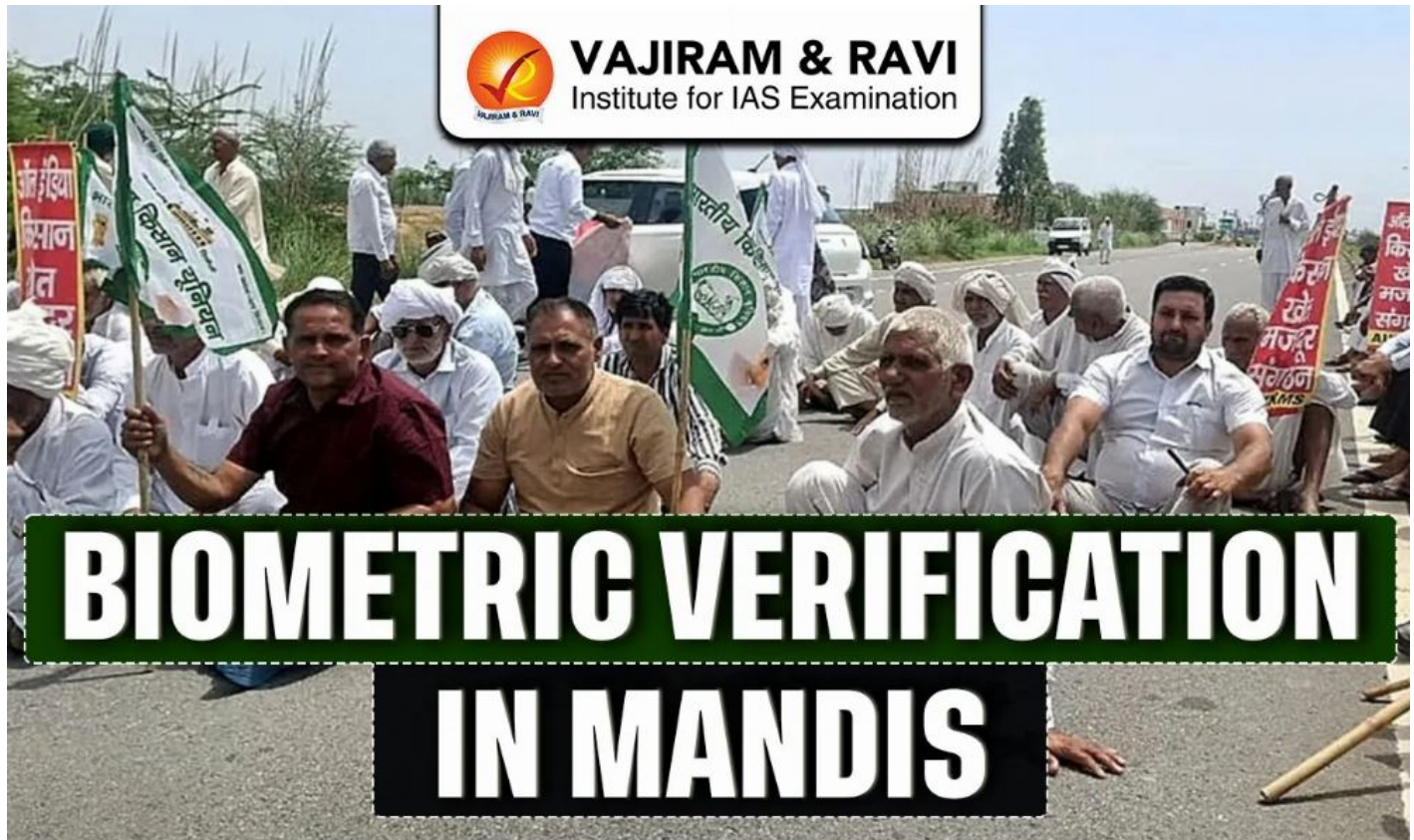


Biometric Verification in Mandis: Why Biometric Verification Triggered Haryana Farmers Protest

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Biometric Verification in Mandis Latest News

- A section of farmers in Haryana protested against the mandatory biometric verification for selling crops in mandis, blocking highways and alleging it creates harassment and procedural hurdles.
- The state government, however, defended the move as a step to enhance transparency and accountability in the procurement system.

Mandi System in India

- The Mandi system is India's **regulated agricultural marketplace framework** where farmers bring their produce for sale through a structured auction process.
- These mandis (wholesale markets) are established under the **Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Acts** enacted by individual state governments.

- The APMC Act designates specific geographical areas as market yards, and all agricultural trade within that area must compulsorily pass through the regulated mandi.
- Middlemen called arhatiyas (commission agents) facilitate transactions between farmers and buyers, charging a commission on every sale.

Issues and Challenges

• Structural Problems

- The mandi system has long been criticised for creating a monopoly of middlemen.
- The middlemen often advance loans to farmers, creating a cycle of debt bondage where farmers are compelled to sell exclusively through their creditor-agent regardless of price.

• Fragmented Market and Multiple Levies

- India's mandi system is highly fragmented — a trader operating across states must obtain separate licences in each state and pay multiple layers of taxes including market fees, commission charges, and various local levies.
- This fragmentation increases transaction costs and discourages private investment in agricultural marketing infrastructure.

• Price Realisation Gap

- Farmers typically receive only 30-40% of the final consumer price of their produce, with the remainder absorbed by the chain of intermediaries.
- In the current setup, farmers are often **price-takers rather than price-setters**, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation especially during periods of surplus production.

• Infrastructure Deficits

- Many mandis suffer from inadequate storage, cold chain facilities, and processing infrastructure.
- Poor road connectivity to mandis, lack of weighing equipment, and absence of grading and sorting facilities result in significant **post-harvest losses**.

• Information Asymmetry

- Farmers — particularly small and marginal ones — lack access to real-time price information, making them heavily dependent on the arhatiya for price discovery.

Government Efforts at Reform and Integration

- **Electronic National Agriculture Market (e-NAM)** – Launched in April 2016, **e-NAM** is an **online trading portal** that networks existing APMC mandis across the country into a unified national market.
- **Model APMC Act, 2003** – The central government circulated a Model APMC Act encouraging states to amend their legislations to allow direct purchase from farmers, establishment of private markets, and promotion of contract farming.
 - However, adoption across states was uneven, with several states making only cosmetic changes.
- **Gramin Haats and Primary Agriculture Cooperative Societies (PACS)** – The government has been upgrading 22,000 Gramin Haats (rural periodical markets) into Farmer-Consumer Markets to enable direct farm-to-consumer trade, bypassing intermediaries.
 - Simultaneously, PACS are being strengthened to provide collective bargaining power to small farmers.

Haryana's Biometric Procurement System in Mandis

- Introduced in 2026, Haryana's procurement system mandates **Aadhaar-based fingerprint verification** for farmers before selling crops in mandis, linked to the "**Meri Fasal-Mera Byora**" portal to ensure accurate registration and prevent discrepancies.
- The system also includes vehicle tracking, requiring tractor details and photos, and geofencing of procurement centres and storage points to enhance monitoring and prevent misuse.
- So far, hundreds of mandis and over a thousand storage locations have been brought under this digital oversight framework.

Reason Behind Biometric Verification in Haryana Mandis

- The biometric verification system was introduced following the **2025 Karnal paddy scam**, where fake gate passes were used to sell paddy from other states in Haryana mandis.
- This led to fraudulent procurement records and siphoning of government funds, involving officials, traders, and millers.
- The scam resulted in multiple FIRs and arrests, prompting the government to implement biometric verification to prevent such fraud and ensure transparency in procurement.

Farmers' Concerns Over Biometric Verification

- Farmers argue that procurement irregularities were due to **collusion among officials and millers**, not farmers themselves, yet the new system places the burden on them.
- They report long queues, slow verification, and procedural hassles, especially when the registered farmer cannot be physically present.
- Many see the process as excessive and humiliating, with union leaders calling it overly cumbersome and farmers feeling they are being treated with undue suspicion.

Government-Opposition Divide on Biometric Procurement

- The Haryana government defends biometric verification as a tool to enhance transparency, accountability, and efficiency, noting significant adoption in wheat procurement.
- It has also introduced relaxations, such as allowing nominated individuals and flexible vehicle documentation.
- However, opposition leaders criticise the system as bureaucratic and arbitrary, arguing it unfairly burdens farmers while ignoring the real issue of collusion among officials and traders.

Source: **IE** | **DTE**

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