

Maharashtra cane farmers intensify stir for Fair and Remunerative Price

RADHESHYAM JADHAV

Pune, January 28

Sugarcane growers in Maharashtra intensified their agitation, demanding Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) arrears and have started a sit-in dharna at the State Sugar Commissioner's office in Pune on Monday.

Thousands of farmers gathered in the city have threatened not to return to their villages unless the State government gives them a concrete assurance on FRP in a single instalment and takes action against sugar mills for delaying payment.

Swabhimani Shetkari Sanghatana MP Raju Shetti and Swaraj India Party leader Yogendra Yadav are leading the agitating farmers.

"Sugar mills have not paid FRP worth ₹5,300 crore to sugarcane farmers in the State. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, instead of initiating action against sugar mills, is asking mill owners to pay 80 per cent FRP. The government is encouraging mills to act illeg-



Ultimatum issued The farmers say they will not return to their villages unless the State government assures them FRP in a single instalment and takes action against mills for delaying payment

ally. In this scenario, we don't have any other option than to agitate to demand our rights" said Shetti, speaking to reporters.

Single payment sought

He demanded that sugar mills pay FRP in one go, per the Sugar Control Order. "We are not going to accept payment in instalments," he said.

The Sugarcane (Control) Order, 1966, stipulates payment of the cane price within 14 days of supply, failing which interest at the rate of 15 per

cent per annum on the amount due for the delayed period beyond 14 days is payable. The powers to enforce the provisions of the Sugarcane (Control) Order, with regard to payment of cane dues of farmers is mainly vested with the States.

The FRP is fixed on the basis of the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACAP), in consultation with the various State governments and associations of the sugar industry and the cane growers.

Sugar mill owners in the State have expressed their inability to pay FRP saying that excess sugar production and depressed domestic sugar prices have led to accumulation of cane price arrears of farmers.

Output bump

Sugar production in the 2017-18 season was about 322 lakh metric tonnes (LMT), which was much higher than the consumption of 255 LMT. Production during the current season is estimated to be about 315 LMT and consumption is estimated to be 260 LMT. Sugar mills in the State have approached the State and the Centre asking for financial assistance so that they could pay FRP to the cane growers.

"Maharashtra farmers are not asking any grant or subsidy. They are just asking for their legal right of due payment. If farmers in a progressive State like Maharashtra are facing problems to get their due payment, think of farmers in other States" said Yadav.

Hindu Business Line
29/1/2019

