

## Incessant rain spells doom for tobacco farmers

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Tobacco farmers kept their fingers crossed as rain induced by 'Jawad' damaged crops, in their transplantation stage, in the traditional tobacco growing areas both in Prakasam and SPSR Nellore districts.

Much against odds, including the ever-increasing cost of cultivation, tobacco farmers had raised the crop. But, like last year, unabated rain damaged the standing crops in over 30% of the cropped area, shattering all their hopes.



The wet spell during the peak rabi season had partially damaged tobacco crop in 3,712 hectares and fully destroyed the crop in 2,444 hectares. The downpour had taken away 30% of the planted crop in 19,696 hectares, as per Tobacco Board.

This year, the crop was grown in over 10,000 hectares as against 22,750 hectares permitted by the Tobacco Board in the Southern Black Soil(SBS) region. In the Southern Light Soil(SLS) region, the crop coverage was 9,502 hectares as against the permitted area of 25,423 hectares.

“We have no option but to go for replantation, even if that means bearing additional costs,” said a group of farmers at Chekurpadu village while scooping out water from their crops in a bid to salvage whatever little they can.

### Crop infestation

As if the damage caused by the rain to the crop was not enough, the wet spell had also spurred leaf blight disease in crops raised in the SLS and SBS regions, said a farmer V.V. Prasad.

“I have to go for replantation altogether as the damaged crop will adversely affect grade outturn,” said another farmer B. Ramanjaneyulu coming under Ongole II auction platform.

“The government should come to our rescue by providing input subsidy to raise a new crop. Rain in November has turned out to be a bane for us,” said a farmer S. Guruva Reddy said.

For farmers in D.C. Palli, it is a different challenge as there is a rampant pest infestation to crops following the wet spell. The farmers demand that the Tobacco Board and the State Government provide 33% input subsidy as they have to go for grow crops afresh.

Tobacco Board SLS Regional Manager D.Venugopal said asked the farmers to sparingly use ammonium sulphate to save the tobacco seedlings from damping off disease. the farmers should wait till at least December first week to raise fresh crops in Ongole, Vellampalli, Tangutur and Kondepi.

### Total crop damage

Meanwhile, Agriculture Joint Director S.Srinivasa Rao said the rains during November had damaged kharif and rabi crops raised in 66,038 hectares, including Bengal gram in 16,666 hecatres, black gram in 20,940 hectares and paddy in 5,658 hectares in Prakasam district.