

Bengal gram farmers bear brunt of cyclone

Heavy rains damaged crop at initial stage itself and farmers are in a dilemma as to what crop to be cultivated



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VIJAYAWADA: The Nivar cyclone, which broke the back of farmers in the State, has proved devastating for bengal gram farmers. The cyclone damaged the crop at the initial stage itself and now with optimum time for sowing elapsed, farmers are in a dilemma as to what crop to be cultivated as an alternative.

Bengal gram is cultivated mostly in Prakasam and Kadapa districts during Rabi and this year, the target for cultivation of the crop during Rabi was 4.03 lakh hectares and sowing was completed in 3.06 lakh hectares. However, due

to the Nivar cyclone, a significant portion of the cultivated crop was damaged. Officials are now busy enumerating the losses. According to agriculture department officials, in Kadapa district, the crop was cultivated in 1.67 lakh hectares in 16 mandals of Badvel, Pulivendula,

Kamalapuram, Kadapa and Jammalamadugu Assembly constituencies. “We are taking stock of the losses and a report will be submitted to the State government in 2-3 days,” an agriculture department official in Kadapa told TNIE. Investment for Bengal gram crop per acre was around `15,000 with the State government providing seed at 80 per cent subsidy in view of the crop loss due to heavy rains during Kharif. “We thought of recouping losses of Kharif, but unexpectedly Nivar hit and we lost the crop we cultivated midway itself,” rued KV Ramana Reddy, a farmer from Badvel. He cultivated Bengal gram in six acres investing `1 lakh.

Stating that there is no time for recultivating the bengal gram, he said they are thinking of cultivating vegetables using water from borewells, as groundwater has been recharged considerably. M Srinivasulu, another Bengal gram farmer from Muddanuru in Kadapa district, said he suffered losses in four acres. He added that he is in a dilemma as to what crop to be cultivated or should he leave it fallow till Kharif.

In Prakasam district, Bengal gram was cultivated in around 20 per cent of the normal extent of the crop, which is 1.4 lakh hectares. However, 14,000 hectares of the crop was reportedly lost and the enumeration is still under progress. “My nearly `1 lakh investment got washed away in the Nivar cyclone,” rued Subgrama Reddy from Yerragondapalem mandal. He cultivated the crop in four acres and with heavy losses, he is looking forward to input subsidy to recoup some of the losses. C Sreerama Murthy of NG Padu village, who returned to Bengal gram cultivation, which he left due to lack of MSP and marketing problems, seeing good rains was disappointed. “Heavy rains due to

Nivar was unexpected and they dashed our hopes,” he said. However, he is not ready to give up and decided to continue with Bengal gram in his 25 acres of land.

According to agriculture experts, the extent of Rabi crops cultivated so far has been 1.5 lakh hectares less than what it was in the previous Rabi session, mostly due to heavy rains and cyclones in October-November. Next two weeks will determine to what extent there will be a deficit in the extent of cultivation during Rabi.

(With inputs from S Nagaraja Rao from Kadapa and IVNP Prasad Babu from Ongole)