

EXTENT OF ADOPTION OF RECOMMENDED MANURING PRACTICES FOR RUBBER IN SOUTH INDIA

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A survey was undertaken during 2013 in the rubber growing tract of South India viz. Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra to understand the extent of adoption of recommended manuring practices by rubber growers and to identify areas which need further intervention. Data obtained from the survey were digitized and information on manuring practices were retrieved. Majority of the rubber growers applied organic manures along with chemical fertilizers, which is a very desirable practice to improve soil fertility, and this practice is more prevalent in the northern regions of the traditional rubber growing tract. Though mixtures and complex fertilizers are costlier than straight fertilizers, irrespective of the region, farmers preferred fertilizer mixtures, may be due to the ease of handling. Though it is recommended that deep pocket placement of fertilizers should be avoided, many rubber farmers are still applying fertilizers by taking small pits which shows the need for renewed extension efforts generate awareness. Regarding frequency of fertilizer application for mature rubber, 68 to 91 per cent of the farmers followed the recommended practice of applying fertilizers twice in a year. The study identified that type of fertilizers and method of fertilizer application were the two major areas which needed extension focus to enhance fertilizer use efficiency in rubber plantations.

Key words: Extent of adoption, *Hevea brasiliensis*, Manuring practices, Natural rubber

Rubber (*Hevea brasiliensis*) was introduced in India in 1873, and since then, there has been rapid increase in the spread of this crop in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Konkan region and also in the North-eastern region. Agro-management of rubber cultivation has experienced many changes and productivity of rubber has registered phenomenal increase from 300 to 1800 kg ha⁻¹year⁻¹ (Jacob and Siju, 2017). Besides genetic improvement of planting materials, proper soil and

fertilizer management also have a significant effect in achieving these yield levels. Rubber Research Institute of India has been working closely with Rubber Production Department of Rubber Board and other stake holders to disseminate improved agro-technologies to rubber farmers and improve the adoption of these technologies.

The rubber plantation industry in India is dominated by small holdings, accounting for 90 per cent of the total area and 94 per