

Tobacco Board's intervention sought as Cyclone Mandous inflicts heavy crop loss

Farmers lose at least 40% of standing crop in over 53,000 hectares, seek rescheduling of crop loan by banks for a period of five years with one year moratorium

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Tobacco Board Executive Director A. Sridhar Babu during his visit to a rain-hit farm near Ongole on Thursday.

Tobacco farmers from the districts of Prakasam and Nellore on Thursday urged the Tobacco Board to come to their rescue as they had lost at least 40% of the standing crop in over 53,000 hectares due to Cyclone Mandous.

Farmers poured out their woes when Tobacco Board Executive Director A. Sridhar Babu toured some of the affected farms in and around Ongole.

“All investment made since the beginning of rabi season has gone down the drain in the wake of Mandous-induced rains for three days,” farmers lamented.

They urged Mr. Sridhar to use his good offices to ensure rescheduling of crop loan by banks for a period of five years with one year moratorium.

The board itself should sanction an interest-free loan of ₹50,000 per barn for them to go for replantation and gap-filling well before the rabi season that would conclude in a fortnight or so, a group of farmers led by Tobacco Board member Mareddy Subramanyeswara Reddy pleaded.

Worst-hit areas

Crops in Ongole, Tangutur and Kandukur were the worst-affected.

“One to two month-old plants, both in the Southern Black Soil (SBS) and Southern Light Soil (SLS) regions, are under severe stress because of saturated soil condition.

All effort to pump out water from the fields have gone in vain,” they told Mr. Sridhar, who was accompanied by Prakasam District Collector A.S. Dinesh Kumar.

The crop regulator had fixed a higher cultivation quota of 142 million kg for Andhra Pradesh, including 89.35 million kg for the SLS and SBS regions, for the 2022-23 season.

In the present situation, the target would be difficult to meet unless replantation was taken up in all the farms on a war-footing, they opined.

“We have no option but to go for replantation in most of the farms,” said a group of farmers in Kandukur, busy procuring seedlings at a cost of up to ₹1,500 per bundle.

A delegation of Telugu Desam Party leaders led by former Ongole MLA D. Janardhana Rao also met Mr. Sridhar Babu, and urged him to come out with a mitigation plan.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/tobacco-boards-intervention-sought-as-cyclone-mandous-inflicts-heavy-crop-loss/article66267027.ece>