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**POPULAR ARTICLE**

# Present status of sunflower cultivation in Andhra Pradesh and its scope for revival

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## Intricacies of the subject

Sunflower is an important oilseed crop for strengthening edible oil security in India, but its cultivation has declined considerably in Andhra Pradesh over the past few years. The present article reviews the current status of sunflower cultivation, production and productivity in the state and examines the major factors responsible for the decline and the possibilities for revival. Sunflower area decreased from 9.0 thousand ha in 2019–20 to 4.3 thousand ha in 2023–24, while production declined from 8.5 to 3.8 thousand tonnes. The decline was particularly evident in major sunflower-growing districts such as Y.S.R. Kadapa and Anantapur, mainly due to farmers shifting towards rice, maize, cotton, pulses and horticultural crops that provide better economic returns and more assured markets. Fluctuating market prices, lack of assured procurement, disease incidence, unstable hybrid performance and yield instability under moisture and heat stress have further reduced farmer preference for sunflower. Despite these challenges, the crop has considerable scope for revival, particularly in rice fallows and limited-irrigation areas. Promotion of high-yielding, heat- and disease-tolerant hybrids, assured market support, improved seed availability, mechanization, extension services and inclusion of sunflower in crop diversification programmes can help restore its cultivation in suitable areas of Andhra Pradesh.

## Introduction

Sunflower remains a strategically important oilseed crop for achieving India's edible oil security and sustainable agricultural development. Sunflower is cultivated mainly in the southern and central parts of India. Among the sunflower-growing states, Karnataka dominates national production, followed by Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and a few emerging states. Andhra Pradesh was once a major sunflower-growing state in India, particularly in the Rayalaseema region. However, sunflower cultivation has declined significantly due to the shift toward maize, cotton, and paddy, expansion of horticultural crops, market fluctuations, and yield instability under drought and heat stress conditions (Mohan *et al.*, 2019). The total sunflower cultivated area in Andhra Pradesh declined from 9.0 thousand hectares during 2019–20 to 4.3 thousand hectares during 2023–24, representing nearly 52% reduction in area.

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Similarly, sunflower production decreased markedly from 8.5 thousand tonnes to 3.8 thousand tonnes, indicating a reduction of about 55% in production over the same period. However, the average productivity improved slightly from 942 kg/ha in 2019–20 to 886 kg/ha in 2023–24, with higher yields observed in *Rabi* season due to favourable moisture conditions and improved crop management practices. During the last five years (2019–20 to 2023–24), sunflower cultivation in Andhra Pradesh showed a substantial decline in area and production, while productivity fluctuated with seasonal conditions and crop management practices. In recent years, Andhra Pradesh has also witnessed increased crop diversification toward paddy, maize, cotton, pulses, and horticultural crops, further reducing sunflower acreage. Reports indicate that sunflower area now lags considerably behind major competing crops due to changing farmer preferences and climatic uncertainties. A detailed survey conducted in major sunflower-growing districts of Andhra Pradesh such as Kurnool, Kadapa, Prakasam, Anantapuramu, Nellore, and Chittoor confirmed a severe decline in sunflower acreage due to farmers shifting toward more profitable crops (Sree *et al.*, 2005). Reliable district-wise sunflower statistics for Andhra Pradesh are not consistently published in a single public database for all six districts over the last five years. However, based on available state agriculture reports, district trends, and Directorate of Economics and Statistics, 2025 summaries, the following compiled trend table provides an approximate representation of sunflower area, production, and productivity in the major sunflower-growing districts of Andhra Pradesh.

**Fig. 1: Major sunflower-growing districts of Andhra Pradesh**

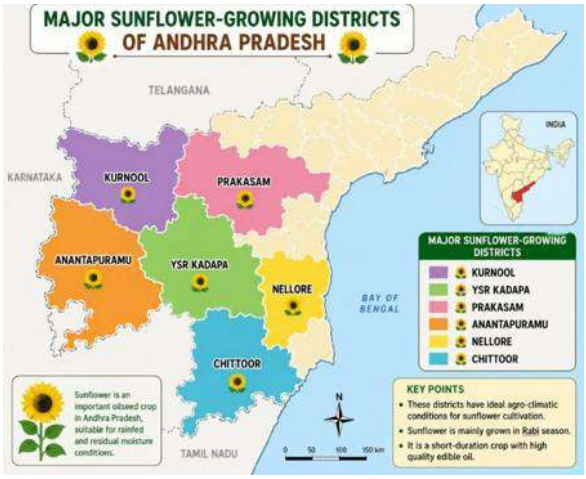



**Table 1. Andhra Pradesh sunflower area, production and productivity (Season-wise)**

| Year | *Kharif* area | *Kharif* production | *Kharif* yield | *Rabi* area | *Rabi* production | *Rabi* yield | Total area | Total production | Total yield |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2019-20 | 2.0 | 1.4 | 698 | 7.0 | 7.1 | 1012 | 9.0 | 8.5 | 942 |
| 2020-21 | 2.0 | 1.2 | 575 | 10.0 | 7.2 | 715 | 12.0 | 8.3 | 692 |
| 2021-22 | 9.0 | 4.5 | 498 | 11.0 | 7.6 | 693 | 20.0 | 12.1 | 605 |
| 2022-23 | 11.0 | 7.6 | 688 | 10.0 | 9.9 | 994 | 21.0 | 17.5 | 834 |
| 2023-24 | 2.5 | 1.7 | 670 | 1.8 | 2.1 | 1177 | 4.3 | 3.8 | 886 |

(Area: ‘000 ha; Production: ‘000 tonnes; Productivity: kg/ha)

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Sunflower cultivation in Andhra Pradesh is predominantly concentrated in the *Rabi* season. Total sunflower area declined sharply from 21.0 thousand ha in 2022-23 to 4.3 thousand ha in 2023-24 (Table 1), indicating a major reduction in farmer preference. Production similarly decreased from 17.5 thousand tonnes to 3.8 thousand tonnes during the same period. Similarly, rabi productivity remained comparatively higher than *Kharif* productivity throughout the study period. The highest *Rabi* productivity was recorded during 2023-24 (1177 kg/ha) despite lower area coverage. *Kharif* sunflower area fluctuated considerably due to rainfall variability and competition from rice, cotton, and maize.

**Table 2. Major sunflower-growing districts of Andhra Pradesh (Last five years)**

| District | 2019-20 Area | 2023-24 Area | 2019-20 Production | 2023-24 Production | 2019-20 Yield | 2023-24 Yield | Major change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Y.S.R. Kadapa | 4.1 | 0.7 | 4.5 | 1.0 | 1105 | 1382 | Sharp decline in area |
| Anantapur | 2.3 | 0.9 | 1.5 | 0.2 | 666 | 274 | Severe reduction in production |
| Kurnool | 0.7 | 1.3 | 0.5 | 1.1 | 708 | 842 | Relatively stable |
| Prakasam | 0.4 | 0.3 | 0.4 | 0.3 | 1076 | 1181 | Slight decline |
| SPSR Nellore | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 1194 | 1231 | Stable productivity |
| Chittoor | 0.5 | Negligible | 0.5 | Negligible | 1004 | 1177 | Nearly disappeared |

(Area: '000 ha; Production: '000 tonnes; Yield: kg/ha)

**District-wise sunflower cultivation in Andhra Pradesh**

As per the sources of district-wise sunflower cultivation statistics in Andhra Pradesh (Table 2), sunflower cultivation showed a declining trend across most major districts of Andhra Pradesh. Y.S.R. Kadapa remained the leading district, although its area declined sharply from 4.1 to 0.7 thousand ha, while productivity improved. Anantapur, once a major sunflower-growing area, recorded a large decline in cultivation and production due to crop diversification and drought conditions. Kurnool maintained relatively stable cultivation, with productivity increasing from 708 to 842 kg/ha. Prakasam showed a moderate decline in area and production, while productivity remained stable. SPSR Nellore had a small, cultivated area but maintained relatively good productivity. In Chittoor, sunflower cultivation almost disappeared by 2023–24 due to its replacement by horticultural and commercial crops.

**Shifting to remunerative crops**

Sunflower cultivation in Andhra Pradesh has drastically declined over the years as farmers shifted towards more profitable, stable, and market-supported crops during both *Kharif* and *Rabi* seasons. Survey studies conducted across major sunflower-growing districts revealed that over the years from 2005-06 to 2017-18, the decline in area of sunflower crop was observed as 97.8% in the surveyed districts of Andhra Pradesh. The area of black gram, maize, cotton, bengal gram and red gram increased in these districts by 93.9%, 75.2%, 53.4%, 56.4%, 45.6%, and 38.5% (Venkataramanamma *et al.*, 2019). The farmers preferred crops such as rice, cotton, maize, Bengal gram, black gram, red gram, tobacco, and sugarcane over sunflower

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due to better economic returns, assured markets, stable yields, and lower production risks. Major reasons for the decline in sunflower include unstable hybrid performance, susceptibility to diseases like necrosis, fluctuating market prices, and lack of assured procurement. Based on the farmer preference ranking shown in the field notes, the major competing crops replacing sunflower cultivation in Andhra Pradesh are summarized below in Table 3 as per the current data.

**Table 3. Major competing crops during kharif and *Rabi* seasons**

| Rank | Preferred crop (*Kharif*) | Rank | Preferred crop (*Rabi*) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Rice | 1 | Rice |
| 2 | Cotton | 2 | Bengal gram (Gram/Chickpea) |
| 3 | Red gram (Tur) | 3 | Maize |
| 4 | Groundnut | 4 | Black gram (Urad) |
| 5 | Maize | 5 | Groundnut |
| 6 | Soybean | 6 | Jowar |
| 7 | Tobacco | 7 | Green gram (Moong) |
| 8 | Sugarcane | 8 | Sesame |
| 9 | Black gram (Urad) | 9 | Sunflower |
| 10 | Green gram (Moong) | 10 | Safflower |

**Major reasons for decline**

- Better profitability from rice, cotton, maize, Bengal gram, and horticultural crops
- Fluctuating sunflower market prices
- Lack of assured procurement support
- High disease incidence (especially necrosis and downy mildew)
- Yield instability under moisture and heat stress
- Higher irrigation preference toward paddy and commercial crops
- Expansion of horticulture and oil palm cultivation in Andhra Pradesh

**Present trend**

Currently, sunflower occupies only a marginal area in Andhra Pradesh compared with earlier decades. In many districts, the crop is mainly confined to limited rainfed and residual moisture conditions during *Rabi* season. Karnataka continues to dominate sunflower cultivation in India, while Andhra Pradesh has lost much of its earlier share.

**Scope for revival**

Despite the decline, sunflowers still have strong potential in Andhra Pradesh because

- It is a short-duration oilseed crop
- Suitable for rice fallows and limited irrigation systems
- High-quality edible oil demand is increasing
- Climate-resilient hybrids and heat-tolerant varieties can improve productivity
- Mechanization and assured procurement can attract farmers again

Future revival strategies should focus on

- High-yielding heat- and disease-tolerant hybrids
- Assured MSP and market linkage
- Promotion in rice fallows
- Inclusion in crop diversification programs
- Improved hybrid seed availability and extension support

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