



Seed Act 2026: A Strong Shield against Fake Seeds

For years, fake and substandard seeds have been among the most damaging threats to Indian agriculture. Poor germination, weak plant growth, and reduced yields translate directly into financial loss. Recognising the seriousness of this challenge, the Government of India has enacted the Seed Act 2026, a comprehensive reform designed to modernise India's seed regulatory framework. The objective is to protect farmers from fraud, ensure transparency in the seed supply chain, and rebuild trust in one of agriculture's most critical foundations.

India's earlier legal framework governing seeds was anchored in the Seeds Act of 1966. Over the decades, Indian agriculture expanded and diversified. Private seed companies entered the market. Hybrid seeds became more common. Distribution networks extended across states, districts, and remote rural markets. With this expansion came complexity—and with complexity, regulatory gaps. Unregistered sellers began operating outside formal systems. Informal supply chains flourished. In some

instances, counterfeit packaging mimicked reputable brands. The penalties prescribed under the older law were often insufficient to deter deliberate malpractice. This created an environment where dishonest traders could profit, while farmers bore the risks. The Seed Act 2026 is not merely an amendment. It is a structural response to a transformed seed economy.

Seed Act 2026 Building a Traceable Seed Ecosystem

One of the most significant features of the new law is the introduction of a nationwide seed traceability

system. Every packet of seed sold commercially must now carry a QR code. For farmers, this marks a practical shift in power. By scanning the QR code, they can verify essential information about the seed's origin, production details, and authorised seller credentials. Instead of relying solely on packaging claims or verbal assurances, farmers gain access to verifiable data before purchase. For regulators, traceability creates accountability. If a batch fails quality checks or complaints arise about performance, authorities can track its source swiftly. Traceability transforms the seed supply chain from an opaque network into a monitored system.

Mandatory Registration Cleaning the Marketplace

A second major reform under the Seed Act 2026 is the introduction of mandatory registration for all entities engaged in commercial seed trade. Seed companies, dealers, and sellers must now operate within a formal registration framework. Sowing seasons often witness a surge in temporary sellers, especially in rural markets where demand is urgent and verification mechanisms are weak. By requiring registration, the law ensures that every commercial seller can be identified and held accountable.

Stronger Penalties as a Real Deterrent

Regulation without deterrence is ineffective. One of the limitations of the earlier framework was that penalties for violations were often too modest to discourage malpractice. The Seed Act 2026 significantly strengthens punitive provisions. Deliberate sale of fake, unregistered, or substandard seeds now attracts substantial financial penalties. Fines may extend up to ₹30 lakh. Serious or repeated offences can lead to imprisonment for up to three years. Seed fraud is no longer treated as a minor commercial irregularity. It is recognised as an offence that directly undermines farmers' livelihoods and rural stability.

Protecting Farmers' Traditional Rights

The Government has clarified that the Seed Act 2026 does not interfere with farmers' long-standing rights to save, sow, exchange, or share seeds within their communities. These practices are deeply embedded in India's agricultural heritage and remain vital, especially in rainfed and tribal regions. The Act focuses exclusively on regulating commercial seed sales. By safeguarding traditional rights, the law balances modern oversight with cultural continuity.

Strengthening Scientific Evaluation and Institutional Oversight

Quality assurance begins long before a seed packet reaches a retail shelf. The Seed Act 2026 enhances the role of scientific and public institutions in evaluating seed quality and performance. Organisations such as the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, agricultural universities, and Krishi Vigyan Kendra are expected to play a stronger role in ensuring that seeds meet prescribed standards. This emphasis is crucial in a country with diverse agro-climatic zones. Rigorous pre-market evaluation reduces the risk of inappropriate or poorly adapted seeds entering the supply chain. Institutional involvement also enhances credibility.

Awareness and Farmer Empowerment

Regulation alone cannot eliminate fake seeds unless farmers are informed and equipped to respond. Recognising this, the Seed Act 2026 underscores the importance of awareness campaigns through extension systems. Krishi Vigyan Kendras and other outreach platforms are expected to guide farmers on how to verify QR codes, understand quality indicators, and access grievance mechanisms. Equally important is the establishment of responsive complaint systems. When farmers encounter substandard seeds, they must have clear channels for reporting and redressal. Swift action reinforces confidence in the regulatory framework.

Towards a Transparent and Accountable Seed Market

Taken together, the reforms under the Seed Act 2026 aim to create a seed market that is transparent, traceable, and accountable. Digital verification tools, mandatory registration, stronger penalties, institutional oversight, and awareness initiatives form a coherent system. A reliable seed market encourages innovation, responsible private participation, and long-term planning.

Seeds as the Foundation of Rural Confidence

The Seed Act 2026 represents a decisive effort to protect farmers from one of the most persistent forms of exploitation. By combining modern traceability systems, stricter registration norms, meaningful penalties, scientific validation, and farmer awareness, the law addresses the problem at multiple levels. If executed effectively on the ground, this reform has the potential to reduce avoidable crop losses, enhance productivity, and restore confidence in agricultural inputs. ■