

Bill No. XXVII of 2018

THE PROTECTION OF FARMERS FAMILIES BILL, 2018

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BILL

to provide for the protection of the families of farmers by the State who have lost their lives in accident of any nature, due to disease, natural death or by committing suicide by extending welfare measures, financial assistance, etc. so as to enable the bereaved families to bear the loss of their bread winners and live a respectable life and for matters connected therewith and incidental thereto.

BE it enacted by Parliament in the Sixty-ninth Year of the Republic of India as follows:—

1. (1) This Act may be called the Protection of Farmers Families Act, 2018.

Short title,
extent and
commencement.

(2) It extends to the whole of India.

5 (3) It shall come into force with immediate effect.

2. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—

Definitions.

(a) "appropriate Government" means in the case of a State, the Government of that State and in other cases, the Central Government.

10 (b) "bereaved family" includes the dependent parents, the widow and dependent children of the deceased farmer;

(c) "children" means the sons and daughters below the age of twenty-five years dependent on the deceased farmers;

(d) "deceased farmer" means a farmer who has lost his life due to accident or disease or natural death or by committing suicide;

(e) "prescribed" means prescribed by rules made under this Act; and

(f) "widow" means a legally married wife of the deceased farmer.

National policy for the protection of the families of farmers.

3. (1) The Central Government shall, within a period of one year from the commencement of this Act, formulate a National Policy for the welfare and rehabilitation of the bereaved families of farmers who lose their lives due to accident of any nature including snake bites, attack by wild animals, in a natural calamity, inhaling of poisonous toxins or pesticides etc. or by committing suicide for whatever reasons including being debt ridden and for providing protective measures as it may deem fit and necessary.

(2) It shall be the duty of the appropriate Government to implement the National Policy referred to in sub-section (1).

Loan waiver of deceased farmers.

4. The appropriate Government shall waive off the outstanding loans taken from any Bank, financial institutions and private moneylender by the deceased farmers.

Financial assistance to bereaved families.

5. The Central Government shall provide such financial assistance to the bereaved families of deceased farmers as may be prescribed:

Provided that the financial assistance shall be in addition to the waiving of the loans under section 4 of this Act.

Skill development programmes for widows and children.

6. (1) The appropriate Government shall conduct skill development programmes for the widows and children of deceased farmers to help them sustainable means of livelihood by focussing on skill augmenting workshops either for handicrafts or for the revival of the skill endemic to the area.

(2) After the widows or children have acquired necessary skills under sub-section (1) the appropriate Government shall provide interest free loan of such amount as may be prescribed to the widows or children, as the case may be, as an initial investment needed for setting up of micro or small scale industry, poultry or dairy farms, etc. for the purposes of this section.

Appropriate Government to provide agricultural equipments and inputs to bereaved families.

7. It shall be the duty of the appropriate Government to provide the necessary agricultural equipments and inputs for the initial sowing season to the bereaved families who opt for farming as means of livelihood.

Education and healthcare facilities etc.

8. The appropriate Government shall open adequate number of schools in rural areas to provide educational facilities to the children and also provide healthcare facilities to the bereaved families and bear the expenditure for marriage of grown up daughter.

Central Government to provide funds.

9. The Central Government shall, after due appropriation made by Parliament by law in this behalf provide requisite funds to the State Governments, from time to time, for carrying out the purposes of this Act.

Act to have overriding effect.

10. The provisions of this Act and rules made thereunder shall have effect notwithstanding anything inconsistent therewith contained in any other law for the time being in force.

Act to supplement other laws.

11. The provisions of this Act shall be in addition to and not in derogation of any other law for the time being in force dealing with the subject matter of this Act.

Power to make rules.

12. The Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, make rules for carrying out the purposes of this Act.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

Farmer, the *annadaata* of the nation grow foodgrains, vegetables, fruits, milk, poultry and non vegetarian food products for the second most populous nation of the globe. He also produces raw material for various industries of the country thus plays a significant role in the progress of the nation. However he is debt ridden, poor and lives hand to mouth and remains exploited also. When he finds the debt, poverty and exploitation unbearable he takes the extreme step of ending his life by committing suicide. Lakhs of farmers have so far committed suicide in the country and unfortunately Maharashtra, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, etc. are leading States where farmers have committed suicide in large number and this is still going on. News of farmers committing suicide comes almost on daily basis. Farmers also lose their lives due to snake bites, attack by wild animals, in natural calamities and also natural death. In most of the cases, the farmer is the sole bread winner of the family which generally consist of aged parents, spouse and children. With the death of sole bread winner the entire family becomes destitute and helpless. In addition to their miseries and sufferings at the hands of cruel destiny, these families are haunted by banks and private moneylenders for loan recoveries. Anti social elements exploit their miseries and lure their young, adolescent girls for trafficking. Land sharks also become active to grab their land.

In a democratic and welfare State like ours, it is the duty of the Central and State Governments to extend protective umbrella to the bereaved distressed families of deceased farmers by providing financial assistance, waiving of loans, providing skill development, granting interest free loans for setting up micro and small scale industries, by ensuring education of the children, healthcare facilities to the aged parents and other family members and arrange for marriage of grown up daughters.

Since the State can not bear the burden of huge financial expenditure, the Central Government must provide adequate funds to the Government of the States for carrying out the purposes of this Bill. The State Government in turn should also allocate the funds based on the degree of agrarian crisis in different parts of the State. For instance, in the State of Maharashtra, the regions of Marathwada and Vidharbha are the most affected due to large scale suicides of farmers. Therefore, the State Government must allocate more funds to these regions.

Hence this Bill.

RAJKUMAR DHOOT

FINANCIAL MEMORANDUM

Clause 4 of the Bill provides for the loan waiver of deceased farmers. Clause 5 provides for the financial assistance to bereaved families of deceased farmers. Clause 6 provides for conducting skill development Programme and interest free loans for initial investment for setting up of small scale industries for the widows and children of deceased farmer. Clause 7 provides for agricultural equipment and inputs to the bereaved families. Clause 8 provides for opening of adequate number of schools, affordable healthcare facilities and arrangement of marriage of daughter to the bereaved families. Clause 9 makes it obligatory for the Central Government to provide requisite funds to the State Governments for carrying out the purposes of the Bill. Though it is not possible to quantify the total expenditure which is likely to be involved for implementing the provisions of this Bill, it is estimated that a sum of rupees one lakh crore may be required as recurring expenditure per annum.

Non-recurring expenditure to the tune of rupees one lakh crore is also likely to be involved.

MEMORANDUM REGARDING DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Clause 12 of the Bill gives power to the Central Government to make rules for carrying out the purposes of the Bill. The rules will relate to the matters of detail only. This delegation of legislative power is of normal character.

RAJYA SABHA

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(Shri Rajkumar Dhoot, M.P.)