

T to let farmers decide on crops they want to grow

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Hyderabad: In a sign that the ruling party is willing to learn some lessons from its past misadventures, the Telangana government is learned to have decided to let farmers take a call on what crops they want to grow this year.

A year after it 'advised' farmers to avoid cotton in the 2016-17 kharif season, the state government this year will not intervene in crop selection choices of the farmers. Last year's advice, led by none other than chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao who had said based on market prospects, cotton will not be a good choice, was enthusiastically echoed by several ruling party MLAs, MLCs and some MPs. While this resulted in acreage under cotton falling from 17 lakh hectares to 12 lakh hectares, the increase in acreage and yields of chilli, pulses and maize left the go-

PEEK AT CROP PRICES

APRIL 2016 CM KCR leads the way against Cotton, says international market conditions not favourable for good returns. TRS party leaders spread the word. Farmers shun cotton, increase sowing of other crops

Crop	2015	2016
Cotton	12 lakh Ha	17 lakh Ha
Chilli	61,000 Ha	1,12,000 Ha
Pulses	4.40 lakh Ha	5.74 lakh Ha



➤ Farmers received up to ₹10,000 per quintal for chilli in 2015, fell to ₹4,000 to ₹6,000 per quintal in 2016

➤ Price of Red Gram in 2015 ₹5,050 per quintal (MSP), most farmers could get at best was ₹4,000 per quintal in 2016

vernment somewhat stranded with farmers not receiving the promised good returns for these alternate crops. Though no one is willing to state this publicly yet, the prevailing mood in the ruling TRS appears to veer towards the likelihood of elections to the Assembly in mid-2018, well before the current term of the assembly ends in the summer of 2019. "We cannot afford to

have a repeat of last year's protests by farmers who were upset that many of them did not benefit from not growing cotton. In fact, against the prevailing expectation, cotton fetched good prices while pulses and chilli did not do well. With elections likely sometime next year, we cannot afford to upset farming community again," a ruling party leader said.

The advice against cotton, first issued by the chief minister last April, finally resulted in area under pulses last kharif rise to 5.74 lakh hectares from 4.40 lakh hectares with red gram dominating acreage at 3.85 lakh hectares. But when the harvest came in, against the minimum support price of ₹5,050 per quintal, farmers at best could get about ₹4,000 a quintal. Similar was the case with chillies. The spice crop that produced returns of up to ₹10,000 a quintal in 2015, saw its price fall dramatically in with a whopping 1,12,000 hectares sown with this crop in 2016. In the previous year, farmers had grown chilli in a mere 61,000 hectares.

"The anger among farmers is still too fresh. And we have to make sure they are taken care of this kharif. The state government cannot afford to have another miscalculation on this front for the second time running" the TRS leader added,

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