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Maharashtra Women Farmers Act 2026 Recognising the Woman Who Farms

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Maharashtra Women Farmers Act 2026

Recognising the Woman Who Farms

17 July 2026 · 4 min read ·

Source: ujjyari.com — researched, fact-checked & UPSC-mapped

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On , Maharashtra became the **first Indian state** to legally recognise women engaged in farming and allied activities as “**farmers**”, formally *decoupling* (<https://ujjyari.com/vocab/decoupling/>) the status of a farmer from ownership of land. The Maharashtra Women Farmers Empowerment Act, 2026 creates a **Woman Farmer Certificate (WFC)** as proof of occupation, a dedicated state fund, and a digital registry, directly addressing the long-ignored reality of the **feminisation of agriculture** in India.

A LANDMARK IN AGRARIAN GENDER JUSTICE

For decades, the woman who sows, weeds, transplants, harvests and tends livestock has been statistically and legally invisible. Because farmer status in India has been tied to **land titles**, and because land is overwhelmingly held in men’s names, women doing the bulk of agricultural labour have been shut out of institutional credit, crop insurance and scheme benefits. Maharashtra’s new law breaks this link.

What the Act Actually Does

The Act redefines who counts as a farmer by attaching the status to the **work performed**, not to a land record. This is the conceptual heart of the reform.

PROVISION	DETAIL
Woman Farmer Certificate (WFC)	Issued through the Gram Sabha / Nagar Panchayat as proof of occupation, without requiring a land title
Maharashtra State Fund for Women Farmers	Financed from the state consolidated fund plus central grants
State-Level Monitoring Committee	Headed by the Chief Secretary
Governing Council	Chaired by the Chief Minister
Digital Registry	Centralised database of certified women farmers

Activities Recognised as Farming

The definition is deliberately broad, capturing the diverse work women do beyond crop cultivation:

- **Crop husbandry** and primary processing
- **Animal husbandry**, poultry and fishery
- **Agro-forestry**, vermiculture and mushroom cultivation

By recognising these allied occupations, the law aligns legal status with the actual agrarian economy in which women are dominant.

WHY IT MATTERS: THE FEMINISATION OF AGRICULTURE

As men migrate to towns for non-farm work, agriculture has become increasingly female. Yet ownership and recognition have not followed labour.

INDICATOR	APPROXIMATE FIGURE
Women's share of the agricultural workforce	65 to 75 per cent
Women who own agricultural land	Under 14 per cent

This mismatch produces the **feminisation of poverty**: women bear the risk and toil of farming but cannot access the collateral-based credit, insurance and welfare that assume a land title. The WFC is designed to bridge exactly this gap by unlocking **collateral-free institutional loans** and **crop insurance** for certified women.

Constitutional and Policy Anchors

The law draws strength from the constitutional scheme for protective discrimination.

- **Article 15(3)** empowers the state to make special provisions for women.

- The **Directive Principles of State Policy** direct the state toward economic justice and adequate means of livelihood.
- The reform complements central welfare architecture such as **PM-KISAN** and formal credit access.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CHALLENGES AHEAD

The Act shifts **entitlement** (<https://ujjayari.com/vocab/entitlement/>) from a **property-based** logic to a **work-based** logic, a potentially transformative model that other states may adopt. It gives women a documented identity that banks, insurers and government schemes can act upon.

Challenges remain. Certification through the Gram Sabha must be insulated from local capture and gatekeeping. The fund must be adequately capitalised. And a WFC will only matter if banks and insurers actually treat it as valid proof for lending and cover. Implementation, not intent, will decide the outcome.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 1: Role of women and women's organisations; social empowerment; the changing structure of rural society and the feminisation of agriculture.

GS Paper 2: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections; mechanisms and institutions for the protection and betterment of women; issues relating to development and management of social sector.

Prelims pointers:

- Maharashtra is the **first state** to legally recognise women in farming as farmers.
- **Woman Farmer Certificate (WFC)** is issued via the **Gram Sabha / Nagar Panchayat**.
- The Governing Council is chaired by the **Chief Minister**; the Monitoring Committee by the **Chief Secretary**.
- **Article 15(3)** permits special provisions for women.

Mains question: "Recognising the woman who farms requires decoupling farmer status from land ownership." Examine this statement in the light of the feminisation of agriculture and evaluate Maharashtra's Women Farmers Act, 2026 as a model of agrarian gender justice.

FACTS CORNER

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First state to legally recognise women in farming and allied work as farmers: Maharashtra (2026).

The reform decouples farmer status from land ownership, a first in Indian law.

Allied activities covered: crop husbandry, animal husbandry, poultry, fishery, agro-forestry, vermiculture, mushroom cultivation and primary processing.

Women form roughly 65 to 75 per cent of the agricultural workforce but own under 14 per cent of agricultural land.

Constitutional hook: Article 15(3) allows special provisions for women.

Benefits unlocked: collateral-free institutional loans and crop insurance.

Sources: *The Hindu* (<https://www.thehindu.com>), *Indian Express* (<https://indianexpress.com>), *PIB* (<https://pib.gov.in>)

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A government-run village-level child care and mother care centre under...

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