

3. Draft Seeds Bill, 2025 – Polity

The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has released the draft Seeds Bill, 2025

Rationale and Background

The proposed Seeds Bill aims to overhaul India's existing seed regulatory framework by replacing the Seeds Act, 1966 and the Seeds (Control) Order, 1983, both of which have become outdated in the context of modern agriculture. The new legislation reflects changes in agricultural technology, seed breeding practices, biotechnology, farmers' rights, global seed markets, and the need for stronger quality assurance. It seeks to modernise the seed sector, ensure farmer protection, promote innovation, and bring India's seed governance in line with international best practices.

Objectives of the Bill

Regulating seed quality – Establish a uniform national framework to monitor, test and regulate the quality of seeds and planting materials across the supply chain.

Ensuring farmer access to high-quality seeds – Guarantee availability of certified seeds at reasonable prices so that farmers can adopt improved and climate-resilient varieties.

Preventing spurious seeds – Introduce strict oversight and enforcement measures to curb the sale of fake, expired, or mislabelled seeds that lead to crop failure and heavy farmer losses.

Farmer protection and compensation – Mandate accountability of seed companies and distributors for quality failure; protect farmers from economic losses due to defective seeds.

Encouraging innovation and global access – Liberalise seed imports and introduce streamlined procedures to allow entry of global varieties, promoting competition and research.

Strengthening transparency – Improve traceability, record-keeping and public disclosure of seed traits, test results and performance so farmers can make informed choices.

Registration and Certification Framework

Mandatory registration – Every seed dealer, distributor, and company must hold a valid registration certificate issued by the State Government before selling, storing, importing, exporting or offering seeds for sale.

Prevention of illegal sales – Unregistered sale of seeds, including sale of non-approved varieties, will attract penalties and prosecution.

Continuity for old varieties – Existing seed varieties already notified under the Seeds Act, 1966 are automatically considered registered under the new legislation to avoid disruption in availability.

Quality assurance system – Registration requires compliance with prescribed germination levels, genetic purity, physical quality and moisture standards.

Institutional Mechanisms

Central Seed Committee – A high-level apex body responsible for implementing the Act at the national level and for advising both Central and State Governments on seed-related policies. Expected functions include standard setting, national coordination, monitoring, data management and regulatory oversight.

State Seed Committee – Constituted by the State Government with a Chairman and up to fifteen nominated or appointed members, representing agriculture experts, scientists, and officials. Responsible for supervising seed regulation within the state, implementing registration procedures, monitoring seed markets and reporting violations.

National Register on Seed Varieties – A comprehensive national database that maintains detailed information on all registered varieties, including characteristics, performance data, quality parameters, and breeder details. Enhances transparency by allowing farmers, researchers, and regulators to verify the authenticity and claims associated with any seed variety. Supports grievance redressal and enforcement by providing a reference source in cases of quality failure or misrepresentation.

Suspension and Cancellation of Registration – Registration of a seed variety can be suspended or cancelled upon receiving complaints from farmers, state authorities or based on the Central Committee's own assessment. Suspension may be ordered in cases of misbranding, quality failure,

misreporting, or any violation of prescribed standards. Allows swift administrative action to prevent further harm to farmers.

Categories of Offences – The Bill classifies offences into trivial, minor, and major, enabling proportionate penalties and efficient enforcement. Trivial offences involve small procedural lapses or technical errors that do not affect seed quality. Minor offences may include non-compliance with packaging, labelling or documentation requirements. Major offences include serious violations such as sale of spurious seeds, selling non-registered varieties, and operating without required registration.

Penalties and Punishments – Major offences attract stringent penalties to deter malpractice and protect farmers' interests. The Bill proposes a maximum fine of Rs 30 lakh depending on the severity and scale of violation. Imprisonment of up to three years is also prescribed for grave violations involving fraud, misrepresentation or sale of harmful/spurious seeds. Provisions on compensation for farmers in case of seed failure strengthen accountability mechanisms.

Farmer-Centric Measures – Emphasis is placed on protecting farmers from exploitation and ensuring their right to quality seeds. Transparency requirements mandate sellers to provide complete information on seed performance, origin, and traits. Dispute redressal mechanisms enable farmers to lodge complaints and seek compensation. Market oversight aims to ensure availability of affordable seeds, preventing price gouging and unfair trade practices.

Liberalisation of Seed Imports – The Bill encourages a more open seed import regime to provide Indian farmers access to advanced global varieties. Policies allow entry of new genetic material after proper evaluation for environmental and biosafety concerns. This is expected to create competitive pressure on domestic companies, stimulate research and development, and improve overall productivity.

Conclusion

The Seeds Bill aims to modernise India's seed regulation system by ensuring quality control, transparency, and farmer protection. It strengthens institutional mechanisms, introduces stringent penalties against malpractice, and aligns the seed sector with global innovations. The Ministry has invited inputs from farmers, researchers, companies, and the public to refine the Bill further and ensure it addresses on-ground challenges effectively.

Source – <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/centre-releases-draft-seeds-bill-industry-welcomes-farm-outfits-cautious/article70276737.ece>

