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EARLY PERFORMANCE OF SOME CLONES OF *HEVEA BRASILIENSIS* IN TRIPURA

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North-East India is an ideal non traditional tract for growing the rubber tree (*Hevea brasiliensis*). The first trial for evaluating clones in this tract was laid out during 1979 at Agartala involving fifteen oriental clones. Apart from the growth and yield, secondary attributes of clones were also studied. 80.80% of growth was contributed during May to October. The highest percentage of initial survival and growth was exhibited by RRIM 600. Precocity in tapability was seen in RRII 118, RRIC 105 and PB 235. Initial yield pattern showed PB 235,RRIM 600, RRIM 703 and RRII 105 as high yielding clones, and RRII 105 followed by PB 235 having higher dry rubber content. PB 5/51 showed moderate tolerance to wind damage.

Key words: Clonal performance, *Hevea brasiliensis*, Non-traditional area, Yield, India.

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INTRODUCTION

The growing demand for natural rubber in India and shrinking area for further expansion in the traditional regions, forced the search for alternate areas in non-traditional regions of India where near tropical climatic conditions exist. North-East India, especially Tripura, was consequently identified as a potential area where *Hevea brasiliensis* can thrive well. However, there are adverse conditions also in this region like cool weather which may be deleterious to this tropical species. Rubber plantation began in Tripura during 1963, when the forest and soil conservation departments ventured experimental plantings of seedlings at different locations. Clonal plantations were brought up later with the assistance from the Rubber Board. The first clonal evaluation trial was laid out during 1979 by the Rubber reasearch Institute of Indian (RRII) at Agartala (RRII, 1989) to study the responses and suitability of different clones in the prevailing environment and to identify the appropriate ones for commercial cultivation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The traditional rubber growing tract in humid tropics lies between 10°S to 10°N of equator, and in India it extends up to 13°N. Agroclimatic requirements of *Hevea* suit well to that prevailing in this region. Annual average rainfall of 1800 mm to 3500 mm distributed in 105 to 139 rainy days, average relative humidity of 71 to 80 per cent and an average 7.0 h of sunshine are received here (Sethuraj *et al.*,1991).