

POST-DELUGE, FARMERS DISTRESSED BY LEAF BLIGHT DISEASE

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

@ Palakkad:

THE agriculture sector has been the worst hit in the devastating deluge. Among individual crops, paddy is the most damaged in the district.

"In the eastern parts of the district, considered the rice bowl of the district, hundreds of hectares of land were submerged for days together. The stalks of paddy and their roots were damaged. Those farmers who had taken loans are in dire straits now. Adding to the woes now is the leaf blight disease," said Muthalamthode Mani, general secretary of the Desiya Karshaka Samajam.

He said that the preliminary estimate of the agriculture de-

partment was that of the 8484 hectares of agricultural crops, which were damaged, 7,204 hectares consisted of paddy farming. This apart, 537 hectares of vegetable farming were damaged. Crops like plantain, coconut, and rubber also sustained loss.

"The leaf blight disease was reported from Chittur, Kollengode, Alathur, Nenmara, Vadakkencherry, Pattambi and Cheruplassery areas. In the Chittur taluk, hundreds of hectares have been affected with leaf blight diseases where the stalks and leaves turn brownish in colour. Of the 6,500 hectares of paddy fields, leaf blight disease has been reported in 3,700 hectares, according to the figures prepared by the local bodies," added



A farmer whose paddy crop has been affected by leaf blight disease at Chittur

Muthalamthode Mani.

The plantain crop has also been affected by this diseases.

"The coconut palms and nutmeg trees have been damaged in the incessant rain. Nutmeg

trees, some of them as old as 36 years, have been damaged, said Radhakrishnan, a farmer from Narani in Perumatty panchayat.

Farmers have lost a signifi-

Not-so Bright

According to a preliminary estimate of the Agriculture Department, of the 8484 hectares of agricultural crops which were damaged, 7,204 hectares consisted of paddy farming. This apart, 537 hectares of vegetable farming were damaged.

cant stream of revenue as a nutmeg tree could give up to ₹ 30,000 revenue annually. If a new nutmeg sapling is planted, it will take at least 10 years to give yield.

Muthalamthode Mani feels that the losses in the final estimate could be even higher.