

# Siddipet oil palm farmers celebrate first harvest

STATE BUREAU

Siddipet

Oil palm farmers in Siddipet district are celebrating the first harvest of their efforts in the relatively new sector. The first farmer to trigger the celebrations was at Akkenapally village in Nanganur mandal on Sunday. Former Minister T Harish Rao had put a lot of focus on encouraging farmers to take up oil palm cultivation in the district, with the previous BRS government making oil palm one of the priority crops and launching multiple initiatives to encourage farmers to take up the crop.

Following Harish Rao's encouragement, 26 farmers in Akkenapally village took up cultivation in 168 acres three years ago (2021-22). Tippani Nagendar was among one of the 26 farmers. Since Nagendar's crop was ready for harvest, he invited Harish Rao on Sunday and got the first crop harvested by his hands. The harvested crop will be transported to Kothagudem district for crushing.

The cultivation of oil palm was started in 2021-22 when Akkenapally farmers were the first to respond to the call from the then government. Since then, the area under oil palm cultivation increased to 11,105 acres in the district. As many as 3,339 farmers took up the cultivation.



*BRS MLA T Harish Rao harvesting the first oil palm crop in Akkenapally village of Siddipet district on Sunday.*

The cultivation of oil palm is spread across Siddipet, Gajwel, Dubbak, Husnabad and Jangon constituencies in the district. Speaking to 'Telangana Today', Nagendar said he was delighted to reap the first harvest in the district.

The farmers will get the harvest done in 416 acres by December this year. The harvest of the crop commences in the fourth year after planting the saplings. It is expected to give 3 to 4 tonnes of harvest and could go up to 12-14 tonnes in the 10th year and gradually increase year-on-year.

## **'Increase customs duty on imports'**

Harish Rao demanded the Centre to increase customs duty on oil palm imports to 15% from the existing 12.5% to help oil palm farmers in the country get better prices. "Farmers are getting just Rs 13,000 for a tonne of oil palm harvest," he said, adding that the Congress government in the State was not giving Rs 4,200 towards crop management per year, which the BRS government had introduced. Harish Rao blamed Congress for not continuing the drip system to oil palm farmers.