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Title: Need to include gale/whirlwind under Calamity Relief Fund and grant immediate financial assistance to the banana farmers who suffered loss of their produce in Tirunelveli district, Tamil Nadu.

SHRI S.S. RAMASUBBU (TIRUNELVELI): Banana is the predominant crop raised in the Kalakkad-Thirukkurunkudi area of my Tirunelveli District in Tamil Nadu. Over 25 lakh plantains arc cultivated in a season in this region. Harvested fruit is auctioned and traders from within the State and the neighbouring Kerala take part in the auction as the 'nenthiran' variety from this region is preferred for making banana chips and they are sold in various parts of the country and exported abroad. For raising the crops, farmers raise loans from banks, money lenders. Often due to gale/whirlwind, their crops get damaged and in overnight they fell in debt trap.

Over the past nine months, farmers have struggled to raise their crop against overwhelming odds such as scarcity of water for irrigation, crop destruction by rampaging wildlife and gale that swept Kalakkad, Manjuvilai, Keezha Paththai, Mela Paththai, Padmaneri, Thirattur, Karuvelankulam, Thoppur, Salaipudur. Chidambarapuram, Gopalasamudhram, Thirukarankudi and surrounding areas. An estimated 10 lakh banana plants were damaged. A farmer has to spend at least Rs. 100 on a plant till it attains the harvest stage. Even as the farmers are waiting for the harvest, the gale dashes their hopes quite often.

Unexpectedly, on Monday. 15 th April 2013 evening, heavy rain and gale destroyed banana plantations in southern parts of Tirunelveli district just like Thane cyclone inflicting further loss on farmers who were already reeling under falling prices for their produce and they have incurred heavy losses.

As banana plantation and leaves are quite often damaged, I humbly urge upon the Union Government to include damage caused due to gale/whirlwind under Calamity Relief Fund and grant immediate financial assistance to the affected banana farmers of my Tirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu without delay.