

Farmers declare 'crop holiday'

G. Nagaraju – with courtesy from Hindu Date: 30.06.2011

ACHANTA (WEST GODAVARI DIST): Paddy farmers of this delta village in West Godavari district have declared a 'crop holiday' in next Kharif as an answer to the current crisis in the paddy market.

The 'crop holiday' will be enforced in the village under the aegis of the Rytu Sangham, a body of peasants represented by political parties in the village.

The sangham took a decision to this effect at a meeting attended by over 500 farmers a couple of days ago. The declaration came in the wake of the distress conditions caused by over-production leading to a price crash and increasing labour cost.

Testing ground The village, a testing ground for the Green Revolution in the mid 60s, literally suffers from the problem of plenty in rabi.

With a paddy area of 4,500 acres, it produced a little over 1.8 lakh quintals in the current season, a two-fold increase over the previous rabi. According to president of the Rytu Sangham, Godavarthi Radhakrishna Chowdary, hardly 20 per cent of the produce has been marketed so far.

Most of the produce covered under the tarpaulin covers and the dry grass is seen stocked in the paddy fields and on the road side.

A major portion of the crop is yet to be threshed because of the late transplantation extended up to December last year because of the heavy rains.

No choice Nekkanti Subba Rao, a progressive farmer from the village said, "We are left with no choice but to declare 'crop holiday' in at least one out of the two seasons every year," he said.

Labour costs The labour cost had doubled in the last two years.

Migration of workers to cities for construction work and the Mahamta Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme had led the daily wage up to Rs. 350-Rs 400 a day, Mr. Subba Rao said.

"When a farmer receives 40 bags per acre, half the yield goes towards the labour cost. He will end up in negative balance after deducting the expenditure incurred on the inputs", he added.

Peddireddy Chengal Reddy, secretary-general of the Consortium of Indian Farmers Associations, welcomed the move.

Welcome move "The Achanta farmers have shown the way for his counterparts across the spectrum." Mr. Chengal Reddy said the consortium would follow in their footsteps and campaign for the reduction of paddy area by 25-30 per cent in the country so as to reverse the demand-supply position.