

Farmers demand survey of land before implementing Title Guarantee Act

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Representative image - REUTERS

Many countries have introduced Title Guarantee Acts to end uncertainty, duplication of land title deeds and endless disputes over the ownership of land holdings.

Farmers' unions and activists, on Tuesday, have asked the Telangana government to conduct a comprehensive survey of the land in the state before proceeding with the Title Guarantee Act. They said that the the state government should also introduce an exclusive Act to deal with the grievances regarding the disputed lands. This Act, according to them, should also recognise tenant farmers, who are 'practising farmers' and register them in the records. The state government is making arrangements to implement the Title Guarantee Act to ensure complete and undisputed rights to farmers over the land they own. Thereby, putting an end to many civil and criminal disputes. "When it happens, it is expected to bring down civil disputes by a whopping 66 per cent," Sunil Kumar, an activist working for the land rights for the poor, said. He added that there should be a dialogue on the pros and cons of the Act before introducing it. "There is a need to assess the exact extent of land by conducting a comprehensive survey. The government is claiming that 95 per cent of the land titles are clear. But this is being disputed," he said. Rythu Swarajya Vedika (RSV) has conducted a brainstorming session on the draft Revenue Act on Monday. Representatives from several farmers' unions and people's organisations attended the meet. Many resolutions were passed at the meeting. The authorities also called for an establishment of legal assistance centres in all the districts to provide free legal advice to farmers with grievances. "The government should implement land reforms and provide land to the landless. It should seriously implement Land Ceiling Act and distribute the surplus land among the poor," they said. What is the Title Guarantee Act? Many countries have introduced Title Guarantee Acts to end uncertainty, duplication of land title deeds and endless disputes over the ownership of land holdings. The new Act ensures a complete and total guarantee over the ownership on a particular piece of land. Unlike in the present system, where the government has no role in guaranteeing the ownership, the proposed new Act puts the onus on the government to provide rights to the actual owner. The farmers will get a compensation if they suffer losses due to mistakes in the records. It is argued that it would drastically reduce legal disputes and resultant crime incidents in villages. The committee, headed by Professor D C Wadhwa, was set up by the then Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Manmohan Singh in 1987. They recommended that all States introduce the Title Guarantee Act. The activists and farmers organisations ask the government to get the draft of the Act translated into Telugu and circulate it widely to create awareness among the farmers. Undivided Andhra Pradesh tried to implement BhuBharati, an IT-backed land survey project about 10 years ago. But it proved to be a failure in the absence of an Act to back its implementation. The TRS government has revived the idea and is planning to bring in a new Title Guarantee legislation.

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