

## Draft Seeds Bill 2025 - Key Provisions Explained

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### Seeds Bill Latest News

- The Union Agriculture Ministry has released the Draft Seeds Bill 2025, inviting public comments until December 11.
- The Bill aims to modernise seed regulation by amending the **Seeds Act, 1966** and the **Seeds (Control) Order 1983**, ensuring quality seeds for farmers while reducing compliance burdens for the seed industry.

### Context and Rationale Behind the Seeds Bill 2025

- India's seed sector has undergone a massive transformation since the 1960s, through advances in biotechnology, hybridisation, commercial seed processing, and international trade.
- According to the Agriculture Ministry, in 2023-24, the national requirement for seeds was 462.31 lakh quintals, while availability reached 508.60 lakh quintals, creating a surplus of 46.29 lakh quintals.
- Industry associations have argued that the 1966 Act is outdated and ill-equipped to deal with new scientific and commercial realities.

# Regulatory Architecture Proposed Under the Bill

- **Clear Definition of Stakeholders**

- The Bill defines key actors, farmer, dealer, distributor, and producer, as separate entities engaged in seed use and trade. This creates regulatory clarity across the supply chain.

- **Central and State Seed Committees**

- Two statutory bodies are proposed:
  - Central Seed Committee (27 members)
  - State Seed Committees (15 members)

- The Central Committee will recommend standards such as:

- Minimum germination levels,
- Genetic and physical purity,
- Traits and seed health norms,
- Additional quality parameters.

- The State Committees will advise on the registration of seed producers, dealers, nurseries, and processing units.

## Quality Control and Registration Systems

- **Mandatory Registration of Seed Processing Units**

- All processing units must register with the State government. This ensures quality control but may increase operational costs for small seed entrepreneurs.
- To ease compliance for companies operating across multiple States, a **Central Accreditation System** may be introduced, merit-based, transparent, and uniform.

- **National Seed Variety Register**

- The Bill creates the office of a Registrar responsible for maintaining a National Register of Seed Varieties under the Central Seed Committee.
- Field trials to determine the Value for Cultivation and Use (VCU) are also standardised in the Bill.

- **Seed Testing Laboratories**

- Central and State seed testing laboratories will be strengthened to:
  - Analyse genetic purity,
  - Assess germination and health parameters,
  - Assist in compliance monitoring.

- **Role of Seed Inspectors**

- Seed inspectors will have search-and-seizure powers under the **Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita**, ensuring stronger enforcement against violations.

## Offences and Penalties

- The new draft significantly revises the penalty framework compared to the 2019 draft.
- The Bill classifies offences as: **Trivial, Minor, Major**, with corresponding penalties.

- This stronger penal architecture reflects the government's intent to curb seed fraud and maintain quality standards.

## Farmers' Rights and New Safeguards

- The Bill reiterates that farmers retain the right to save, use, exchange, and sell farm-saved seeds, except under a brand name. This aligns with long-standing protections under Indian law.
- The draft also links seed regulation to the **Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Act 2001**, attempting to ensure that quality norms and intellectual property rights are harmonised.

## Concerns Raised by Farmers' Organisations

- Farmers' unions, including the All India Kisan Sabha, have criticised the Bill for:
  - Potential increase in seed costs, enabling large companies to engage in "predatory pricing."
  - Risk to seed sovereignty, as centralisation may favour multinational and domestic seed corporations.
  - Dilution of biodiversity protections, arguing that the Bill conflicts with global treaties such as the CBD and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food & Agriculture.
  - Creating a "corporatised regulatory structure" that may overshadow the PPV&FR Act's progressive farmer-centric provisions.
- These groups demand that the Bill must complement, not undermine, India's biodiversity and farmers' rights legal architecture.

Source: **TH**

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