

PINEAPPLE INTERCROPPING IN THE FIRST THREE YEARS OF RUBBER PLANTING IN SMALLHOLDINGS : AN ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

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A study on pineapple intercropping in rubber holdings was conducted during July-August 1989 in Kottayam district of Kerala. Fifty one rubber smallholders, having pineapple intercropping, were interviewed and an analysis was done using ABC cost concept. Sensitivity analysis was done at 10 per cent variation of output prices and input prices. The discounted net income for the first three years was worked out at Rs. 22443.48 per hectare. The average pineapple plant population in the first year of planting was 4565 per hectare and the total yield for the first three years amounted to 31 tonnes. The cost of production worked out to Rs. 0.57 per kilogramme of pineapple on cost C basis. The BCR of the discounted cash flow was 2.27. Even though the BCR indicates the economic feasibility of investment, this crop lacks definite policy content. More and more pineapple processing industries need to be set up in Kerala so as to have much greater value addition within the state itself, resulting in price stability and a fair share of consumer's rupee to the growers.

Key words - Pineapple intercropping, ABC cost concept, Gross income, Farm business income, Family labour income, Net income, Land rent, Capital productivity, Sensitivity analysis.

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INTRODUCTION

Rubber, a perennial crop, occupies around 15 per cent of the net cultivated area in Kerala. This crop however, has a long gestation period of about seven years which could act as a disincentive to rubber cultivation particularly in the case of smallholders. In order to give the rubber grower some income during the pre-maturity period, researchers have identified certain annual intercrops which can be grown during the first three years without adversely affecting the rubber trees. Banana, ginger, turmeric, elephant-foot yam etc. are the common intercrops recommended and cultivated in young rubber plantations (Sreenivasan *et al.*,

1987). Pineapple is reported to be grown as an intercrop in Sri Lanka and the superior effect of growing pineapple as an intercrop in rubber holdings was demonstrated in an experiment conducted by the Rubber Research Institute of Sri Lanka. The growth of rubber in the intercropped plots has been found better than that of the control plots (Chandrasekhara, 1984). In certain areas namely Amayannoor, Arecpparambu and Kooroppada of Kottayam district of Kerala pineapple is also cultivated as an intercrop in rubber holdings from very early times. Studies conducted by the Agronomy Division of the Rubber Research Institute of India also indicate the possibility of growing