

## **Agricultural Marketing Reforms: Current Status and Future Directions**

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### **Abstract**

*India is primarily an agricultural economy with about half of the farming sector's workforce (GoI2016a). Marketing in agriculture means the economic mechanism through which agricultural products are traded. The Agri-Food system supports half of India's population and other economic sectors. These sectors provided inputs to other industries for raw material and supply. It is estimated that India agricultural sector accounts for only about 14% of the country economy but 42% of total employment (GoI2020). So it is the country most crucial industry in terms of jobs generation, its percentage share has declined. The growth of GDP and stability of food chain management is the most critical aspect of the Indian economy. The Government has taken the requisite steps to make farms laws to ensure a profitable chain. Therefore, studying other agricultural marketing reforms is essential to increase farm productivity and maintain the supply chain. In this paper, analysis and understanding of recent agrarian marketing reforms in India and their effect are crucial in deciding the natural course of the future direction. We have attempted to review the country's major marketing reforms and various studies on the advantages and changes of agricultural marketing reforms and recommend solutions to improve NAM to distribute its anticipated benefits to farmers inclusively and efficiently.*

**Keywords:** Agricultural marketing, Reforms, Food chain, APMC.

### **Introduction**

India is an ancient agricultural country. "Agriculture and allied sector continue to play an essential role in India as they ensure the food security of about 1.3 billion people, employing more than 50% of the workforce and making a contribution of approximately 15.4% (GoI, 2018) to the country's Gross Domestic Product"(J.C., 2013). Agriculture is a state

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subject in India, and agriculture marketing is governed by state-level Agriculture Produce Marketing Acts, who can buy produce from farmers, who can sell to farmers, and where the exchange takes place are all governed by state-specific regulations, quotas, and restrictions on imports and exports are used to limit overseas commerce. In contrast, the Vital Commodities Act is used to control internal trade. In many ways, the Indian agriculture sector has been struggling. Farm growth remained stagnant after 1990-91, with agriculture revenue growing negatively in five of the subsequent 12 years the difference. Between a farmer's agriculture income and that of a non-agriculture worker is enormous. Reforms in the agriculture sector are required due to the discrepancy between agriculture and non-agriculture. Economic surveys from 2011-12 to 2014-15, 2016-17, and 2019-20, in particular, focused on the reforms required in this setting (Dapke, 2021). According to the researchers, farmers have also been subjected to numerous agricultural produce market committee yards restrictions. They couldn't sell their products to anyone other than state government licensees. The Market Committee, established under the State Marketing Legislations, is at the Centre of the strategy for agriculture sector development by establishing an agricultural marketing system. The food sector heavily uses agricultural products and commodities. In developing countries, disposable incomes are increasing. As a result, agriculture will need to support the food industry's efforts to address the new challenges and opportunities. The food business, in particular, will demand that agriculture deliver a more comprehensive range of quality in its products and commodities, as well as a larger share of overall supply. (AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD MARKETING MANAGEMENT, n.d.) . However, Agriculture Market is one of the issues that Indian agriculture is dealing with. It has a variety of meanings and branches, such as lack of regulation, lack of specialised transportation, insufficient warehouses, and insufficient cold storage, Perishable agricultural product storage facilities, large-scale exploitation of farmers by mediators or commission agents in APMC mandis etc. Agriculture Produce Markets Regulation Act, often known as APMC Act, was adopted by the Indian Government in 1964.

### **Objectives**

1. To understand and analysis of the status of Agricultural marketing in India.
2. To analyse the need for reforms in the agricultural market.
3. To study the understanding of New Farms bills, i.e. New marketing Reforms

## Review of Literature

- **Jyotika(2020)** states that the Government of India (GOI) recommended current significant reforms to boost several of these marketing mechanisms that Indian farmers were obligated by law to employ measures to remove many of the lengthy roadblocks to agricultural growth and farmer profitability.
- **Pritam (2020)**(*Centre's Agricultural Marketing Reform*, n.d.):It assumed that Farmers would have more options to sell their food at attractive pricing under the new Central law, and interstate trade dddd be more open, ensuring cultivators get a better bargain for their crop
- **M.Ravikishore (2020)**((*PDF*) *Agricultural Marketing Reforms – Ushering Rural Agripreneurship*, n.d.).The most recent regulations emphasise the importance of agricultural market reforms in fostering agripreneurship in the country. These Indian government rules will help develop entrepreneurship, particularly farming. As a result, all three ordinances are examined to acknowledge the importance of governmental support for entrepreneurial growth and raise awareness among farmers.
- **(Srivastava & Saxena, 2021)**: suggests that agriculture is becoming more commercialised, although gradually due to various infrastructure, institutional, and legislative obstacles. As a result, farmers' income continues to be low, with substantial geographical variations. Common price realisation and a slow pace of diversification are the two leading causes for the country's low level of farmer income, among a few other factors. By tackling the rising difficulties through technological advancements and regulatory reforms, agriculture may become more remunerative, competitive, and sustainable.
- **Chatterjee (2020)**(*Farm Bills: First Principles and the Political Economy of Agricultural Market Regulation*, n.d.): looked at the Farm Bill: Principles and Political Economies of Agricultural Market Regulations and discovered that an uncompetitive market with a high entry barrier for a large buyer is considered as a significant hurdle to achieving national policy's goal of doubling farmer income. The Government has praised the legislation as "transformative changes" that will free India's farmers and agriculture from the grasp of manipulative middlemen and unethical State-regulated Agriculture Produce Market Committees, popularly known as mandis.

### ***Brief History of Agricultural Marketing***

The Royal Commission on Agriculture's recommendation for regulation of marketing methods and In 1928, the introduction of regulated markets (GoI, 2017) was a significant milestone in the country's agricultural marketing scene. In 1938, the Government of India drafted a Model Bill and distributed it to all states. Even though some provinces and states passed legislation to regulate agricultural produce markets, little transpired until independence (*Brief History of Agricultural Marketing Regulation*, n.d.). Development of marketing system before the Green Revolution, consisting of Market Committees established under State Marketing Legislations. As a result, organised agricultural markets came into force through regulated markets. . The purpose of market integration was to safeguard farmers from trader abuses such as collusive price setting, adulteration, false weighing and quality assessment, delayed payments, and more. Regulated markets were meant to hold open auctions, convey information, utilise established weights, and take drastic action against dishonest merchants to remedy these malpractices. The Government of India passed the Agriculture Produce Markets Regulation Act, also known as the APMC Act, in 1964. This act aims to correct existing agricultural market anomalies and malpractices. "APMC eliminated various malpractices and flaws in agriculture markets, establishing orderly and transparent marketing circumstances, and ensuring a more equitable bargain for farmers selling their produce. "Each state in independent India adopted variants of the committee's suggestions to create its APMC laws to govern agricultural produce marketing, especially the initial transaction. APMC markets are the major exchange venues in several states (e.g., Punjab, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh). This is not the case in many others (e.g., Bihar and Odisha), where physical APMC marketplaces generally never existed. Reforms in the Post-Independence Era Price discovery was initially enhanced by developing market sites and regulations, but difficulties remained. The old APMC acts only allowed licenced merchants to sell within regulated markets. It was a bureaucratic nightmare getting new licences. Incumbent traders created cartels and wielded market dominance in general. In response to these issues, states made several changes, including introducing alternative marketing channels (outside of regulated markets) and allowing direct purchases from farmers. However, there is significant regional variance. Many improvements remained on paper but were never implemented in practice. States, for example, were tardy and unscrupulous in awarding direct procurement licences, and new permits for trading across markets came with more incredible prices. Furthermore, many states did not devote enough resources to

agricultural marketing. In this environment, the central Government decided that agricultural marketing needed to be further deregulated to allow private firms to enter the market. Increased competition and investment would boost farmer earnings (Lee et al., 1994).

### *APMC*

The primary goal of APMC Markets is to prevent farmers from selling their land in distress. However, because farmers wanted to sell their products through these committees, these APMC markets had become a barrier to getting a fair price. Only licenced mediators such as commission agents, wholesalers, transporters, and storage agents are permitted to operate in the APMC system, primarily built on a commission-based network. The competition commission Confined in December 2010 that several groups of middlemen collected their share before it reached the final customer. In a 2012 report, the National Council of Applied Economic Research highlighted a significant impediment to fair trade as a handful of dealers monopolising practically all markets. Some of the barriers, as mentioned earlier, can be seen in existing APMC markets. As a result, the government stated that the new Act 2020 would make it easier for farmers to market their produce profitably. The new act will also lower interstate trade obstacles, allowing farmers in Uttar Pradesh, for example, to sell to buyers and merchants in Gujarat via an e-trading framework.

### *e-NAM*

-On April 14 2016, eNAM was an online trading platform launched by the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India. An e-trading platform in India attempts to connect the current APMC with another market yard to create a unified national market for agricultural commodities. Empirical studies show that even electronic market functioning depends on adequate physical infrastructure (Sekhara et al., 2020). At its core, NAM is a "virtual marketplace with a physical market (Mandi)." NAM must be established to support the creation of a famous national market for agricultural goods. The amount of agriculture commodity trading at first idea of a sale, that is, when farmers deliver yield after the produce, is currently limited by APMC-controlled market yard harvest in the local Mandi, which is generally at the Tehsil if not the district level. To improve the efficiency of the agricultural marketing system, the Indian Government developed a national agriculture market in 2016, integrating all of the country's existing APMC marketplaces through a single electronic platform known as e-NAM (<http://www.enam.gov.in>). It aims to help farmers by improving price realisation, lowering transaction costs, and minimising mediators' role and price manipulation.

### ***Current Status***

In the year 2020, the Indian Government introduced and enacted three acts that, according to the Government, will bring significant changes to the Indian agricultural market. On June 5, 2020, India's Ministry of Law and Justice issued three regulations to ease existing market limitations, eliminate free trade obstacles in agricultural output, and allow farmers to contact potential purchasers directly before harvest. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed comprehensive market adjustments in the Special Economic Package to strengthen India's agricultural sector post-COVID-19 economy on May 15, 2020. (*India: | USDA Foreign Agricultural Service*, n.d.). The proportion of farm products sold within the state drops as agriculture becomes increasingly commercialised, while the balance sold outside the state rises.

Furthermore, when the country's per capita income rises, the country's purchasing patterns diversify. People prefer to eat a wide range of foods grown primarily outside of the state, if not the Government. This necessitates a continual flow of farm produce across the country, free of regulatory stumbling blocks and unneeded mediators. This needs supply and value chains that transport things quickly and effectively from one state to another and consumer and producer integration over great distances. Such development will be accelerated if we have clear rules throughout the country, allowing farmers and traders to sell, buy, and move their products without further inspections or barriers. To boost farmer price realisation, provide food to consumers at competitive prices, compete with imports, and push export, a "one nation, one market" is required. The motto "One India, One Agriculture Market" is an open declaration of the reforms' centre goal ("*One Nation, One Market*" n.d.). "The Union Cabinet approved three major decisions via central ordinances that impact India's agricultural Sector on June 3, 2020. The Ministry of Law and Justice published the three regulations following approval from India's President, Ram Nath Kovind, on June 5, 2020" (*Agri Reforms Of May 15 2020*, n.d.).

The central government recently issued three ordinances that regulate the critical agricultural market.

- i. The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Ordinance 2020.
- ii. The Farming Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Ordinance, 2020, and
- iii. The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Ordinance. (*Home | Mo A&FW | GoI*, n.d.)

### **I-The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Ordinance, 2020**

According to the Indian government, this legislation will establish an environment where farmers and dealers can freely sell and buy agricultural products outside of state-run APMC-registered mandis. It will reduce inter-and intra-state trade and reduce marketing transportation costs, which helps farmers get better prices. Further also facilitates a framework for electronic trading(*What Is Farm Bill 2020-Times of India*, n.d.). India farmers began to protest, especially Punjab and Haryana leading the charge. The Farmers' outrage stems from their fear of the MSP being dismantled (Minimum Support Price) and corporate exploitation of farmers.

### **II- The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm services Ordinance 2020**

According to a press release from the Government of India, this law will allow farmers to enter into contracts with agribusiness corporations and compete on an equal footing with processors, wholesalers, aggregators, distributors, large retailers, and exporters. It will transfer market risk from the supplier to the buying farmer and provide new technology and enhanced inputs. It will help farmers earn more money by lowering marketing costs. Farmers are also opposed to the ordinance, fearing that large firms will exploit large private firms and be unable to bargain what they require. (*Times of India*, n.d.).

### **III- The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Ordinance 2020**

According to this ordinance, essential food items such as edible oils, onions, potatoes, grains, pulses, oilseeds will be removed from the list of essential commodities, easing private investors' concerns about excessive regulatory intervention into their business operations. The legislation was passed. According to the law, the stock limit can only be applied to restrict these commodities under specific circumstances, including war, starvation, drastic economic shifts, and natural disasters. This provision will attract private sector\FDI in the farm sector and bring investment for farm infrastructure like cold storage and modernising the food supply chain. These ordinances denied by the farmers due to insecurity by big companies have the freedom to stock commodities. It means they dictate terms to farmers, leading to lower prices for the cultivators(*Times of India*, n.d.).

### **Data Collection**

Evaluating the scholarly articles, reports and news articles relevant to the research has helped understand agricultural marketing. This study will

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also include secondary data from various websites, journals, texts, books, magazines, research publications.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Agriculture continues to be the most critical sector of the Indian economy, playing a crucial role in accomplishing many development goals such as food security, income generation, job creation, and industrial development. “The agriculture sector has a significant potential to contribute to national income while also providing direct employment and income to a numerically more meaningful and more vulnerable population segment”(Bairwa et al., 2014). Governments should implement programmes that would enhance farmers' income and productivity. As the government launched e-Nam, which as aforementioned, we need to create awareness about this platform. It's also been noted that a sizable number of smallholder farmers may be excluded from this structural change in the country's marketing system since they are uninformed of the incentives and benefits available through e-NAM commerce. As a result, to reap the full benefits of the structural changes established in the agricultural market in terms of e- NAM, the implementation process must be revisited and certain new features added to the system favouring smallholder farmers(Kumar et al., n.d.) Digital procurement/sourcing solutions are critical to improving the supply chain. Mainly reforms bring better access to the market, information, and services to enhance the farmer, allowing him to adopt suggested agricultural techniques and trade transparently. (Global System for Mobile Communications Association [GSMA], 2020)(Chaudhary & Suri, 2021).The proper implementation of reforms in any sector brings up-gradation and advancement. The new Act 2020, according to Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, meets the expectations and needs of agriculture. When it comes to farm l(*Farm Bills: Liberalization of Agricultural Marketing Is Necessary*, n.d.) believes that agriculture marketing liberalisation is the way to go. A proper grasp of the relationship between law and the operation of the marketing system is required for any programme of agricultural marketing. Agriculture and farming markets, without a doubt, require increased investment and more robust regulation. While the private sector will be necessary to make considerable investments, the government will benefit farmers, particularly those connected to public goods and infrastructure (Chatterjee, n.d.). The relevance of a market liberalisation programme and the need for legal reforms to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the marketing system has been recognised by developing countries all over the world. Farmers must be given the resources to deal with the sector's liberalisation, its related difficulties, and the tools (capabilities) they need to become Agri entrepreneurs and participate in its development. (Pindado & Sánchez, 2017). In a nutshell, these laws will increase private sector investment in farm produce in both domestic



and foreign markets. Farmers can increase farm output and sell their produce directly without commissions or Mandi fees. The minimum support price system, which protects small and marginal farmers, would be maintained, according to Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar "The goal of the three farm laws was to empower the farmers of the country, tiny farmers," the prime minister said in his speech to the nation. "They should obtain the correct price for their produce and maximum alternatives to selling the produce," he said. Furthermore, several conversations with farmers have taken place over the last year, but no agreement has been reached. In terms of agricultural marketing, He has proposed forming a committee to promote zero-budgeting agriculture, adjust crop patterns in response to changing country needs, and improve the effectiveness and transparency of the MSP. Representatives from the Federal Government, state governments, farmers, agricultural exports, and agricultural economists will serve the group(*India Withdraws Agriculture / Argus Media*, n.d.). India's agricultural marketing policy has been characterised by state participation in production activities, state intervention in foodgrain procurement and distribution, agricultural economy direction through regulatory mechanisms such as storage and warehousing, and construction of supporting infrastructures. Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India said on November 19, 2021, that the Government would repeal all three agriculture-related market changes that were implemented in September 2020 and have sparked significant protests for nearly a year. The new Acts are expected to address substantial issues in making Indian agriculture more profitable and competitive if implemented correctly. However, a few crucial difficulties must be addressed: Farmers protest the new farm legislation. Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India said on November 19 2021, that the "Government would repeal all three agriculture-related market changes that were implemented in September 2020 and have sparked significant protests for nearly a year. Large firms will have the ability to stock commodities following the approval of the controversial agriculture measures, perhaps resulting in lower crop prices for farmers. Furthermore, by increasing the number of potential buyers, the new Bills may undercut the MSP system, favouring "big farmers" and companies over smaller farmers.(*Withdrawal of Farm Bills Demanded - The Hindu*, n.d.). We can introduce agricultural marketing reforms that are beneficial to farmers, so long as these current reforms are balanced against implementing these bills with improvements and under farmers' expectations and requirements. It needs hours to make agriculture more attractive and profitable by making marketing reforms suitable for farmers. So there is a need for improvement in APMC to ensure farmer productivity, which helps maintain the proper food chain supply in an economy.

### **Limitation of the Study**

This paper also discusses the recent agricultural reforms approved by the Government of India on June 3 2020. The present government believes that the laws will bring much-needed changes to India's agricultural markets, calling the act “historic”. However, the shows have sparked outrage from various quarters, demanding swift reversal beyond political views. Following Statute 2020, sure farmers' leaders and opposition parties have protested against bills, criticising the new act. Farmers are voicing their opposition to the new farm legislation. Farmers were allowed to continue protesting when the Supreme Court ruled on December 17, 2020, that the Right to Protest is a fundamental right that must be exercised peacefully. The protests will continue until the Government announces the amendment bills' withdrawal. On November 19 government of India was removed from amendment bills.

### **Recommendations**

- To ensure the implementation of new agricultural reforms to benefit farmers for developing the agriculture sector.
- It should assure Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for agricultural products as the government provides MSP on wheat, rice, and associated products. They should also include MSP on all staples goods. Related advantages are given to farmers for better productivity. Minimum Support Prices (MSP) coverage should be expanded to encourage farmers to diversify their production capability. As a result, pulses, horticulture, and other crops such as oilseeds should solely be grown in India, reducing our import imbalance and allowing customers to obtain such commodities at a low cost. India would also address its malnutrition problem and many other health problems among children and women. So they can get nutritious things at minimum prices.
- Existing infrastructure, such as warehouses and processing facilities, cannot fulfil rising demand. As a result, the government should improve physical and virtual infrastructure to meet farmers’ needs. Farmers should be aware of the existing digital facilities such as the E-NAM portal to derive the maximum benefit. So, the awareness among farmers is critical to proceed further.
- Regarding new farm bills, the government should reintroduce them with some modifications after considering farmers’ demands while persuading and educating them about the anticipated benefits of these bills.

- Market barriers should be removed, such as various prohibitions, hoardings, black marketing, and moneylender harassment of farmers to conduct their business in an open and unrestricted market. It should also improve market facilities, e.g. storage and warehouses, etc., which leads to enhanced farmers' produce.
- Data is a prerequisite for developing successful policies, and this necessitates the timely collection of data on all of the country's farmers and their producing crops. It ensures a steady supply of accurate data to get the most out of their sales and boost marketing efficiency.
- Artificial intelligence (AI) is expanding globally in the agriculture market. Hence, Government should also ensure that the use of technology should benefit the farmers in enhancing their production capabilities and global competition.
- Natural farming should be promoted to maintain the healthy growth of crops, farmers do not need to purchase fertilizers or pesticides. This farming approach boosts nutritional value and crop yield, contributing to the country's food security and helping to achieve sustainable goals.
- The importance of agricultural market reforms in fostering agribusiness in any country. The Indian government would act as a catalyst for entrepreneurship development, particularly in the agriculture sector, by recognising the importance of governmental support for entrepreneurship development and raising public awareness among farmers.
- The government should ensure that the aforementioned agrarian reforms are implemented to assist farmers and strengthen India's agricultural industry and the formation of Various committees that have proposed different modifications in the marketing of agricultural commodities due to the constraints of existing market regulation.

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