



November rain in south coastal A.P. kindles hope in tobacco farmers for good winter crop

Enthusied by 40 mm rain in a fortnight, farmers have cultivated the crop in 21,000 hectares in SLS region and 20,600 hectares in SBS region so far

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Tobacco Board employees examining the quality of seedlings at a nursery near Ongole in Prakasam district. | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement

The recent spell of rain under the influence of the active northeast monsoon has come as a boon for the tobacco farmers in the drought-prone south coastal Andhra Pradesh. The tobacco farmers, who could not cultivate crops to the full extent during the kharif due to deficient precipitation, say that they can now cultivate the crop in additional land during the winter.

“The timely rains have kindled hopes in us. We can sow winter crops now,” said a group of tobacco growers at Mangamoor village near Ongole during a conversation with *The Hindu* in the midst of brisk sowing operations. “Thanks to the shortage of the crop (tobacco) globally, we have got remunerative prices for our produce in the last two years. We are confident of getting handsome gains this year too,” said V.V. Prasad, a farmer leader from Ongole.

After a brief lull in the middle of November, the south coastal Andhra region saw a revival of the northeast monsoon this week, aiding cultivation of the commercial crop in Prakasam and SPSR Nellore districts. Thanks to the increase in demand for tobacco seedlings, its price has gone up to ₹3,500 per bundle.

Farmers have raised tobacco seedlings in 41,600 hectares in the arid parts of the Prakasam and Nellore districts, said Tobacco Board Regional Manager M. Lakshmana Rao. Enthused by 40 mm rainfall in a fortnight, farmers have cultivated tobacco in 21,000 hectares in the SLS region and another 20,600 hectares in the SBS region so far.

The farmers hope for more rain until the December first week, with the weathermen forecasting a depression over the Bay of Bengal during the fag-end of November. Mr. Rao insisted that the farmers should stick to the crop size fixed by the crop regulator to get remunerative price.

Curing of the harvested leaves will start in the region from the second week of December. The tobacco growers witnessed a record price of ₹216.28 per kg on an average for 123 million kg of produce sold last year amid the shortage of crop globally.

Crop size

“We will be able to meet the crop size of 90 million kg fixed by the crop regulator easily and get record prices this season too,” said T. Ramanaiah, farmer leader from Kandukur in Nellore district.

The optimism of farmers over remunerative prices for various grades of tobacco stemmed from their counterparts in the Mysuru region of Karnataka getting an average price of ₹242 per kg this year. Tobacco is grown during kharif season in Karnataka and rabi season in Andhra Pradesh.

High cultivation cost

Meanwhile, the tobacco farmers expressed concerns over the increase in the cost of cultivation by more than 20% in view of the labour shortage and hike in the rent for barn, the primary tobacco processing unit by a whopping ₹50,000.

The land lease rent have doubled to over ₹30,000 per acre this year, said B. Ramanjaneyulu, a farmer under the Ongole II auction platform.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/november-rain-in-south-coastal-ap-kindles-hope-in-tobacco-farmers-for-good-winter-crop/article67569924.ece>