



# Competitive Exams: General Studies Economics Land Reforms in India

Get unlimited access to the best preparation resource for IAS : Get **detailed illustrated notes covering entire syllabus**: point-by-point for high retention.

## Land Reforms

- Around 70 percent of the country's population lives in rural area. Accessibility to land is not only economically important to them; it also leads to a host of other benefits. As 'land' is a State subject under the Constitution, different States have evolved differently in the field of land management. In fact there may be different systems in different regions of the same State also. The Central Government has only a limited role to play in this regard. But surprisingly most of the initiatives have come from the Central level only. The Central Government persuades and incentivizes the States through schemes or policy initiatives.
- India faces tremendous challenges on the issues related to land governance. The following data will make it clearer
- India has approximately 2.16 million sq. Km. Of cultivable area
- India has about 18 percent of world's population
- 15 per cent of world's livestock population is to be supported from this land
- India has about 2 percent of world's geographical area and 1.5 Percent of forest and pasture land
- The per capita availability of land has declined from 0.89 hectares in 1951 to 0.37 hectares in 1991
- The average agriculture land holding has declined from 0.48 hectares in 1951 to 0.16 hectares in 1991
- 95.65 percent of the farmers are within small and the marginal category owning about 62 percent of the land, while the medium and the large farmers who constitute 3.5 percent own about 37.72 percent of the total area
- Most of the cases pending in the Courts relate to land disputes
- 7.9 million persons are without dwelling units to live in:
- In the rural areas alone, there are more than 140 million land owners, owning more than 430 million records
- There are approximately 55 million urban households

- In most of the States last cadastral survey was done around 70 to 80 years ago. In fact in some States, for example, North Eastern States this survey has not been done till now. The issues related to land may be described in following five divisions.

## Land Reforms

As stated above, access to land is of critical importance in large parts of India. Agriculture and primary sector activities based on land and other natural resources are the primary source of livelihood for a vast majority of economically vulnerable rural population of Indian. So, land reforms initiatives have been undertaken to ensure equitable distribution of the Zamindari system after independence of the country. Second round of major initiatives were taken in the year 1972 with the enactment of land ceiling laws in majority of the States. These initiatives in land reforms can be broadly categorized into the following fields:

1. Land Ceiling-Ceiling limits have been prescribed by the States, above which a family can not own the land. The surplus land is taken over by the State Government and distributed to the land less persons.
2. Bhoodan Lands-The land owners who has large quantities of land were persuaded to surrender some parts of their lands voluntarily during the time of Shri Vinoba Bhave. These lands were also distributed to the land less persons.
3. Tenancy Reforms-Many land owners do not practice agriculture themselves. They lease out their lands to other needy persons on written or oral agreement for agriculture. Some States have enacted laws to protect the interest of the tenants in such cases.
4. Common Property Resources-The village commons are used by the community for various purposes like pasture lands, for collection of minor forest produce and fuel wood etc. Some States have conferred rights to the community over such resources through enactments.
5. Waste Lands-States also distribute the wastelands available with them to the land less persons.
6. Tribal Land Alienation-Scheduled Tribes living in various parts of India are particularly in a vulnerable position as their lives are intertwined with the land. Most of the States have enacted laws to protect their rights on the land. They cannot sell their lands to non STs. If land is alienated fraudulently from them, then the States proactively pursue such cases so that the land is restored to the tribals.
7. The issues related to land reforms are being considered by the Government of India at the highest level. In order to evolve a comprehensive policy on the matter, two very high level bodies have been formed as follows:
  - a. A Committee on State Agrarian Relations and the Unfinished Task in Land Reforms under the chairmanship of Minister of Rural Development

- b. A National Council for Land Reforms under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister.
  
8. The composition, terms of reference, etc. Of the Committee and the Council were notified in the Official Gazette on 9th January, 2008.
  
9. The Committee has submitted its report for consideration of the National Council. In the mean time, it has been decided that the recommendations of the Committee may be examined by an appropriate Committee of Secretaries (CoS) before they are placed for consideration of the National Council for Land Reforms. The CoS has submitted its recommendations on the Report which are being placed before the Council. The decisions of the Council on various land reforms issue will give a fresh impetus to the land reforms programmes in the States.

Courtesy: Yojana

Developed by: **Mindsprite Solutions**