

Rains delay tobacco cultivation in Prakasam

S. Murali | ONGOLE, November 20, 2020



In dire straits: A tobacco field under a sheet of water at Chekurapadu in Prakasam district.

Farmers need to go for fresh sowing as crops have been damaged

The recent rains ahead of Deepavali has turn out to be a bane for the farmers in the traditional tobacco growing region in Prakasam district.

It was unseasonal rains in January this year that put paid to the hopes of tobacco growers to get a good grade out-turn, the current wet spell has submerged the crops in among other areas of Ongole, Vellampalli, Tangutur, Kandukur and Kaligiri.

As a result, the farmers will have to go for fresh plantation in the areas where rejuvenation of the crops has been ruled out. The rain during the peak sowing season of tobacco seedlings has damaged the crops in more than 250 hectares in the Southern Light Soil(SLS) as also Southern Black Soil region(SBS).

The downpour has delayed the sowing of other rabi crops as the farmers have adopted a wait-and-watch policy.

Tobacco, the principal commercial crop in Prakasam district, have been planted in about 20,000 hectares in SLS and SBS regions thgus far, hen compared to the 27,000 hectares during the corresponding period last year, SBS Regional Manager R. Srinvasulu Naidu said, after taking stock of the seasonal condition in the areas coming under the SBS auction platforms.

“Farmers could take up tobacco cultivation only in about 40% of the intended area in the two regions. The sowing of seedlings in other areas may be delayed by another two to three weeks as the farmers have to wait for the excess water to drain especially in the SBS region,” Mr. Srinvasulu Naidu told The Hindu.

Expenses to go up

Meanwhile, tobacco farmers have their fingers crossed.

“The incessant rains have flooded my fields a few weeks after I completed sowing operations to recoup the losses incurred during last cropping season when coronavirus-induced lockdown coincided with the peak marketing season. Now, I have no other option than replantation, which involves additional expenses,” lamented V.V.Prasad, a tobacco farmer from Chekurapadu village near N.G.Padu.

The steady showers has also delayed the sowing of chillies, black gram and bengal gram and others in the district.

Low acreage

Rabi crops has been taken up only in 31,345 hectares as against the target of 2.56 lakh hectares fixed by the Agriculture Department. Sowing of bengal gram, the principal pulse crop, has been completed only in 2,545 hectares as against the normal extent of 95,554 hectares,” said Agriculture Joint Director P.V. Sriramamurthy, adding that the overall crop acreage has been only 13% thus far.

Standing crops in 3,142.60 hectares belonging to 3,252 farmers in 98 villages were damaged by November 18, said a preliminary report compiled by the Agriculture Department. Cotton crops in 1,349 hectares suffered a damage, followed by black gram in 654 hectares, said Mr. Sriramamurthy, adding that a detailed enumeration is on across the district.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/rains-delay-tobacco-cultivation-in-prakasam/article33136763.ece>