

EVALUATION OF THE PRODUCTION OF *HEVEA* PLANTING MATERIAL IN NIGERIA

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The production of *Hevea* planting materials was evaluated by selecting 33 rubber budders engaged at the Rubber Research Institute of Nigeria (RRIN) Main Station Nursery Iyanomo in 2007 budding operation. Data collected were subjected to descriptive statistics, labour productivity analysis, Likert models and budgetary technique. Empirical results of the analysis showed that among the budders, females (60.61%) dominated the budding operations and all budders had formal education in one form or the other. Budding provided employment with a mean monthly wage of ₦ 28132.22. Labour productivity analysis indicated a total *Hevea* planting material production success of 55 per cent with an average labour productivity of 44 budded seedlings per day. The analysis also revealed a gross and net labour productivity of ₦ 547.77 and - ₦ 111.11. Cost and return analysis revealed a gross margin and net farm income of ₦ 17757.20 and ₦ 7445.61, respectively. Likert analysis also showed that the identified constraints viz. inadequate wages/salaries, irregular payment of wages, inadequate transport, inadequate housing facilities and casualization were the significant factors affecting budders' productivity. Recommendations have also been put forth to overcome the identified constraints.

Keywords: Budders, *Hevea*, Labour productivity, Likert analysis, Nigeria, Presidential initiative.

INTRODUCTION

Natural rubber (*Hevea brasiliensis*), introduced into Nigeria from Kew gardens, England in 1895 has become increasingly important since the beginning of the 20th century. Natural rubber (NR) production in Nigeria is mainly from smallholdings (Delabarre and Serier, 2000). Government funding for NR research resulted in remarkable improvement in the breeding operations which led to the introduction of high yielding clones of rubber by the Rubber Research Institute of Nigeria (RRIN) with an annual average latex yield of 2000 to 3000 kg per ha compared to 900 and 1600 kg per

ha for introduced (exotic) clones (Omokhame and Nasiru, 2004). This increase in yield propelled an increasing demand for *Hevea* planting materials by farmers while supply lagged behind. This may be attributable to the constraints associated with estate and smallholder development activities, seedlings production and off take, processing and alternative uses of seeds and local marketing and export.

Most of the existing plantations in Nigeria are planted with unselected planting materials. The rubber belt corresponds with the oil-producing belt of Nigeria and competes with the oil sector for the scarce