

# Bill Summary

## The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) (Maharashtra Amendment) Bill, 2021

- The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) (Maharashtra Amendment) Bill, 2021 was introduced in the Maharashtra Assembly on July 6, 2021. The Bill seeks to amend the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020 in its application to the state of Maharashtra. The central Act allows barrier-free trade of farmers' produce outside the physical premises of the markets notified under the various state Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) Acts. The Bill requires a license for the trading of certain agricultural produce and proposes certain changes in the dispute resolution mechanism. Key features of the Bill are:
  - **License for trading:** The central Act allows traders to engage in the trade of scheduled farmers' produce outside the markets regulated by APMCs. Scheduled farmers' produce means any agricultural produce regulated under any state APMC Act. Such traders must have a PAN Card or any other document notified by the central government. Instead, the Bill requires traders to obtain a license from the Competent Authority to trade in any such produce. However, no license or permission will be required for marketing of fruits, vegetables, ginger, garlic, coriander, and chillies.
  - The Bill provides that the state government will prescribe the Competent Authority and the manner of granting licenses.
  - **Dispute resolution mechanism:** The central Act specifies a three-tier dispute resolution mechanism for disputes between farmers and traders. First, the disputes are referred to a Conciliation Board, set up by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM). If the parties fail to resolve the dispute within 30 days, they may approach the SDM for resolution. Appeals against the SDM's order will lie with the Appellate Authority (the Collector or Additional Collector).
  - The Bill proposes certain changes in the dispute resolution mechanism. The parties may seek the solution by filing an application to the Competent Authority, who will decide the dispute within 30 days. Further, any party can file an appeal to the Appellate Authority against the decision of the Competent Authority. The Appellate Authority will be prescribed by the state government.
  - **Punishment for harassment of farmers:** Harassing farmers involves not paying them as per the agreement or within seven days from the date of receipt of delivery of goods, whichever is earlier. The Bill prescribes punishment of at least three years of imprisonment, or a fine of at least five lakh rupees, or both, for the harassment of farmers.

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