



Unfazed by 'Michaung' jolt, tobacco farmers go for replanting in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh

Crop acreage is likely to cross the 70,000-hectare mark thanks to the high demand for quality leaf globally, suggests an estimate prepared by the Tobacco Board

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Post Michaung, farmers in the Southern Black Soil and Southern Light Soil regions have cultivated tobacco in over 66,000 hectares when compared to 63,500 hectares during the corresponding period last year. | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement

Cyclonic storm Michaung came as a shock at the fag-end of the year for the tobacco growers in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh as it destroyed the standing crops during the early phase of rabi season like last year when a similar weather system under the influence of Cyclone Mandous wreaked havoc.

Undaunted by the natural calamity, the tobacco farmers in Prakasam and Nellore districts have gone for replantation or gap filling, depending upon the situation as no other crop grows in adverse climatic conditions with the alternate occurrence of drought and excessive rain.

Post Michaung, the enterprising farmers coming under the Southern Black Soil (SBS) and Southern Light Soil (SLS) regions have cultivated tobacco in more than 66,000 hectares this winter when compared to 63,500 hectares during the corresponding period last year, according to Tobacco Board Regional Manager M. Lakshmana Rao.

According to an estimate prepared by the crop regulator, the acreage is likely to cross the 70,000-hectare mark as farmers are planting tobacco saplings with vigour.

“The crop establishment and growth is satisfactory,” according to an assessment made by the Indian Tobacco Association.

Labour shortage

However, the farmers are forced to grapple with acute labour shortage. “We are forced to pay 30% more as wages to farm workers,” said V.V. Prasad, a farmer from Chekurapadu.

Farmers are optimistic that they will get a remunerative price for their produce this rabi, given the buoyant market condition in neighbouring Karnataka where tobacco is a kharif crop.

Record price

The farmers in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh marketed 123 million kg of tobacco and realised a record price of ₹216 per kg on average during the e-auctions this year. “We hope to get a remunerative price for the cured leaves this rabi season too as the average price has gone up to ₹247 per kg in the Mysuru region when compared to ₹228 per kg in the previous year,” said B. Ramanjaneyulu, a farmer leader.

“We hope to see a spurt in demand for bright and medium grade varieties thanks to increase in global demand for quality leaf,” added T. Ramanaiah, another farmer leader.

Meanwhile, Mr. Lakshmana Rao suggested that the farmers apply ammonium sulfate to overcome the stunted growth of the crop and arrange for irrigation in the farms, especially those in the SLS region where low-grade varieties dominated the first two curings this year.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/unfazed-by-michaung-jolt-tobacco-farmers-go-for-replanting-in-south-coastal-andhra-pradesh/article67683587.ece>