

Unions from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh-often **Jat and related cultivating groups** with a history of Green Revolution surplus and **MSP** grain-led the blockade. **BKU** and later a wider coalition, including women langar and kit-work, made it more than a male tractor protest. It used highways, social media, and a moral language of annadata. That is a **regional agrarian class movement** with a nationalist frame, not an all-India landless labour uprising.

Assessment

As a veto on a particular liberalisation of grain trade, it succeeded. It showed that organised farmers can still check the Union when logistics (Punjab-Delhi) and union density align. It politicised **MSP** as a public guarantee. Limits are clear: landless Dalit labour and many dryland farmers were weakly centred; corporate and class inequalities inside agriculture remain; the movement did not rewrite tenancy or women's land titles. Some violence and a

contested Republic Day tractor march complicated its civic claim.

Sociologically it is a **dominant-cultivator defence of a state-supported grain regime**, allied at times with wider rural anger, effective as protest, incomplete as agrarian justice. Compared with earlier New Farmers' Movements (Sharad Joshi, BKU in the 1980s), it was more national-media visible and more focused on Union statute.

- **The assessment, then:** historically large, regionally skewed, tactically successful on repeal, structurally conservative on labour and landless interests.

Flow diagram

Three farm laws 2020 -> Border sit-ins unions
Punjab Haryana west UP cultivators -> Border sit-ins unions
Border sit-ins unions -> Repeal 2021 MSP politics
Landless and dryland weakly centred -> Border sit-ins unions

Conclusion

The 2020-21 farmers' movement was a powerful, union-led, Green-Revolution-belt mobilisation that forced repeal of the three laws. It defended **MSP** and cultivator dignity more than it represented all rural classes. That is both its strength and its limit.

Facts & figures

Three farm laws 2020

Statutes on trade, contract farming and essential commodities that protesters saw as a threat to MSP mandis.

Repeal 2021

Union withdrawal after the year-long agitation.

MSP

Minimum support price politics at the centre of the movement's demand language.