

ADOPTION OF INTERCROPS IN THE TRADITIONAL RUBBER GROWING REGIONS IN INDIA: EMERGING TRENDS IN THE SMALLHOLDER SECTOR

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The study confined to the smallholdings, which availed planting subsidy during 2004-10, showed that among the various intercrops, banana was the most popular intercrop in the traditional rubber growing region which spread over five agro-climatic zones. The results of the study revealed that there were notable differences in the extent of adoption of intercropping, choice of crops and size-class-wise preferences. The highest level of adoption of intercrops in rubber plantations was observed in Kanyakumari region (72.8%) followed by Central Kerala (72.2%) and South Kerala (68.2%) during the seven year period under study. Adoption of intercrops was the lowest in North Kerala (36.2%). The analysis revealed that pineapple replaced banana as the choicest intercrop in Central Kerala. The size of holding was a key determinant in the selection of intercrops. A positive relationship was observed between large size of holding and adoption of commercial crops such as banana and pineapple whereas subsistence crops such as tapioca, amorphophallus and colocasia were preferred in the smallest size-class.

Keywords: Adoption, Holding size-class, Intercrops, Smallholdings, Traditional belt

INTRODUCTION

The twin objectives of intercropping in the immature phase of rubber plantations are to generate income in the cash-trap period and to intensify cropping in the spatial and temporal dimensions. Intercrops such as pineapple, banana, vegetables and yams are cultivated during the immature phase of rubber whereas coffee, cocoa and medicinal plants are recommended for the mature phase (Rubber Board, 2011). In the traditional rubber growing regions, the popularity of intercropping and choice of

crops varied significantly (Rajasekharan and Veeraputhran, 2002). The extent of intercropping during the immature phase of rubber plantations varied from 61.5 per cent (North Kerala) to 85 per cent (South Kerala) and the choice of intercrops depended mainly on the size of holdings, local preferences, marketing facilities, price of produce, availability of family labour, irrigation facilities *etc.* (Anilkumar *et al.*, 2005).

Historically, rubber was grown as a monocrop in the traditional regions. The genesis of organised attempts to promote