

### **Ceiling Limits on Land Holdings**

Data on distribution of land holdings in the country clearly indicate that there is disparity and inequality. Large number of cultivators owing relatively less land, while big land owners, smaller in number owning larger acreage of land. It leads to disparities in the incomes in the rural areas. In view of this, our leaders in the earlier days thought of this land reform measure.

The first five-year plan mentions "where land is managed directly by the substantial owners and there are no tenants in occupation, public interest requires that there should be an absolute limit to the amount of land which any individual may hold."

Prof. D.R.Gadgil, in the report of the Committee of Panel on Land Reforms mentions that "Among all resources, the supply of land is the most limited and the claimants for its possession are extremely numerous. It is therefore, obviously unjust to allow the exploitation of any large surface of land by single individual unless other overwhelming reasons make this highly desirable. Moreover, in the context of the current socio-political climate, redistribution of land would rather appear to be imperative".

The ceiling on land holdings was intended to –

- I. meet the land needs of the landless
- II. reduce the glaring inequalities in land ownership so that it may lead to development of co-operative rural economy, and
- III. enlarge self-employment in owned land as distinguished from subletting and tenant cultivation.

### **Ceiling legislations and amendments**

The Ceiling legislations were initiated in many parts of the country in the late 50's and early 60's. Jammu and Kashmir was the first state in the country to pass this Act. It was followed by West Bengal and Himachal Pradesh States. Maharashtra State passed this Act in 1961. However, the progress of ceiling legislation was disappointing till 1972. It was found that only about 23 lakh acres of land was declared surplus. Of this, only about 13 lakh acres were redistributed. In Bihar, Karnataka, Orissa and Rajasthan, no land was declared surplus. It was mainly due to partitioning of land or Benami transfers. This brought in lot of criticism in the Chief Minister's conference held in July 1972. The conference suggested new guidelines, which are summarized below:

- I. The best lands in a state with assured irrigation for two crops in a year should have ceiling in the range of 10 to 18 acres, taking into account the fertility of the soil and other conditions.
- II. In case of inferior lands, ceiling may be higher but should not exceed 54 acres.
- III. The unit of application shall be family of five members, the term family being defined as to include husband, wife and three minor children. Where the number of members in the family exceeds five, additional land may be allowed for each member in excess of five in such a manner that the total area admissible to the family does not exceed twice the ceiling limit for family of five members.
- IV. The ceiling should not operate on land held under tea, coffee, rubber, cardamom and cocoa.
- V. Ceiling should not operate on land held by industrial or commercial undertakings for non-agricultural purposes.
- VI. State Governments may, in their discretion, grant exemption to the existing religious, charitable and educational trusts of Public nature.

- VII. In the distribution of surplus land, priority should be given to landless agricultural workers, particularly to those belonging to the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes.
- VIII. Compensation payable for the surplus land on imposition of ceiling laws should be fixed well below the market value of the property so that it is within the capacity of the new allottees.
- IX. The compensation may be fixed in graded slabs and preferably in multiples of land revenue payable for the land.

The amended ceiling laws were to be given retrospective effect from a date not later than January 24, 1971.

As per the new guidelines, 17 states amended the ceiling legislations. The range of ceiling varied from State to State. For instance, in Andhra Pradesh, the level of ceiling for dry land ranged from 14.16 hectares to 21.85 hectares. Karnataka had the limit of 21.85 hectares for dry land, while Punjab had 20.50 hectares and West Bengal 7.00 hectares. For irrigated lands with two crops, the limit was lower –Andhra Pradesh – 4.05 to 7.28 hectares, M.P, Maharashtra – 7.28 hectares, Punjab – 7 hectares, West Bengal – 5.0 hectares.

The compensation pattern also varied from State to State. However, in many States it was the multiple of assessment. It was payable in bonds, cash or a combination of the both.

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(IN Ha.)

	Irrigated with two crops	Irrigated with one crop	Dry land
Suggested in National Guide-lines of 1972	4.05 to 7.28	10.93	21.85
Actual Ceilings			6.74
Andhra Pradesh	4.05 to 7.28	06.07 to 10.93	14.16 to 21.85
Assam	6.74	06.74	6.74
Bihar	6.07 to 7.28	10.12	12.14 to 18.21
Gujarat	4.05 to 7.29	06.07 to 10.93	08.09 to 21.85
Haryana	7.25	10.90	21.80
Himachal Pradesh	4.05	06.07	12.14 to 28.33
Jammu and Kashmir	3.60 to 5.06	03.6 to 5.06	5.95 to 9.20 in Ladakh 7.7 Hec.
Karnataka	4.05 to 8.10	10.12 to 12.14	21.85
Kerala	4.86 to 6.07	04.86 to 6.07	04.86 to 6.07
Madhya Pradesh	7.28	10.93	21.85
Maharashtra	7.28	10.93	21.85
Manipur	5.00	05.00	06.00
Orrisa	4.05	06.07	12.14 to 18.21
Punjab	7.00	11.00	20.50
Rajasthan	7.28	10.93	21.85 to 70.82
Tamil Nadu	4.86	12.14	24.28
Sikkim	5.06	-	20.23
Tripura	4.00	04.00	12.00
Uttar Pradesh	7.30	10.95	18.25
West Bengal	5.00	05.00	07.00

The actual ceiling limits for lands having two crops and single crop respectively irrigated in Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh are marginally higher due to classification of land.

The actual ceiling limits in respect of dry land in Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan are higher due to hilly terrain and being desert also respectively.

Biz  
Knowledge  
(Agricultural  
Laws)

