

1. Land leasing is the unfinished agenda of land reforms and is must for agriculture reforms. Critically examine the need for land leasing in view of above statement. What effect will it have on rural employment? (250 words)

**Answer:**

- In the first three decades after Independence, land reforms remained high in the stated agenda of governments and state administrations. Actual success was significant in the abolition of large estates, for which there was high political backing because the zamindars of the past were close allies of the British colonial rulers.
- The success in redistributing ceiling-surplus land, abolishing or regulating tenancy, allocating surplus cultivable government land to the landless, and preventing land alienation from tribal and other socially vulnerable landholders was, however, much more limited. However, even these modest gains are highly ephemeral on the ground.
- When neo-liberal economic policies hit India with gale force in 1991, land reform went off the radar of the Indian polity; it became a forgotten agenda in State policy. Thus, today:
  - a) No more than 4.9 per cent of farmers control 32 per cent of India's farmland
  - b) A "large" farmer in India has 45 times more land than the "marginal" farmer
  - c) Four million people, or 56.4 per cent of rural households, own no land
  - d) Only 12.9 per cent of land marked - the size of Gujarat - for takeover from landlords was taken over by December 2015.
- The draft National Land Reforms Policy, prepared in 2013, suggests policy correctives:
  - a) Stopping land-holding exemptions to religious, educational, charitable, research and industrial organisations beyond 15 acres.
  - b) Allowing smaller land-holdings in states where the existing limit is more than five to 10 acres for irrigated land and 10 to 15 acres for non-irrigated land.
  - c) A "single-window" to redistribute surplus land within a specified time.
  - d) A crackdown on benami - in someone else's name - land.
  - e) A database of land inventories available for public scrutiny.
- The expert committee constituted by Niti Aayog to review the existing agricultural tenancy laws of various states has suggested a model land leasing law to secure the ownership rights of land owners while also providing security of tenure to tenants. The committee has also called for the facilitation of access to bank credit and insurance for all tenants, including share croppers.
- It has suggested the enactment of a Model Land Leasing Act, 2016, to permit and facilitate leasing of agricultural land, to improve agricultural efficiency and equity, access to land by the landless and semi-landless poor, occupational diversity and to promote accelerated rural growth and transformation.

- Legalization of land leasing could be an important contributing factor in this respect. It would encourage large land owners to lease out land without fear of losing their land ownership rights and invest in non-farm enterprises (with appropriate capital and technology support), which is vital for occupational diversification and rapid rural transformation. This will reduce the pressure of population on agriculture and enable small farmers to augment their size of operational holdings by leasing in the land.
- Many marginal and small farmers would be better off leasing out their land to more viable farmers on rent, while seeking paid employment within or outside agriculture. This would help them to maximise incomes by way of rentals as well as wage incomes. Land owners who are otherwise forced to operate small uneconomic holdings will thus have the opportunity to legally lease out land to other farmers with the assurance of being able to resume possession at the end of agreed lease period.
- Legalising land leasing would greatly help as the "legal ban or restrictions on land leasing have led to concealed tenancy in almost all parts of the country. Informal tenants are most insecure, as they either have short duration oral leases or get rotated from plot to plot each year so that they cannot prove continuous possession of any particular piece of land for any specified period which could give them the occupancy right, according to law of a state. This provides a disincentive to tenant farmers to make any investment in land improvement for productivity enhancement.
- As many as 570 million Indians, or 47.1 per cent (including 6.7 per cent in urban areas), still depend on agriculture, which contributes 15 per cent to the GDP, according to a 2011-12 National Sample Survey Office 2011-12 report and 2011 census data. Thus, any change in the land reforms policy or a renewed focus on it would lead to the change in employment structure of these people.

## PRACTICE QUESTIONS

### **Answer the following Questions**

1. Grassroot bureaucracy in India suffers from several flaws and merits reform. Examine. (250 words)
2. Discuss the etiology, transmission, signs, treatment and control of Nipah virus disease. Also highlight the role of National Centre for Disease Control in controlling various diseases. (250 words)