

## CYCLONE MANDOUS HITS FCV TOBACCO CROP

The untimely heavy rains caused by Cyclone Mandous in the second week of December 2022 badly affected the Flue Cured Virginia (FCV) tobacco crop grown over thousands of hectares of land in the Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh. A large share of the standing crop under the 11 tobacco auction floors in the district was submerged in rainwater, post the devastating cyclone. FCV crops in Ongole, Tangutur and Kandukur were the worst-affected.

“All investment made since the beginning of rabi season has gone down the drain in the wake of Mandous-induced rains for three days,” a group of FCV farmers were quoted saying by *The Hindu*. These distressed farmers appealed to the Tobacco Board to sanction an interest-free loan of ₹50,000 per barn to allow crop replantation and gap-filling without any delay. They also wanted the Board to facilitate rescheduling of crop loans by the bankers for a period of five years, with a one-year moratorium.

Farmer associations lamented that farmers are in an unenviable position for not getting any institutional credit, insurance cover and compensation at times of natural calamities. Aggrieved tobacco growers called on both the Union and State governments to come up with a special financial package to bailout the farmers affected by Cyclone Mandous.



They argued that each tobacco farmer should be provided with ₹25,000 per barn as compensation for totally destroyed crop and ₹10,000 per barn for partially damaged crops. They expressed disappointment that the AP government denied financial support to tobacco growers while the state had provided input subsidy to growers of other crops, *The Hindu* reported.

### Relief Package Announced

The Union Commerce Ministry in January 2023 sanctioned disbursement of Rs. 28.11 crore to provide immediate relief to the thousands of farmers in the cyclone-hit areas of AP. Under the relief package, approved by the Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, Tobacco Board, a statutory body under the ministry, will disburse a special interest-free loan of Rs 10,000 to each of the affected farmers under the Board's Growers' Welfare Schemes. The move will benefit FCV farmers under the Southern Light Soil and Southern Black Soil regions of AP.

According to the Ministry, this measure will help the FCV Tobacco farmers overcome the damage caused by Mandous cyclonic rains and would greatly help the growers to take up immediate damage mitigation measures, said an *ANI* story posted on January 5.

The Tobacco Board will distribute this financial assistance uniformly irrespective of the extent of land holding by a farmer concerned, Tobacco Board, Production Manager, Krishna Sri was quoted saying by *The Hindu* on January 11. She further said that the soft loan will be recovered from the farmers, when the produce is sold at the auctions starting end of February.

According to her, farmers, who had started cultivation in 53,000 hectares, lost their crop in about 26,000 hectares in the two southern growing regions. As a result, farmers had to replant the crop or fill the gap, created post the cyclone.

FCV tobacco is a major commercial crop grown in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka which is sold at various e-auctioning platforms managed by the Tobacco Board.

Importantly, the Tobacco Board had fixed a higher crop size of 142 million kg for Andhra Pradesh, including 89.35 million kg for the cyclone-hit Southern Light Soil (SLS) and Southern Black Soil (SBS) regions, for the 2022-23 season.

FCV tobacco is the major exportable tobacco variety accounting for more than 70% of India's leaf tobacco exports in value terms.

### References:

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