

Unseasonal rain hits crop quality, productivity in Prakasam

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Trail of destruction: A farmer showing a tobacco plant affected by untimely rains at S.N. Padu village in Prakasam district.

Tobacco, Bengal gram yield likely to fall below target

Fifty-seven-year-old Srinivasa Rao, a farmer in Mangamoor village in Prakasam district, was caught unawares as a fresh wet spell overnight left his tobacco farm water-logged at a time when processing of plucked leaves was going on on a brisk note.

“We were hoping to get a good grade out-turn at least this year. But the rain has come at a most inopportune time. We are saddled with 30 to 35% of low grade varieties,” said the farmer along with fellow farmers in the village.

The e-auctions of the main commercial crop are set to commence in the traditional tobacco growing areas coming under Southern Light Soil (SLS) and Southern Black Soil (SBS) auction platforms in three phases from February 17, 26 and March 4.

The farmers who have been reeling under the impact of severe drought in the last five consecutive years, were hoping to recoup the losses at least this year thanks to good precipitation during both khariff and rabi cropping seasons. But the unabated rain even at the time of harvest has hit hard productivity and the quality of crops including tobacco and Bengal gram, the main commercial crops grown under rain-fed condition in the district.

As a result, tobacco production, which was earlier estimated to cross the 100 million kg mark, is likely to hover around the 90 million kg mark in SLS and SBS regions, according to Indian Tobacco Association sources. It was estimated that bright grade varieties will account for only 40 to 45% of the total crop and medium grade varieties 25 to 30% of the total crop.

Wastage goes up

“Seven to eight leaves per plant have gone waste following the untimely rain,” said a tobacco grower from Vellampalli village K. Venkateswara Rao. Curing of the tobacco crop has so far been completed in 50% of the total cropped area in SBS region and 70% in SLS region said a group of farmers who geared up to market their produce.

The unseasonal rain during the flowering stage had also hit Bengal gram productivity by about 3 quintals from the normal yield of seven to eight quintals per acre, complained a group of farmers in N.G.Padu village. So was the case with red gram with productivity declining by 50% from the the normal crop of about six quintals per acre.

Farmers have taken up rabi crops in 2.29 lakh hectares. Bengal gram accounted for a lion’s share of 84,378 hectares, tobacco 47,708 hectares during this winter, according to a report compiled by the Agriculture department.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/unseasonal-rain-hits-crop-quality-productivity-in-prakasam/article30796006.ece>