

Recurrent inclement weather remains a headache for tobacco growers in south coastal Andhra Pradesh

It is for the second consecutive year that farmers are grappling with nature's fury; Cyclonic storm Mandous damaged tobacco in about 40% of the total acreage in 2022
December 10, 2023 | ONGOLE



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Tobacco Board Executive Director A. Sridhar Babu inspecting the tobacco crop damaged by Cyclone Michaung near N.G.Padu in Prakasam district on Sunday. | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement

Tobacco growers in south coastal Andhra Pradesh are in trouble as the cyclonic storm Michaung has flattened the crops in the region.

It is for the second consecutive year that tobacco farmers are grappling with nature's fury. Cyclonic storm Mandous wreaked havoc on the tobacco crop in about 40% of the cropped area last year.

Adding to the farmers' woes, the flash floods caused by the damage done to the Gundalakamma reservoir gate inundated tobacco crops in the villages coming under the Ongole II auction platform, including Chekurapadu, Karavadi and Maddiralapadu.

Thanks to the increased global demand for tobacco, farmers in Southern Light Soil (SLS) and Southern Black Soil (SBS) regions have cultivated the crop in 60,000 hectares this year when compared to 53,000 hectares last year.

"The crops in the SBS region suffered more damage than that in the SLS region. We will complete the assessment of the damage in a few days and help the farmers," said Tobacco Board Executive Director A. Sridhar Babu after visiting some farms on the outskirts of Ongole on December 10 (Sunday).

The crops in Ongole and Tangutur were badly affected, while they were less affected in Podili, Kanigiri, D.C.Palli and Kaligiri, according to Tobacco Board sources.

“We have no option other than replantation,” lamented a group of farmers at N.G.Padu village as their efforts to drain the stagnated rainwater from their fields went in vain. “The only solace is that we have enough stock of the seedlings as we anticipated inclement weather in December,” said V.V. Prasad, a progressive farmer from Chekurapadu.

“There has not been much damage in the first two days of rain as Prakasam district had been experiencing a dry spell for over a fortnight and the soil had moisture holding capacity. However, the fields got inundated as about 150 mm to 200 mm rain was received in a short spell. The one-month-old crops collapsed following heavy wind on the day of landfall of teh cyclone near Bapatla,” they said.

Undaunted by the crop damage, the farmers decided to go for replantation, anticipating a good global demand for the produce. They have got record prices for various grades of produce in the two previous years. “At this stage, gap-filling is not possible,” they felt.

Meanwhile, Tobacco Board Regional Manager M. Lakshmana Rao advised the farmers to apply ammonium sulphate to the affected crops for their revival.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/recurrent-inclement-weather-remains-a-headache-for-tobacco-growers-in-south-coastal-andhra-pradesh/article67624634.ece>