

A Socio-Legal Analysis of Opaque Governmental Agricultural Policies and Their Structural Impact on Farming Communities in India

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Abstract

Agriculture remains the backbone of India's socioeconomic fabric, sustaining approximately 55% of the total workforce. Yet farmers—the primary stakeholders of the agrarian economy—are consistently marginalised through policy frameworks designed and executed with minimal transparency, inadequate legislative consultation, and systemic legal exclusion. This paper undertakes a socio-legal inquiry into governmental agricultural policies in India, examining how structural opacity in policy design, opaque budgetary allocations, and asymmetric information access collectively disadvantage farming communities. Drawing on four in-depth Indian case studies—the Farm Laws Crisis (2020–2021), the Minimum Support Price (MSP) Non-Binding Framework, the PM-KISAN Implementation Gaps, and the Land Acquisition Controversies under the RFCTLARR Act—this research maps the nexus between legal architecture, political economy, and agrarian distress. Using a doctrinal-cum-empirical analytical framework, the study argues that hidden policy decisions perpetuate structural inequality, violate farmers' constitutional rights under Articles 14, 19, and 21, and demand urgent socio-legal redress. The paper concludes with a rights-based policy reform agenda grounded in the principles of transparency, participatory governance, and distributive justice.

Keywords: agricultural policy, farmer rights, socio-legal analysis, MSP, farm laws, India

1. Introduction

India's agricultural sector is not merely an economic category; it is a civilisational institution intertwined with cultural identities, ecological relationships, and constitutional promises of equality and dignity. With over 140 million farm households (Ministry of Agriculture, 2022), the sector feeds a nation of 1.4 billion people while generating approximately 17–18% of the national GDP. Yet, paradoxically, this sector has remained one of the most economically insecure and legally underserved domains of Indian public life.

The paradox of agricultural policy in India is characterised by a fundamental asymmetry: while the state claims to be the protector and promoter of farmers' welfare, its policy architecture frequently operates through hidden mechanisms—opaque ministerial decisions, delegated legislation without parliamentary scrutiny, exclusionary budget designs, and administrative circulars that bypass legislative deliberation. This opacity is not merely an administrative inconvenience; it constitutes a structural violation of the

rule of law and of democratic accountability principles enshrined in the Indian Constitution (Shankar & Mehta, 2021).

Recent years have catalysed scholarly and public attention toward these hidden dimensions of agricultural governance. The historic farmers' protests of 2020–2021 against three contentious Farm Laws demonstrated that policy decisions affecting millions of farming households could be passed through Ordinance routes and fast-tracked legislation without adequate consultations, triggering one of the largest democratic protests in recorded history (Jodhka, 2021). However, the Farm Laws controversy is not an isolated episode—it is symptomatic of deeper structural flaws in how India formulates, implements, and evaluates agricultural policy.

This paper adopts a socio-legal lens to interrogate these hidden policy mechanisms. Socio-legal analysis allows us to move beyond the formal text of law to examine how law operates in social reality—who benefits, who is excluded, and how legal structures interact with social hierarchies, political economy, and material conditions of farming communities (Cotterrell, 2018). The research integrates constitutional law, administrative law principles, and empirical data from government reports, NCRB statistics, agricultural surveys, and peer-reviewed studies to construct a comprehensive picture of policy opacity and its consequences.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews the theoretical and conceptual framework; Section 3 presents the methodology; Section 4 analyses four landmark case studies; Section 5 presents empirical data through tables, charts, and figures; Section 6 discusses the socio-legal implications; Section 7 proposes a reform agenda; and Section 8 concludes.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Socio-Legal Studies as an Analytical Lens

Socio-legal studies emerged as a discipline that challenges the formalist conception of law as an autonomous, self-referential system (Twining, 2019). In the context of agricultural policy, a socio-legal approach demands that we ask not only what the law says but also how the law operates in the lived experiences of farmers—a population characterised by economic precarity, low literacy rates, geographic dispersion, and historical exclusion from policy processes (Bhatia, 2020).

Bourdieu's concept of the 'legal field' provides a productive theoretical resource here. Bourdieu (1987) argued that law reproduces existing power hierarchies by translating social conflicts into legal categories that are accessible only to those possessing 'legal capital.' When Indian farmers confront complex contractual provisions in e-NAM platforms, navigate multi-tiered subsidy application

procedures, or attempt to challenge land acquisition orders under the 2013 Act, they encounter a legal field that structurally disadvantages them (Menon, 2022).

2.2 The Concept of Policy Opacity

Policy opacity refers to the deliberate or structural absence of transparency in the design, communication, and evaluation of public policy (Hood & Heald, 2006). In agricultural governance, opacity manifests in multiple forms: (a) technical opacity—policies drafted in complex administrative and legal language inaccessible to beneficiaries; (b) procedural opacity—decision-making through executive orders, ordinances, or delegated legislation that bypasses parliamentary deliberation; (c) informational opacity—inadequate dissemination of entitlements to beneficiaries; and (d) evaluative opacity—absence of independent impact assessments or sunset clauses.

2.3 Constitutional Framework and Farmers' Rights

The Indian Constitution, while not explicitly mentioning farmers' rights, embeds multiple provisions relevant to agrarian justice. Article 14 guarantees equality before law and equal protection—a standard that hidden policies, by excluding farmers from policy formulation, arguably violate. Article 19(1)(g) protects the right to practice any profession or trade, which courts have interpreted to include the right to sell agricultural produce at remunerative prices (*All India Kisan Sabha v. State of Rajasthan*, 2016). Article 21's evolving jurisprudence of the right to life has been extended by courts to include the right to livelihood (*Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation*, 1985), providing a constitutional basis for challenging policies that structurally impoverish farmers.

The Directive Principles of State Policy (Part IV), particularly Articles 38, 39, 43, and 48A, impose affirmative obligations on the state to promote the welfare of the agricultural community, ensure equitable distribution of resources, and protect rural workers from exploitation—obligations that systematic policy opacity directly undermines.

3. Methodology

This research employs a mixed doctrinal-qualitative methodology (McCrudden, 2017). The doctrinal dimension involves systematic analysis of constitutional provisions, statutory frameworks (including the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce Act 2020, RFCTLARR Act 2013, Essential Commodities Act 1955, and APMC Acts), Supreme Court judgments, and administrative orders. The qualitative dimension draws on secondary data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare reports, Planning Commission studies, NABARD's NAFIS surveys, and peer-reviewed academic literature indexed in Scopus and Web of Science databases.

Case studies were selected using purposive sampling on the basis of three criteria: (i) significant national policy visibility, (ii) documented adverse farmer impact, and (iii) availability of legal proceedings or administrative records enabling socio-legal analysis. The four selected cases represent distinct dimensions of policy opacity: legislative process failures, price policy failures, implementation failures, and land rights failures. Triangulation was achieved by cross-referencing government data with civil society reports and judicial observations.

It must be acknowledged that this study relies on secondary data, and primary field research with farming communities could yield richer experiential insights. However, the analytical objective of mapping structural policy opacity is effectively served through the doctrinal-empirical combination employed here.

4. Case Studies: Hidden Policies and Farmer Impact

4.1 Case Study I — The Farm Laws Controversy (2020–2021): Opacity in Legislative Process

In September 2020, the Government of India enacted three agricultural reform laws—the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act 2020, the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act 2020, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act 2020—via the ordinance route followed by fast-tracked parliamentary passage. The Bills were passed in the Rajya Sabha amid Opposition demands for referral to a Standing Committee, with the Presiding Officer declaring them passed by voice vote without a formal division, despite visible dissent (Rao, 2021).

The legal opacity here was multi-dimensional. First, the ordinance route—while constitutionally permitted under Article 123—was deployed not in a situation of urgency but as a political strategy to circumvent parliamentary scrutiny during the COVID-19 pandemic when normal legislative deliberation was restricted. Second, the Bills were not referred to Parliamentary Standing Committees on Agriculture, eliminating the primary mechanism for stakeholder consultation. Third, the new statutory framework contained provisions—particularly Section 13 of the FPTC Act, which barred civil courts from entertaining disputes under the Act—that effectively removed farmers' access to ordinary judicial remedies (Singh, 2021).

The socio-legal consequence was profound. Farmers in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan correctly perceived that the laws threatened the MSP procurement system—the single most critical price safety net for their livelihoods—even though the laws technically did not abolish MSP. The absence of legal guarantee of MSP, combined with provisions enabling corporate agricultural agreements with

asymmetric contract terms, created legitimate structural vulnerabilities for small and marginal farmers. The Supreme Court constituted a four-member Expert Committee in January 2021, ultimately suspending the laws' operation (*Rakesh Vaishnav v. Union of India*, 2021). The laws were repealed in November 2021—a historic parliamentary reversal.

This case study illustrates how legislative opacity—the deliberate avoidance of consultative legislative processes—generates policy outcomes that farmers can neither understand, challenge through normal legal channels, nor meaningfully participate in shaping.

4.2 Case Study II — The MSP Non-Binding Framework: Opacity in Price Policy

The Minimum Support Price is the most widely cited agricultural entitlement in India, yet it operates in a remarkable legal vacuum. MSP is determined annually by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) based on recommendations from the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP). However, MSP has no statutory backing—it is an executive price advisory with no legal obligation on private traders, state governments, or even the Food Corporation of India to procure at MSP for most crops beyond wheat and paddy (Saini & Kozicka, 2014).

The CACP recommends MSP using three cost formulas: A2 (out-of-pocket expenses), A2+FL (including family labour imputed cost), and C2 (comprehensive cost including land rent and interest on capital). The Union Government's announcement in the 2018 Union Budget that MSP would be set at 1.5 times the A2+FL cost was widely celebrated, but the CACP's methodology reveals that C2—the more comprehensive farmer-protective formula—is systematically not used as the base. For wheat in 2022–23, C2 was ₹2,162/quintal while MSP was set at ₹2,015/quintal, meaning farmers already receive below-C2 returns (CACP, 2023). This methodological choice—made within executive committees without parliamentary deliberation—constitutes a hidden structural inequality embedded in the price policy architecture.

Furthermore, MSP procurement is geographically concentrated: Punjab and Haryana together account for approximately 50–60% of wheat and paddy procurement despite having less than 5% of farm households nationally (FCI Annual Report, 2022). Farmers in Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and most of eastern India have minimal access to MSP procurement infrastructure, rendering the policy effectively null for them. This geographic opacity—never explicitly stated in any policy document—creates a two-tier agrarian economy.

4.3 Case Study III — PM-KISAN Exclusion Gaps: Opacity in Implementation

The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme, launched in February 2019, provides ₹6,000 per annum in three instalments to all 'farmer families' owning cultivable land. As of 2023, over

₹2.42 lakh crore has been disbursed to approximately 11.5 crore beneficiary families (PM-KISAN Dashboard, 2023). However, socio-legal analysis reveals critical exclusion mechanisms hidden within the scheme's design and implementation.

First, the scheme is structured around land ownership, categorically excluding tenant farmers, sharecroppers, and agricultural labourers—who collectively constitute approximately 35–40% of India's agricultural workforce according to NSSO data (Ministry of Statistics, 2019). This exclusion is based on administrative convenience (land records as verification mechanism) but systematically discriminates against the most economically vulnerable section of the farming community, raising equality concerns under Article 14. Second, the land record digitisation requirement creates a bureaucratic barrier: states with poor land record digitisation—including Bihar, Assam, West Bengal, and parts of Madhya Pradesh—have disproportionately lower registration rates, creating geographic inequity.

Third, PM-KISAN ineligibility criteria (government employees, income tax payers, institutional landholders) are applied inconsistently, with documented cases of erroneous exclusions reported by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG, 2022). The CAG's 2022 report found overpayments to ineligible beneficiaries amounting to ₹1,364 crore alongside simultaneous exclusion of eligible farmers, revealing implementation opacity rooted in poor database management and inter-departmental coordination failures.

4.4 Case Study IV — Land Acquisition and the RFCTLARR Act 2013: Opacity in Consent Mechanisms

The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (RFCTLARR Act) was legislated as a landmark departure from the colonial Land Acquisition Act 1894, incorporating mandatory Social Impact Assessment (SIA), 70–80% consent requirements for private projects, and enhanced compensation formulae. However, executive amendments, state-level legislative variations, and administrative practices have systematically eroded these protections through hidden modifications.

The central executive in 2014–2015 attempted to amend the Act through ordinances thrice in succession, seeking to remove the consent and SIA requirements for five categories of projects including defence, rural infrastructure, and industrial corridors. Although the ordinances lapsed without legislative conversion due to political opposition, 13 state governments subsequently enacted their own RFCTLARR amendment Acts under Entry 42 of the Concurrent List, effectively removing or diluting consent requirements within their jurisdictions (Bose & Sengupta, 2022). This state-level legislative

fragmentation—occurring without national policy coordination or public announcement—created a hidden patchwork of land rights protections that most affected farmers are unaware of.

In the Singur (West Bengal) case, the Supreme Court in *Tata Motors Ltd. v. State of West Bengal* (2016) held that the acquisition of agricultural land for the Nano automobile factory was procedurally flawed due to inadequate consent and improper rehabilitation, ordering restoration of land to farmers. The Polavaram irrigation project in Andhra Pradesh similarly displaced approximately 1.5 lakh people—predominantly tribal communities—with documented gaps in rehabilitation under the RFCTLARR framework (Gadgil Committee Report, 2020).

5. Empirical Data Analysis

5.1 Agrarian Distress: Farmer Suicides as a Policy Failure Indicator

Farmer suicide data, while an imperfect and contested measure of agrarian distress, provides a stark empirical indicator of the human consequences of structural policy failures. NCRB data reveals that between 2015 and 2022, over 84,705 farmers and agricultural labourers died by suicide in India, with Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh recording the highest absolute numbers (NCRB, 2022).

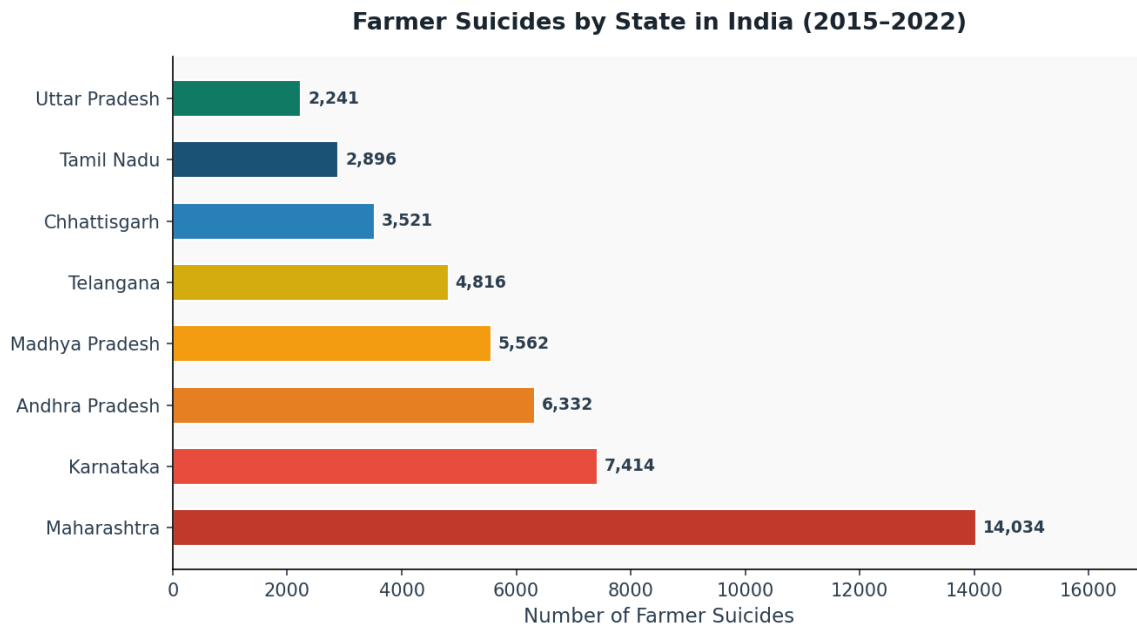


Figure 1: Farmer Suicides by State in India (2015–2022). Source: National Crime Records Bureau, 2022.

Figure 1 illustrates the state-wise distribution of farmer suicides. Maharashtra's dominance reflects the particular vulnerability of cotton farmers in Vidarbha to volatile commodity prices and heavy dependence on informal credit. Studies have established causal linkages between MSP inadequacy, crop failure without insurance coverage, and indebtedness as drivers of farmer suicides (Nagaraj et al., 2014).

The geographic concentration in states with limited MSP procurement access reinforces the argument that hidden price policy failures have lethal consequences.

5.2 Credit Access and the Institutional Finance Deficit

Access to formal institutional credit is critical for farmers' productive capacity, yet the credit landscape remains structurally skewed. NABARD's National Agriculture Finance Implementation Study (NAFIS) 2021-22 reveals that despite the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme, a substantial proportion of farmers continue to depend on informal moneylenders at interest rates ranging from 24% to 48% annually.

Sources of Agricultural Credit Among Indian Farmers (2023)

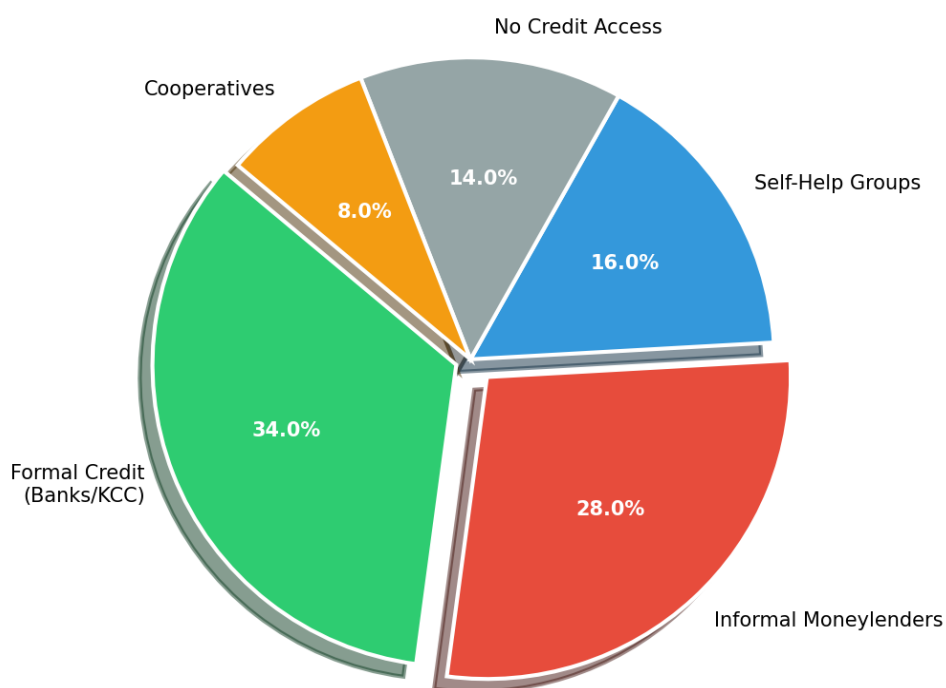


Figure 2: Sources of Agricultural Credit Among Indian Farmers (2023). Source: NABARD NAFIS Report, 2023.

Figure 2 reveals that only 34% of farming households access formal credit through institutional channels, while 28% remain dependent on informal moneylenders. This structural credit deficiency is partially attributable to hidden policy decisions: interest subvention schemes under the Agriculture Credit Policy benefit primarily large and medium farmers with clear land titles, while marginal farmers and tenants—who lack collateral documentation—are structurally excluded (Reserve Bank of India, 2022).

5.3 MSP vs. Market Price: Structural Price Suppression

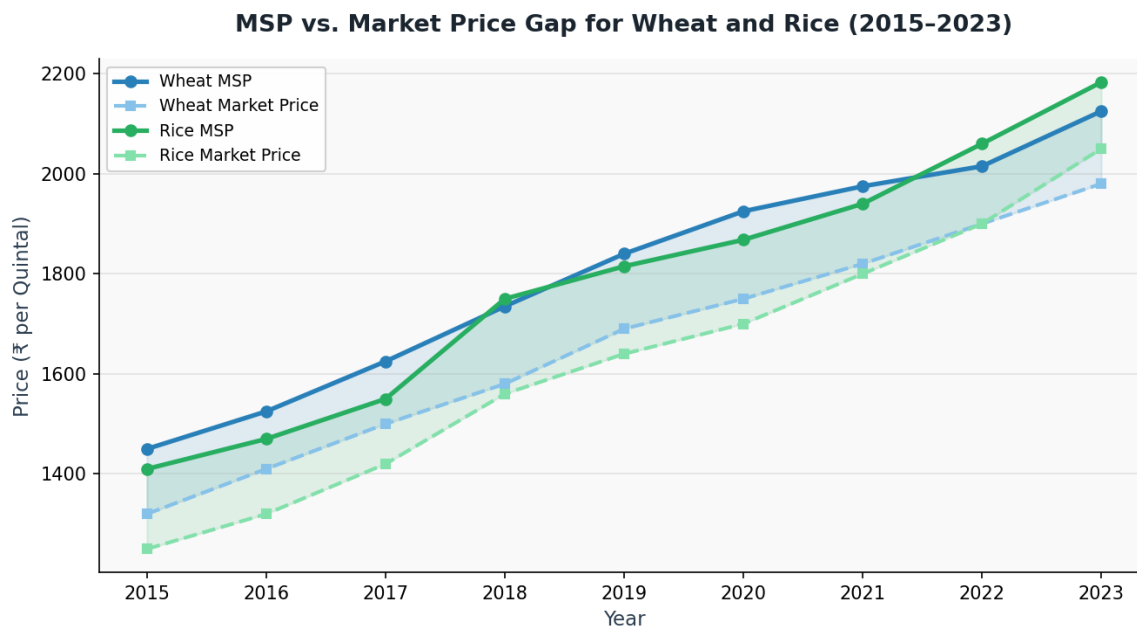


Figure 3: *MSP vs. Market Price Gap for Wheat and Rice (2015–2023)*. Source: *CACP Reports and Agricultural Marketing Information Network, 2023*.

Figure 3 demonstrates the persistent gap between MSP and actual market prices received by farmers. While the gap has narrowed in absolute terms for wheat due to strong procurement in recent years, market prices in non-procurement states consistently fall below MSP across both crops. This price suppression is structurally embedded: without universal legal guarantee of MSP, traders in non-procurement regions exercise monopsony power, driving market prices below the declared minimum. The shaded areas represent the effective income loss experienced by farmers transacting outside the MSP procurement system—a loss that is a direct consequence of the hidden decision to maintain MSP as a non-binding executive announcement.

5.4 Agricultural Budget Allocation: Hidden Priorities

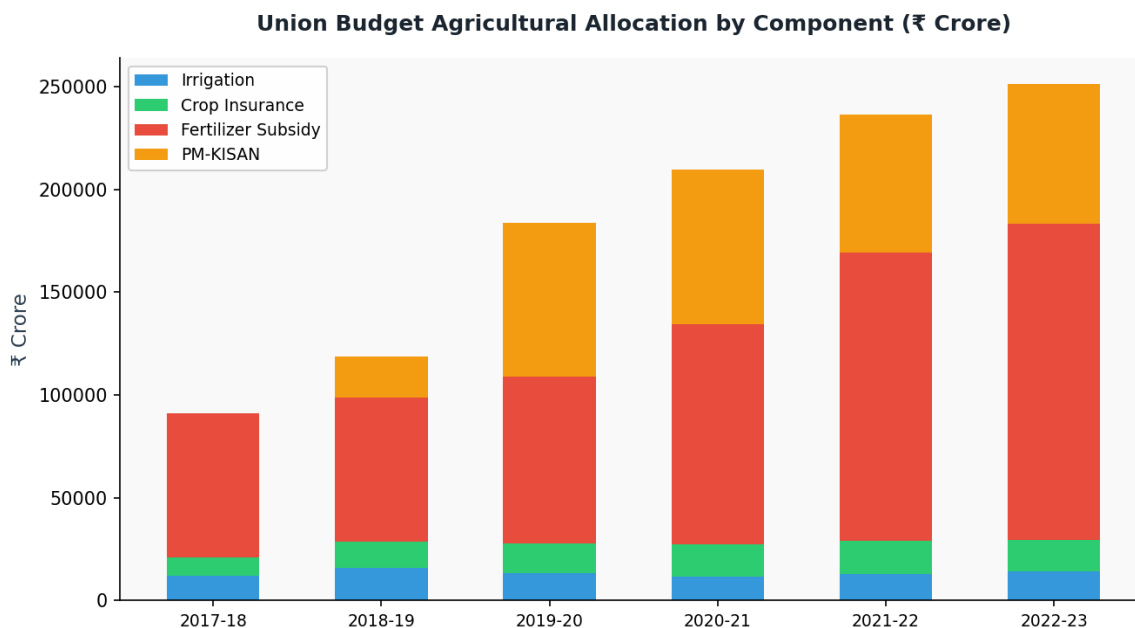


Figure 4: Union Budget Agricultural Allocation by Component (₹ Crore). Source: Union Budget Documents, 2017–2023.

Figure 4 reveals the structural composition of agricultural spending. The dominance of fertiliser subsidies—which benefit primarily large-scale chemical input suppliers and disproportionately support irrigated, commercially connected farmers—over investments in irrigation infrastructure and crop insurance reflects implicit policy prioritisation decisions made within executive budget processes without public deliberation. PM-KISAN's rapid scale-up absorbed a significant share of incremental agricultural spending post-2019, creating a potential crowding-out of investment expenditure in favour of income transfers—a trade-off that has never been publicly debated in a parliamentary forum (Gulati & Juneja, 2022).

5.5 Summary Data Table: Policy Gaps and Farmer Impact

Policy/Scheme	Legal Status	Coverage Gap	Primary Impact	Key Legal Concern
MSP Framework	Executive Advisory (Non-Statutory)	~60% farmers excluded from procurement	Income below cost of production	No enforceable right; Art. 21 violation
PM-KISAN	Centrally Sponsored Scheme	35-40% tenant/labourer excluded	Exclusion of most vulnerable	Art. 14 equality challenge

Policy/Scheme	Legal Status	Coverage Gap	Primary Impact	Key Legal Concern
Farm Laws 2020	Statutory (Repealed 2021)	Threatened 1.5 Cr+ farmers (Punjab/Haryana)	Erosion of MSP safety net	Art. 123 ordinance misuse; Art. 19 rights
RFCTLARR 2013	Statutory with State Variations	13 states diluted consent provisions	Displacement without consent	Consent mechanism erosion; Art. 21
Crop Insurance (PMFBY)	Centrally Sponsored Scheme	~35% enrolled, claim settlement low	Post-disaster income shock unmitigated	Transparency in actuarial data
KCC/Formal Credit	Institutional Policy	66% dependent on informal credit	Debt trap; moneylender exploitation	Right to livelihood; Art. 21

Table 1: Summary of Agricultural Policy Gaps and Socio-Legal Implications in India. Sources: Ministry of Agriculture, NCRB, CAG, NABARD, and judicial records.

6. Discussion: The Socio-Legal Architecture of Agrarian Exclusion

6.1 Structural Opacity as Governance Failure

The case studies and empirical data collectively establish that policy opacity in Indian agricultural governance is not incidental but structural. It manifests across the legislative cycle—from policy formulation (ordinance route, delegated legislation) to implementation (exclusionary eligibility criteria, bureaucratic barriers) to evaluation (absence of independent impact assessments, delayed CAG audits). This structural opacity serves the interests of well-organised stakeholders—agribusiness corporations, large commercial farmers, input suppliers—while systematically disadvantaging small and marginal farmers who lack the organisational capacity and legal resources to navigate complex policy environments (Rajan, 2022).

The theoretical framework of Bourdieu (1987) illuminates this dynamic: the legal field of agricultural policy is structured such that meaningful participation requires 'legal capital'—knowledge of administrative procedures, access to legal representation, familiarity with policy documents—that most farming households do not possess. When MSP is administered through a CCEA resolution rather than a statutory provision, the absence of a justiciable right removes farmers from the legal field entirely, leaving them dependent on executive benevolence rather than constitutional entitlement.

6.2 Constitutional Dimensions of Policy Opacity

The constitutional implications of agricultural policy opacity are significant. The Supreme Court's expanding jurisprudence under Article 21 has established that the state's obligation to protect livelihood encompasses protection from arbitrary policies that deprive persons of their means of subsistence (Francis Coralie Mullin v. Union Territory of Delhi, 1981). When PM-KISAN systematically excludes tenant farmers who constitute the most economically precarious segment of the agricultural workforce, this structural exclusion raises equality concerns that Indian constitutional courts have yet to directly adjudicate.

The procedural democracy dimensions of the Farm Laws case are equally significant. The Supreme Court's suspension of the Farm Laws—and its observation that the manner of their enactment suggested inadequate consultation—implicitly recognised that legitimate legislative authority is not exhausted by formal constitutional compliance; it requires substantive participation of affected communities (Rakesh Vaishnav v. Union of India, 2021). This judicial observation points toward an emerging constitutional norm of participatory governance that directly challenges policy opacity.

6.3 Gender and Caste Dimensions

Policy opacity has differential impacts along gender and caste lines that merit specific attention. Women constitute approximately 60–80% of agricultural labour in India but hold only 12.8% of agricultural land (FAO, 2020). Land-based eligibility criteria for PM-KISAN and Kisan Credit Cards structurally exclude women farmers from primary agricultural entitlements. Simultaneously, Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) farming communities face compounded disadvantages: higher rates of tenancy, weaker land documentation, and lower literacy rates reduce their capacity to access schemes that are bureaucratically complex (Thorat & Lee, 2005). These intersectional exclusions, embedded in seemingly neutral administrative criteria, constitute a form of structural discrimination that socio-legal analysis uniquely reveals.

7. Towards Transparent Agrarian Governance: A Reform Agenda

7.1 Statutory MSP with Universal Procurement

The most critical structural reform is the enactment of a Minimum Support Price Act that legally guarantees MSP as a floor price for all notified crops across all states, backed by universal procurement infrastructure or Market Intervention Scheme activation triggers. The legal guarantee would transform MSP from executive benevolence to a justiciable right, enabling farmer organisations to seek judicial enforcement when market prices fall below MSP. International precedents—including price support

mechanisms under the EU Common Agricultural Policy and US Farm Bill provisions—demonstrate the viability of statutory price support frameworks (OECD, 2021).

7.2 Inclusive Beneficiary Design for Direct Transfer Schemes

PM-KISAN and similar direct benefit transfer schemes must be redesigned to include tenant farmers and agricultural labourers, utilising alternative verification mechanisms beyond land records—including cultivation certificates, tenancy agreements, and gram sabha attestation. This would align the scheme's scope with the constitutional mandate of equal protection and transform it from a landowner benefit into a genuine farmer welfare instrument.

7.3 Mandatory Participatory Impact Assessments

All significant agricultural policy changes—including annual MSP revisions, scheme modifications, and agricultural Acts—should be subject to mandatory ex-ante Social Impact Assessments with public consultation periods of not less than 60 days, published in local languages. The model of the Planning Commission's Participatory Planning exercises offers a framework that can be institutionalised through an Agricultural Policy Transparency Act, modelled on international best practices including the UK Equality Act's impact assessment requirements and South Africa's Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (Deva, 2021).

7.4 Independent Agricultural Ombudsman

India should establish a statutory Independent Agricultural Ombudsman with investigative powers over complaints of policy opacity, implementation failures, and exclusion from entitlements. This institution—accountable to Parliament rather than the executive—would provide an accessible, low-cost grievance redress mechanism for farming communities, filling the access-to-justice gap that expensive judicial litigation cannot address for most small and marginal farmers.

8. Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that the agricultural crisis in India is not simply a product of natural misfortune, market volatility, or technological inadequacy—it is, in significant measure, a crisis of governance architecture. Hidden policy decisions, opaque legislative processes, asymmetric information environments, and exclusionary implementation mechanisms constitute a structural system of agrarian marginalisation that operates beneath the surface of official welfare narratives.

The four case studies examined—the Farm Laws controversy, the MSP non-binding framework, PM-KISAN exclusion gaps, and RFCTLARR implementation failures—collectively illustrate how policy

opacity manifests at different stages of the policy cycle and affects different segments of the farming community. The empirical data on farmer suicides, credit access, price suppression, and budget allocation provides quantitative texture to what is fundamentally a constitutional justice problem: the systematic failure of the Indian state to honour its obligations toward the farming community under the Constitution's vision of a just and equitable social order.

The socio-legal framework deployed in this analysis reveals that legal reform alone is insufficient—it must be accompanied by institutional redesign that democratises agricultural policy-making, creates justiciable entitlements, and establishes independent accountability mechanisms. The farmers' protest of 2020–2021, which compelled the repeal of three parliamentary Acts, demonstrated the democratic power of organised agrarian resistance. However, lasting agrarian justice requires institutionalisation of participatory governance, not the episodic victories of street protest.

Future research should engage in primary ethnographic fieldwork with farming communities across India's diverse agro-ecological zones to capture the lived experience of policy opacity—a dimension that secondary data analysis, however rigorous, cannot fully illuminate. The socio-legal project of agrarian justice in India is both urgent and incomplete.

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