

NEXT IAS

**DAILY EDITORIAL
ANALYSIS**

TOPIC

**FOOD SOVEREIGNTY: LESSONS FROM
FRANCE & INDIA**

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FOOD SOVEREIGNTY: LESSONS FROM FRANCE & INDIA

Context

- The **Orientation Law on Agricultural Sovereignty and Generational Renewal (2024) of France** linked food sovereignty with youth participation in farming.
- Simultaneously, concerns over declining youth interest in agriculture in India have revived debates on agricultural sovereignty and generational renewal.

About Food and Agricultural Sovereignty

- Agriculture and related activities are central to the economic and social fabric for countries like India and France.
- **France** shares nearly about **18% of the EU's agricultural output**, however, there will be only about half of its farmers working in agriculture by 2030.
- India faces a similar challenge as rural youth increasingly migrate to urban areas.
- As per the **Annual Status of Education Report (2017)**, 42% of youth aged 14–18 years are working, and 79% of these work in agriculture, almost all on their own family's farm. However, only 1.2% aspire to become farmers.
 - ♦ This crisis is not merely about production; it concerns **who controls agriculture and on what terms**.

Concept of Food Sovereignty

- **Food Sovereignty or Agricultural Sovereignty** is the right of people and nations to determine their own agricultural systems, including control over seeds, land, markets, inputs and production practices.
 - ♦ However, **Food Security** ensures reliable access to sufficient, safe and affordable food.
- The **concept of food sovereignty** was articulated by La Via Campesina in 1996 and later gained recognition from international organizations such as the **United Nations and the World Bank**.
 - ♦ Its **six guiding principles** include right to food; valuing food producers; localising food systems; placing control at local levels; building knowledge and skills; and working in harmony with nature.
- Thus, food sovereignty seeks to adequate food production along with the empowerment of present and future generations of farmers.

India's Role in Food and Agricultural Sovereignty

- The **Green Revolution** in India was marked as self-reliance and self-sufficiency in agriculture, and now agriculture in India remains one of the world's largest producers of cereals, pulses, milk and horticultural crops.
- India's commitment to agricultural sovereignty is reflected by:
 - ♦ **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** mechanism for price assurance;
 - ♦ Public procurement and the **Public Distribution System (PDS)**;
 - ♦ Promotion of indigenous seeds and millets under the **International Year of Millets (2023)**;
 - ♦ Support for smallholders through schemes such as **PM-KISAN, Kisan Credit Card (KCC) and Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)**.

Issues and Concerns

- **Decreasing Youth Engagement:** As agriculture is becoming economically non-viable with low income, uncertainty in earning and climate risks, more and more rural youths are migrating to urban areas.
- **Land Fragmentation:** As per Agriculture Census data, more than 85% farmers of India are small and marginal farmers restricting economies of scale.
- **Increasing Debt:** With the increase in cost of production and need for credit and price fluctuations, discourages the next generation to take up agriculture as their profession.

- **Climate Change and Ecological Risks:** Erratic monsoons, soil erosion and groundwater depletion poses long term risk for agriculture.
- **Import Dependence:** The increasing dependence on foreign inputs like fertilisers, agrochemicals and commercial seeds is hampering agricultural sovereignty.
- **No Specific Focus on Generational Renewal:** Unlike in France, there is no specific institution set up in India which focuses on attracting youths into agriculture.

Efforts Made in Relation to the Problem

- **Income and Credit Assistance:** Income transfer through PM-KISAN programme; expansion of Kisan Credit Card and interest subvention schemes.
- **Sustainable Agriculture:** National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA); Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) and promotion of natural farming through Bharatiya Prakritik Krishi Paddhati (BPKP).
- **Resource Efficiency:** Soil health card scheme and Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY).
- **Market Reforms:** e-NAM; Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and Agri Infra Fund.
 - ◆ But all these efforts are mainly aimed at increasing productivity and incomes of farmers but not generational renewal directly.

Case Study: French Institutions for Agricultural Sovereignty

- The **Orientation Law on Agricultural Sovereignty and Generational Renewal (2024)** has a clear relationship between sovereignty and youths. Some key components of the law are:
 - ◆ Financial assistance to the incoming youths;
 - ◆ Streamlining of administrative procedures;
 - ◆ Education and training related to agriculture;
 - ◆ Facilities to access land for new farmers;
 - ◆ Environmentally sustainable agriculture incentives;
 - ◆ Harmonisation of **EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Strategic Plan**.
- As per CAP, young farmers receive direct payment, eco-schemes and transition support. This makes agriculture an economically feasible profession for the incoming generation.

Way Forward

- Developing a **National Policy** for generational renewal in agriculture.
- Setting up **Young Farmer Missions** providing startup grants, concessional credit and incubation facilities.
- Making reforms for **land leasing and land banks**.
- Enhancing **agri-entrepreneurship, agri-tech and value chain linkages**.
- Development of agricultural education, skill development and digital extension services.
- Promoting **agroecology-based models** led by the community, seed sovereignty and Farmer Producer Organisations.
- Developing a balanced approach that combines **state support and farmer participation** and ensures economic viability, environmental sustainability and democratic governance of agriculture.

Daily Mains Practice Question

[Q] **Food and agricultural sovereignty has emerged as a critical dimension of India's agricultural policy in the era of globalization and climate change. Discuss and suggest measures to ensure generational renewal in Indian agriculture.**

Source: BL

