

## Tobacco turns farmers' favourite in south coastal Andhra Pradesh, thanks to buoyant market

*Seedlings have been planted in over 17,500 hectares in Prakasam and SPSR Nellore districts so far during rabi*

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Tobacco crop being cultivated at Chekurapadu village near N.G.Padu, in Prakasam district. | Photo Credit: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Tobacco farmers in south coastal Andhra Pradesh are gearing up to grow the commercial crop enthusiastically with a lot of hopes during winter, thanks to the buoyant market condition.

Left with no other alternative remunerative crop, the farmers in the drought-prone regions in the Southern Black Soil (SBS) and Southern Light Soil (SLS) regions have taken to the drought-resistant crop meeting the stringent quality standards set by global players.

Following heavy demand for seedlings their prices have shot up to ₹3,500 per bundle at the beginning of the rabi season, giving the jitters to farmers. However, they have now heaved a sigh of relief as periodic showers eased the situation. The prices of seedlings have corrected to ₹2,000 per bundle.

With this, the ryots, who had realised record prices for various grades of Flue Cured Virginia (FCV) tobacco during the last season, have planted seedlings in over 17,500 hectares in Prakasam and SPSR Nellore districts so far.

"There is no shortage of seedlings. The crop extent is likely to touch the 56,000 hectare mark," according to sources in the Tobacco Board. The crop regulator had fixed a higher cultivation quota of 142 million kg for the State, including 89.35 million kg for the SLS and SBS regions, for the 2022-23 season. Thanks to the increase in the global demand for leaf, the farmers in neighbouring Karnataka, where tobacco is a kharif crop, got a high price of up to ₹250 per kg. The sowings are expected to be completed before December end.

With farmers evincing interest in growing the crop during rabi, the rent per barn for curing has shot up to ₹1 lakh. The lease amount per acre has also touched ₹25,000 per acre as tenant farmers are

showing interest in the wake of the increase in the global demand for leaf, says a progressive farmer V.V. Prasad from Mangamoor.

'The cost of cultivation, including labour, has gone up by 20% this year,' lament a group of farmers at Chekurapadu, near N.G.Padu in Prakasam district taking time to talk to The Hindu during transplantation of seedlings. "We expect the trade to take this into account at the time of marketing," remarks another farmer B. Ramanjaneyulu. "We hope that the global demand for leaf will continue this year too," says a farmer from Tangutur P. Bhadri Reddy.

The farmers in the two districts had realised ₹172 per kg for 79 million kg marketed during the last season as against ₹140 per kg secured in the previous year as COVID-19 had played the spoilsport. The auctions were also completed in 100 days, a record of sorts with domestic cigarette manufacturers and exporters vying with one another to lap up the produce, including low-grade varieties, whose price has shot up to over ₹150 per kg as against ₹82 per kg in the previous year.

**Source:** <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/tobacco-turns-farmers-favourite-in-south-coastal-andhra-pradesh-thanks-to-buoyant-market/article66124573.ece>