

## Tobacco growers in Andhra Pradesh seek a fair deal ahead of auctions



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Farmers in the traditional tobacco growing areas in Nellore and Prakasam districts, who have raised the commercial crop much against odds during this cropping season, have completed curing with great hopes as the auctions are all set to commence in 10 days across the 11 auction platforms in the two districts

### **Price expectations**

As the bright grade crop earned a premium price of more than ₹200 per kg in the Mysuru region in Karnataka during the ongoing auctions, the farmers coming under the southern light soil (SLS) and the southern bright soil (SBS) auction platforms in the two districts have pleaded with the Tobacco Board to ensure commencement of auctions with ₹210 per kg for the bright grade, ₹180 per kg for the medium grade, and ₹120 per kg for the low grade.

In keeping with the Union government's policy to boost agri-exports, the Tobacco Board had fixed an enhanced crop size of 78.81 million kg. However, the production, according to the crop regulator, fell by about 10 million kg to a little over 68 million kg.

In view of the unseasonal rains, the grade out-turn is also expected to be far from satisfactory.

Production of bright grade varieties will be in the range of 45% to 50% only when compared to over 60% the previous year in the auction platforms of Velampalli, Ongole I, Ongole II, Tangutur, Kondepi, Kandukur I, Podili, Kanigiri, D.C. Palli and Kaligiri.

A group of farmers at Pernamitta, near here, said it expected at least 15% increase in the prices when compared to the previous year in order to continue growing the crop, which won appreciation for its “richness, full-bodied flavour and smoothness” in the global market.

Sharp showers in November under the influence of a weather system in the Bay of Bengal had forced the farmers to go for replantation in over 25% of the authorised cropped area of 49,889.15 hectares.

The unexpected downpour again in the middle of January added to their woes as they had one spell of curing of medium and low-grade varieties out of the total seven, said a farmer leader from Kandukur T. Ramanaiah.

On no account the average price for the produce should be below ₹160 per kg, said a farmer from Ongole V.V. Prasad.

Low-grade varieties, which account for about 30% of the total crop this year, should be given at least ₹120 per kg, added another farmer B. Ramanjaneyulu.

There has been a fall in the crop coverage to only 46,650 million hectares against the authorised crop size of 49,890 hectares due to unfavourable weather condition, SLS Regional Manager D. Venugopal told The Hindu after taking stock of the situation.

**Source:** <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/tobacco-growers-in-andhra-pradesh-seek-a-fair-deal-ahead-of-auctions/article65065307.ece>