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*Other Legislations Pertaining to the Land*

In order to consolidate the results of the above measures, as a logical follow up, the Government also undertook the following legislation:

The Prohibition of Leases Act, 1953 was enacted for maintaining direct relationship between the cultivators and the State. This Act came into force on October 7, 1953. In the year 1954, Prevention of Fragmentation and Regulation of Land Holdings Act was passed. The purpose of this Act was to prevent fragmentation of land and fixation of ceiling on landholdings. (Very recently the Gujarat State Assembly has repealed this Act and instead passed a separate Act fixing ceiling on agricultural lands.) The Saurashtra Legislative Assembly also passed the Saurashtra Bhoodan Act in 1953 in order to facilitate donation of lands in accordance with the Bhoodan Yagna initiated by Acharya Vinoba Bhave. The Land Improvement Schemes Act was passed in 1954 in order to undertake schemes for improvement of agriculture. The Saurashtra Agricultural Debtors' Relief Act was passed in 1954 with the object of removing indebtedness among the agricultural class.

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LAND REFORM LEGISLATION AND IMPLEMENTATION IN  
WEST BENGAL

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The West Bengal Government had passed in quick succession three important laws, namely, the Bargadars Act of 1950, Estates Acquisition Act of 1953 and the Land Reforms Act of 1955. There have been some subsequent amendments of the main Acts but they are mainly brought in to fill in the lacuna in the Acts rather than altering them. As the problems of the *bargadars* have been considered afresh and suitable measures have been provided in the Land Reforms Act, 1955, the Bargadars Act of 1950 need not be discussed in this paper. The main emphasis would, therefore, be on the second and the third Acts which are now expected to set the pattern of a new agrarian structure.

The objective of the Estates Acquisition Act of 1953 is the "state acquisition of estates, of rights of intermediaries therein and of certain rights of *raiyats* and under *raiyats*" while that of the Land Reforms Act, 1955 is "to reform the law relating to land tenure consequent on the vesting of all estates and of certain rights therein in the State." Thus, both the Acts appear to be closely interrelated and linked together so that the one serves as a complementary to the

other. They together propose to bring about the following reforms : (i) Abolition of Intermediaries ; (ii) Fixation of fair rent ; (iii) Consolidation of Holding ; (iv) Co-operative Farming ; (v) Status of the share-croppers ; and (vi) Imposition of the ceiling on land and distribution of the acquired land.

Since detailed discussion on these problems will not be possible within the short space available we shall indicate in brief the provisions of the Acts and their implementation in West Bengal.

#### *Abolition of Intermediaries*

The law provides that after due notification the rights and the estates of intermediaries shall vest in the State without any encumbrances from such a date as may be specified for the purpose. Compensation will be paid for acquiring the rights and the estates of the intermediaries after the preparation of the assessment roll which will take into account the gross income and expenditure of the intermediaries. After the net income of the intermediary is ascertained according to the principles laid down in the Act the intermediary will be entitled to receive the amount of the compensation ranging from 2 to 20 times the net income varying with the amount of such income. Thus, while an intermediary with an income of Rs. 500 or less would be entitled to get 20 times of such income, the one with an income over Rs. 80,000 would get only two times the balance above this amount. The provision has also been made to pay *ad interim* compensation which will, however, be deducted and adjusted against the amount of total compensation to be arrived at after the formalities of the preparation of the assessment roll and the disposal of any objection thereto are properly attended to. The manner of payment of the compensation, *i.e.*, how much to be paid in cash and how much in bonds, has been clearly stated and the payment in cash shall be decided according to a table prepared for this purpose.

Acquisition of estates and the rights of the intermediaries by the State is now an accomplished fact in West Bengal and all the *zamindaris* and other intermediary rights now vest in the State. The *raiyyats* are brought into direct relationship with the State and they now pay revenue to the State instead of paying rent to the landlord though the amount for such payment remains the same.

The *ad interim* compensation is being paid to the intermediaries ; upto August 15, 1961, the total payment amounted to Rs. 8,25,49,386. The preparation of the compensation assessment roll which should have been completed within 6 years of the vesting of the rights could not be completed within the scheduled date. By a recent amendment to the Act the date is proposed to be extended.

#### *Fixation of Fair Revenue*

The West Bengal Land Reforms Act of 1955 provides for a detailed procedure for the fixation of a fair revenue for each *raiyyat*. The Act lays down that the Revenue Officer will be empowered to determine the revenue rates for different classes of land on the basis of the nature and productivity of the soil, average yield per acre, the average price of crops during the previous 20 years and the market value of any land not used for crop production. A maximum limit has been indicated so that the revenue rates may not exceed one-fifth (for paddy) and one-tenth (for other crops) of the value of the yield. In case of land not used for crop production, the maximum limit is up to two per cent of the market value of the land.

After the revenue rates are arrived at and confirmed, the Revenue Officer will fix up the revenue payable by each *raiyat* according to the area of land held and crops grown and prepare a revenue roll. This revenue roll will be published and any objection to it would be duly heard. After all these steps are taken the *raiyats* would be called upon to pay the revenue instead of the old rent. The revenue thus arrived would not ordinarily be subjected to revision for a period of 20 years unless the State Government decides to change the rates due to the decrease in yield and price of the crops.

Another important feature of the Act is that it provides for a 5 per cent rebate of the amount of revenue if the revenue is paid within the prescribed period.

Since the fixation of fair revenue could not be determined and given effect to even after 7 years of the passing of the Act the *raiyats* continue to pay the same amount as revenue which they used to pay formerly as rent. The work of fixing up the revenue rates has not yet been taken up nor there has been any indication upto now regarding the probable time when the work will be taken in hand. Only in case of the acquired *khas* lands a revenue of Rs. 10 per acre for the cultivated land and Rs. 3 for the high and current fallows are charged on the basis of a yearly settlement.

#### *Consolidation of Holdings*

The fragmentation of land which impairs to some extent the efficiency of farming and impedes the development of irrigation facilities on the basis of the individual farm needs is proposed to be removed through its consolidation. The law provides that the Government may, on its own initiative or on the representation of the two-thirds or more of the *raiyats* who will be affected by the consolidation, acquire the land through proper compensation. After the consolidation is effected the land will be allotted in compact blocks to those *raiyats* whose land has been acquired for the purpose in such a way that nobody would get a larger area than the area held before the acquisition and the quality of the allotted land would almost be the same as of the acquired land.

The value of the allotted land would be deducted from the amount of the compensation to be paid to the landowner for the acquired land. If the value of the former exceeds that of the latter—in most cases this will happen—the Government will realize the difference in instalments as if it is a public demand, from the *raiyat* to whom the consolidation land has been allotted.

It is rather striking that these provisions, made in the Land Reforms Act of 1955, remain fully unimplemented. It is worthwhile to go a bit deeper and search for the plausible reasons which are fully or mainly responsible for the non-implementation of the consolidation provisions. As the Act provides, the initiative for land consolidation must come from two sources—either from the Government or from the people. The Government, it may be presumed, is now fully preoccupied with the implementation of the most important aspect of land reform, namely, the abolition of the intermediaries and the tasks involved in it are undoubtedly voluminous. The lack of interest and initiative from the Government is, therefore, easily understandable.

The initiative from the other source, *i.e.*, from the people, is also not forthcoming because they do not feel sufficient urge for land consolidation. That fragmentation of land is an evil and should be removed from the agrarian struc-

ture is not even understood in its true perspective. By way of illustration it may be pointed out that the "Opinion and Attitude Survey" carried out in some villages of West Bengal by the Agro-Economic Research Centre, Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan regarding the desirability of land consolidation reveals that majority of the cultivators do not show any interest in the subject and do not feel that land consolidation is a logical and essential step towards furthering the interest of farm production.

TABLE I — REACTIONS TO CONSOLIDATION OF HOLDINGS IN TERMS OF PERCENTAGES OF THE RESPONDENTS

Category	Village Sahajapur, Dist. Birbhum: 1955-56*	Village Jungul, Dist. Birbhum: 1957-58*	Village Nachan- gacha, Dist. 24-Parganas: 1956-57*	Village Mohis- got, District Howrah: 1956-57*
Favourable	19.3	15.7	26.3	46.1
Unfavourable	5.7	15.7	31.6	15.3
Indifferent	75.0	68.6	42.1	38.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

\* The year relates to the year of investigation.

It is only in Mohsigot that nearly half of the cultivators expressed their opinion in favour of land consolidation while in the rest of the villages the percentage varied from 16 to 26. It is, however, a happy sign that not a large percentage of the farmers is opposed to it. On the contrary, most of them remained indecisive and indifferent. Effective propaganda in favour of land consolidation would, it is hoped, convert these indifferent farmers and even those who are now against it to favour land consolidation. So long as this step is not undertaken and the initiative for land consolidation does not come from the Government, there is hardly any chance for the successful implementation of the provisions for land consolidation. The policy of consolidation of holdings could also be vigorously pursued by encouraging formation of co-operative farms.

### *Co-operative Farming*

The Land Reforms Act of 1955 contains measures to promote co-operative farming societies by conferring on them the following privileges: (1) reduction of revenue as the Government may decide, (2) free supply of seed and manure for the first 3 years and thereafter at concessional rates, (3) free technical advice by the experts of the State Government, (4) provision of credit facilities under the terms and conditions set by the Government, and (5) arrangement for better marketing.

In the beginning, the progress was rather slow but it gained momentum in 1957-58 in which year the largest number of societies (58) was reported to have been registered. By the end of that year, 92 co-operative farming societies were in existence. The management and the activities of these societies, however, are not at all satisfactory as has been found by the Programme Evaluation Organization<sup>1</sup> and also by an enquiry conducted recently by the Agro-Economic Research Centre, Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan.<sup>2</sup>

1. Government of India, Studies in Cooperative Farming, Planning Commission, New Delhi.
2. Experiments in Cooperative Farming.

The defects which the societies suffer from are too many and of varied characters and unless they are tackled properly the prospect in the field of co-operative farming appears to be rather gloomy in West Bengal. Steps are, however, being taken to remedy these defects and a State Committee has been appointed for the purpose. It has also been decided that the surplus blocks of land exceeding 35 acres should be handed over to the Co-operative Department for the formation of co-operative societies. The Teesta Valley Co-operative Society in Jalpaiguri with an area of 500 acres and the Chabghati Debnagar Co-operative Farming Society in Murshidabad with an area of 400 acres of land are the direct outcome of this decision.<sup>3</sup> More societies are expected to come into being as and when the distribution of the surplus land will make some headway.

#### *Status of the Share-Croppers*

The share-croppers or the tenants-at-will in West Bengal remain mostly unaffected by the abolition of the intermediary rights though the area cultivated by the *bargadar* is estimated to be 20.3 per cent of the cultivated land in West Bengal.<sup>4</sup> The farm management investigation in Hooghly and 24 Paraganas carried out in 1954 reveals that out of 597 farms studied, the number of share-croppers was as large as 246 accounting for 41 per cent of the total number of farms. Thus, the important role of the share-croppers in the agrarian structure of West Bengal is beyond any dispute.

Though it has been provided in the Estates Acquisition Act 1953 that the State may acquire the land which is cultivated by the *bargadar* or the whole or part of the holding which have been sublet, yet the Land Reforms Act of 1955 treats share-cropping as a regular feature of the agrarian structure and goes on to regularize the relationship between the *bargadars* and the landowners.

The share-croppers, it may be observed, suffer under two special disadvantages and one of them is the excessive rent they have to pay to the landowners while the other is the insecurity in land tenure implying that the share-croppers are liable to ejection from the land at the sweet will of the landowner. As a result, the incentive to higher production and fuller utilization of the land are conspicuously absent in their case. It is to be examined how far the West Bengal Land Reforms Act 1955 proposes to remedy these shortcomings.

The Act provides for the sharing of the crops between the *bargadar* and the landowner in the proportion of 50:50 if the latter provides the plough, cattle, manure and seed. The share of the *bargadar* is raised to 60 per cent in all other cases. It is to be observed that the Act is particularly silent about the sharing of the irrigation tax between the two parties.

Before the passing of the Act, cultivation on share was based primarily on two systems commonly known as *bargadari* and *krishani*. In the former, the *bargadar* used to pay generally half of the gross produce to the landowner, the former providing the bullock and human labour and the latter providing seed and manure while the irrigation tax was shared equally by both the parties. The sharing of the produce between the *bargadar* and the landowner in the proportion of 18:22 was also resorted to in some places but this was not widely practised.

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3. *Economic Review*, A.I.C.C., January 6, 1961, p. 130.

4. Census of India 1951, Vol. VI, p. 481.

It would, therefore, appear that the new Act did not make any provision for increasing the share of the *bargadar* which in effect would reduce their rent. It merely accorded a legal recognition to what was already an established fact.

After the passing of the Act, an ominous tendency was, however, set in towards further reducing the share of the *bargadar*. By way of illustration, it may be stated that sharing half the produce which was widely prevalent in the district of Birbhum is now being extensively replaced by the system of 18:22 share implying thereby a reduction of the *bargadar's* share from 50 per cent to 45 per cent of the gross produce. Another system which is of very recent origin and locally called as *Panchaddya* is coming into vogue whereby attempt is made to reduce further the share of the *bargadar*. Under this system, the gross produce is divided into 5 equal parts and the *bargadar* is entitled to get only 2 parts and the rest goes to the landowner. This implies that the *bargadar* will get only 40 per cent of the gross produce instead of his 50 per cent share before the passage of the Act.

Under the *krishani* system, the *krishan* supplied only the human labour and paid one-third of the irrigation tax while the rest of the inputs were provided by the landowner. As a return, the *krishan* received only one-third of the crop and some straw. The latter could not, however, be claimed as a matter of right. The *krishani* system is also undergoing a change after the passage of the Land Reforms Act. This system called *halkrishani* which as its name suggests requires the *krishan* to supply *Hal* (plough cattle and the human labour) along with the human labour and one-third of the irrigation tax. Though the whole input of bullock labour is supplied by the *krishan* under the new system the share of the crop, strangely enough, remains the same. Only half of the straw is granted to the *krishan* for his supplying the extra input of bullock labour. Considering the price of the bullocks and their cost of maintenance which are now to be borne fully by the *krishan* the value of half the share of straw seems to be extremely inadequate and the scale, it may be presumed, is tipped in favour of the landowner.

From the foregoing discussion it would appear that Land Reforms Act of 1955 neither proposed to reduce the rent of the share-croppers nor could it maintain the rent in its former level, what to speak of reducing it in the interest of the share-cropper. The main objective of the land reform measures, *i.e.*, to provide sufficient incentive to higher production, remains, therefore, wholly unfulfilled in case of the share-cropper.

The blame cannot, however, be laid squarely at the Land Reforms Act because it is not at all an ambitious measure. The root of the trouble lies in the agrarian structure itself, *i.e.*, in its scarcity of cultivable land, its uneven distribution and high concentration among the few and the intensive land hunger. After the passage of the Act, great uncertainty prevailed between the two parties—the landowners feeling uneasiness about the future security of their land and the share-croppers showing undue anxiety over the availability of more land or even retaining the land already under their control. Most of the farmers being small-sized and sub-marginal, there is a clamour for land which simply pushes up the rent or reduces the return of the share-croppers.

*Security of Tenure:* The *bargadar* is given a legal protection under this Act against unreasonable eviction by the landowner. It, however, provides that in



certain circumstances the *bargadar* can be evicted from the land only by the order of an officer of the State Government appointed for the purpose. The grounds of eviction are: (a) "that the *bargadar* has without any reasonable cause failed to cultivate the land or has neglected to cultivate it properly or has used it for any purpose other than agriculture; (b) that the land is not cultivated by the *bargadar* personally; (c) that the *bargadar* has contravened any provision of this Act; and (d) that the person owning the land requires it *bona fide* for bringing it under personal cultivation."

If the grounds of eviction are critically examined one may find that the last clause is rather wide offering the largest scope for eviction than that by any other of the clauses. Though certain limitations are proposed to be placed in its working yet this is the most popular and frequently resorted ground for eviction. But this has to be accepted because in doing justice to the *bargadars* the same could not be denied to the landowners only because of their fault, if it is a fault at all, of owning the land.

After the adoption of the West Bengal Estates Acquisition Act 1953 and the Land Reforms Act of 1955 there was a large scale eviction of *bargadars* even though the latter Act made special safeguard against unreasonable eviction. Though the data regarding the number of evictions after the passing of these Acts are lacking yet it is an admitted fact that there has been more evictions since 1953 than those in the preceding years. Such a large scale eviction appeared to be more a result of panic than honest attempts of the landowners to cultivate their land under their personal care. As soon as the panic subsided and the atmosphere calmed down the evicted land was restored, in most cases to the original *bargadars*. However, as a precaution against the vesting of ownership rights of the shared land to the *bargadar* which may be claimed as a result of continuous cultivation of the same land for a number of years the landowners generally interchange the shared land among the different *bargadars* and the settlement is made on a year-to-year basis. Even when the same land is allowed to be cultivated by the *bargadar* year after year the settlement is mad on a year-to-year basis so as to give it an appearance of a new settlement.

The landowners being in a privileged position dictate terms to the *bargadars* which are invariably favourable to the former. The *bargadars* too in their eagerness to have the land agree to the new terms and conditions which may even deviate from the local system already described. Besides, the *bargadars* in most of the cases look up to the landowners, other institutions being lacking, for temporary reliefs and help, which may be denied to them if the latter do not agree to the new terms and conditions. Thus, the *bargadars'* lot remains more or less the same as before and whenever there is any change it has turned to be disadvantageous to the *bargadar*. The land reform legislation in West Bengal has, therefore, failed miserably either to reduce the rent of the *bargadars* or to grant them security in land tenure.

#### *Imposition of Land Ceiling and the Distribution of Land*

The Land Reforms Act of 1955 lays down that no *raiyyat* shall be entitled to hold more than 25 acres of land excluding the homestead. Some relaxation has, however, been made in the following cases:

- (1) In case of the intermediaries more land above the ceiling can be held for public, religious or charitable purposes.

- (2) In case of co-operative farming societies the total area may be much above the ceiling but the land per member excluding homestead must not exceed the limit of 25 acres.
- (3) The ceiling shall not be applicable to the *raiyyats* living in those parts of the district of Darjeeling as may be specified by the Government.

With regard to the distribution of land by the Government the law provides that the settlement of land to those who would form themselves into a co-operative farming society will be preferred. Failing this, the land shall be settled with the local residents holding no land of their own or possessing less than two acres of land for direct cultivation.

By making the above provisions two problems, namely, the inequality of land and the intensive land hunger are proposed to be fought through two ways. Firstly, too large a holding will not be tolerated and the excess land over 25 acres would be taken over by the State. This limit will also apply for the future acquisition of land and no *raiyyat* will be allowed to hold at any time more than 25 acres of land. Secondly, the distribution of land by the Government is proposed to be effected in such a way that the small-sized farms would be converted into larger units or the landless people would get some land for their personal cultivation. Thus, on the one hand, there will be levelling down of the large farms with more than 25 acres while on the other, the small farms will be levelled up by the addition of more land. While nobody will object to the latter step and in fact, it is a very welcome feature of the Act there still persists a raging controversy about the justification of the imposition of ceiling.

On the ultimate analysis, the imposition of land ceiling will have the effect of a ceiling on income in the agricultural sector while no such ceiling is proposed to be imposed on the other sectors of the economy. This seems to be a gross injustice to the farm people in general and the few farms in the upper strata in particular. Various arguments in favour of land ceiling are on record to treat the agricultural sector separately because of its special problems and peculiarities but they are hardly convincing. That is why the committees of the Panel on Land Reforms though favoured the ceiling on land "wished to emphasize that the principle of ceiling should be applied to other sectors of the economy also with due regard to the conditions prevailing in those sectors . . . It was felt that if the State would announce its policy of application of ceilings to other sectors of the economy as well, imposition of ceiling on agricultural lands would meet with less opposition and there would be chances of its proving successful."<sup>5</sup>

Farm problem is basically a low income problem. Without attempting to improve this situation through other suitable measures mere imposition of the ceiling would, in effect, perpetuate the problem and the vast majority of the people staying in agriculture would have to be content with a relatively low income. The standard of living and the farm efficiency will be affected thereby and the agricultural production will suffer in consequence.

Further, the imposition of ceiling would inhibit capital investment in agriculture as there would be very little capital formation due to the low income

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5. Government of India, Report of the Committee of the Panel on Land Reforms, Planning Commission, Delhi, 1959, p.99.

earned from farming. As a result, the improved methods and techniques cannot be adopted in agriculture and the farm sector will lag behind the other sectors. There is already a scarcity of enterprising and capable people in agriculture and the ceiling will accentuate the situation further by encouraging them to leave a depressed sector.

Imposition of land ceiling, however, is expected to lead towards better and fuller utilization of land<sup>6</sup> as intensity of cultivation is much higher in the smaller farms than in the larger ones.<sup>7</sup> The working members being relatively abundant in the small farms the labour input per acre is also expected to rise considerably with the imposition of land ceiling. The addition of a few extra acres of land to the size of the small farms would, therefore, promote not only better utilization of land but also the fuller and effective employment of family labour. All these factors will surely have far reaching effects on the volume of agricultural production of the country.

Taking the law as it is, one may find that it suffers from one main defect that it ignores the regional variation, which at times is quite considerable, as the ceiling is imposed for the State as a whole. This is tantamount to penalizing a large section of the people carrying on cultivation in the less favoured regions. For instance, the ceiling of 25 acres in Hooghly where the land is fertile and the intensity of cropping is high does not and cannot mean the same thing in the western part of Burdwan and Birbhum where the land is infertile and barely a single crop can be raised in a year. It, therefore, appears that proper justice could have been made if the State could be divided as far as possible into some homogeneous regions representing the soil-crop-climate complex and the ceiling be fixed separately for each region with reference to the income attainable in normal circumstances.

Another shortcoming of the Act is that it does not place any restriction on the size of farms at the other extreme. The very small-sized farms which are proverbially inefficient in resource use should not be allowed to exist as they in majority of the cases, not only impede capital investment in agriculture but gradually eat up the capital already invested there. There should have been some provisions for the merging of such farms on a co-operative basis.

With regard to the implementation of the ceiling two relevant points may be indicated here. Firstly, if the objective of the ceiling is to acquire sufficient land for distribution among the landless people the ceiling of 25 acres appears to have been fixed at a rather high level. Secondly, the ceiling has practically been given effect to by the farmers themselves without the intervention of the State Government. That there has been a transfer of land to the near relations cannot be denied but the extent of land so transferred is not likely to be considerable. It is also interesting to note that the transfer of land is not always effected to evade the ceiling but disinherit the daughters of the family who have become the co-sharers of the family property under the recent Hindu Code Act.

The views expressed above are more or less, confirmed by the data presented in Table II which shows the distribution of ownership holdings in seven villages in

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6. G. C. Mandal: *Studies in the Problem of Growth of a Rural Economy*, World Press, Calcutta, 1961, p. 98.
  7. K. C. Basak and B. K. Chowdhury: *Studies in the Economics of Farm Management in West Bengal—Report for the year 1954-55*, p. 32.

TABLE II — DISTRIBUTION OF OWNERSHIP HOLDINGS IN SEVEN VILLAGES OF WEST BENGAL

Size-groups (acres)	Kheadah (Dist. 24- Parganas) 1955-56		Nanchangacha (Dist. 24- Parganas) 1956-57		Sahajapur (Dist. Birbhum) 1955-56		Jungul (Dist. Birbhum) 1957-58		Kashipur (Dist. Bankura) 1959-60		Mahisgot (Dist. Hooghly) 1956-57		Binanai (Dist. Cooch- Behar) 1956-57	
	No. of House- Owned holds	No. of Land Owned holds	No. of House- Owned holds	No. of Land Owned holds	No. of House- Owned holds	No. of Land Owned holds	No. of House- Owned holds	No. of Land Owned holds	No. of House- Owned holds	No. of Land Owned holds	No. of House- Owned holds	No. of Land Owned holds	No. of House- Owned holds	No. of Land Owned holds
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
0 — 5	47 (90.4)	54.84 (58.0)	27 (87.1)	43.74 (41.8)	34 (70.8)	80.95 (33.4)	25 (69.5)	54.23 (35.8)	34 (69.4)	66.63 (32.2)	108 (94.7)	155.89 (76.0)	48 (56.5)	98.62 (18.7)
5 — 10	4 (7.7)	26.83 (28.4)	2 (6.45)	16.50 (15.8)	9 (18.8)	65.23 (26.9)	8 (22.2)	60.44 (39.8)	9 (18.4)	61.88 (29.9)	5 (4.4)	33.48 (16.3)	20 (23.5)	141.57 (26.8)
10 — 15	1 (1.9)	12.82 (13.6)	—	—	1 (2.1)	12.30 (5.1)	3 (8.3)	37.03 (24.4)	4 (8.1)	45.53 (22.0)	—	—	9 (10.6)	106.82 (20.2)
15 — 20	—	—	—	—	1 (2.1)	16.60 (6.8)	—	—	2 (4.1)	32.96 (15.9)	1 (0.9)	15.82 (7.7)	5 (5.9)	86.90 (16.4)
20 — 25	—	—	2 (6.45)	44.36 (42.4)	3 (6.2)	67.47 (27.8)	—	—	—	—	—	—	1 (1.2)	20.30 (3.8)
Above 25	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2 (2.3)	74.47 (14.1)
Total	52	94.49	31	104.60	48	242.55	36	151.70	49	207.00	114	205.19	85	528.68

The years relate to the years of investigation of the village.  
Figures within brackets indicate percentages.

West Bengal surveyed during the period of 1955-60 by the Agro-Economic Research Centre, Santiniketan. It is revealing that there are only two farms in seven villages which will be affected by the land ceiling and the total land available for distribution comes to a very low figure of only 24.47 acres. Supposing this excess land is to be settled with the local residents possessing very little, or no land this land distribution will not be able to bring about any material change in the pattern of landownership. Even if there be any transfer of land after the passing of the Acts the very low number of farms in the middle size groups of farms gives a clear indication that the transfer of land is not at all considerable. Besides, the policy of the Government being to recognize the *bargadari* system, the land already under their cultivation even though it forms part of the surplus land of the landowners will not be available for distribution among the landless people. Thus, the ceiling practically becomes ineffective so far as its objective of land acquisition and distribution is concerned. To fulfil this objective the ceiling needs downward revision but in that process more harm than good will be caused to the interest of agriculture.

The main objective of land reforms legislation is to release the forces of production so as to ensure a progressive agricultural economy. The achievements so far made, however, falls much short of the desired goal. The land reforms legislation, it must be remembered, is no panacea for the rural ills but it will not be an exaggeration to say that much depends upon the faithful implementation of the Acts.

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## LAND REFORMS LEGISLATION IN BIHAR AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

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### PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ZAMINDARY ABOLITION LEGISLATION

#### *Acquisition of Zamindaries*

Until the implementation of the Land Reforms Act 1950—beginning from May 1952 and ending on 1st January, 1956—Bihar was a *zamindari* area under the Permanent Settlement of 1793, with the exception of a few pockets of Khas Mahal Estates which were administered directly by the State Government on *ryotwari* lines.

After a prolonged legal battle, the Supreme Court verdict of May 1952 finally cleared the legal hurdle in the way of acquisition of *zamindaries* by the State Government, after which the process of acquisition which went through four