

## Prakasam tobacco farmers optimistic about reaping good profits in current season

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**ONGOLE:** The tobacco farmers in the Prakasam district bore the brunt of the cyclone Michaung, resulting in substantial losses. An unusual situation has emerged in the district, with both final-stage and newly planted tobacco crop fields coexisting in the same season. Farmers, grappling with losses in other crops, have shifted to tobacco cultivation, optimistic about achieving good income this year, akin to the previous year (2022-23).



Despite the impending tobacco auctions by the Tobacco Board starting next month (February 2024) and the conclusion of the sowing and plantation period. Consequently, the cultivated area has surpassed the permitted crop area limits set by the board.

In the last week of December 2023, the cyclone inflicted more damage, estimated at around 10,000 hectares, to the final-stage tobacco crops across the district. Many affected tobacco growers resumed cultivation in the 3rd and 4th weeks of December 23, while some even initiated re-plantation of tobacco saplings in the preceding days, a process still ongoing in few areas. This surge in cultivation has led to abnormal increases in additional capital amounts required by many farmers.

Despite the board offering Rs 10,000 interest-free loans to cyclone-affected farmers who are members of the board's Tobacco Farmers Welfare Fund (IFWF), most tobacco growers opted for loans from relatives, friends, and private lenders at higher interest rates for tobacco crop re-plantation.

For the current season (2023-24), the board granted permission to cultivate tobacco in 57,013 hectares, producing 86.82 million kilograms under the Southern Black Soils (SBS) and Southern Light Soils (SLS) regions (Prakasam and SPSR Nellore). This is identical to the permission granted for previous season.

While last year's expectation was 61,635 hectares of tobacco cultivation, growers have exceeded permitted extent, cultivating 70,185 hectares. As cultivation continues, the extent may further surge, reaching 74,000 to 75,000 hectares for this season. However, the late crop growers might face challenges with reduced yield. Regional Manager (RM) - Ongole, M Lakshmana Rao, affirmed preparations for auctions.

**Source:** <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/andhra-pradesh/2024/Jan/15/prakasam-tobacco-farmers-optimistic-about-reaping-good-profits-in-current-season>