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Farmers' groups urge Governor not to ratify Ordinance on land reforms

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'It will not only hit farmers but also impact food security and biodiversity'

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

A host of farmers' organisations have written to Governor Vajubhai Vala urging him not to ratify the Ordinance that seeks to bring changes to the Karnataka Land Reforms Act, 1962.

The open letter argues that dilution of the Act will effectively remove restrictions on purchasing agricultural land, which will, in turn, "give scope for huge land banks and aggregators." Dilution of Section 80 of the Act will also make conversion of land use for non-agricultural purposes easy, leading to alienation of land from agriculture threatening not only farmers, but food security and bio-diversity of

the State. Signatories to the letter include Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha, Hasiru Sene, Karnataka Prantha Raitha Sangha, Grama Seva Sangha, Punarchit, Rashtriya Kisan Sangh, and Amrita Bhoomi among others.

"Nearly 80% of farmers in Karnataka are small and medium farmers. These are the farmers who are facing food security to the state. These farmers today suffer from climate change, uncertain rainfall, pest and disease, low soil carbon, insecure market, high production costs, and so on. Under such conditions the government should not further pauperise rural people by enforcing them to sell their land and become labourers on their own fields. The government needs to address these issues to make their lives and lands viable and sustainable," the letter states. "So, it is a question of both farmers' and the large public's food security. The proposed

land reform is a serious threat to farmer's sovereignty," it argues.

"The suggested reforms and amendments will render land to be seen only as an investment commodity and thereby be subjected to exploitation by advanced chemicals, mono-cropping, heavy water use, and hybridisation etc. This will further have a cascading effect on land degradation, underground water in coming years," the letter states.

The open letter also condemns the government taking the Ordinance route to bring in amendment to a law that has such widespread impact on farmer lives and economy during a pandemic. "The fact that the government is now ready to pass Ordinance in this stage indicates a violation of the basic norms of democracy," the letter states, and requests the Governor not to pass the Ordinance to amend the Karnataka Land Reform