

INCOME INEQUALITY AMONG BENEFICIARIES UNDER NATURAL RUBBER BLOCK PLANTING SCHEME IN TRIPURA: A PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

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The distribution and inequalities in income among households under the block planting scheme in Tripura are analysed. The study is based on a sample survey of 402 beneficiary households during the year 2008. The study showed less inequality in income from rubber compared to that from employment and other sources. Moreover, income from rubber acted as a balancing force by minimising the inequality and variability in total income among households with mature rubber. Among the three sources of income, income from rubber has been the critical factor determining the level of income inequality. The three modes of income distribution were: equal income distribution, income distribution based on area slabs and distribution of income based on actual area under possession. The adoption of the mode of income distribution by different tribal groups is closely related to the extent of integration with the mainstream society. The emerging trends indicated the growing shift towards distribution of income from rubber based on actual area under possession.

Keywords: Block Planting Units, Gini coefficient, Income distribution, Income inequality, Lorenz curve, Rubber growers, Tripura

INTRODUCTION

The nature, objectives and scope of agro-based rehabilitation projects vary depending on region-specific factors. The sustenance of these projects has primarily depended on how judiciously the socio-economic aspects of the targeted groups are incorporated into the scheme. Apparently, though there are explicit similarities in the perceived objectives of a rehabilitation project across regions, the marked differences in its scope and the outcomes in the long-run have been determined by a host

of factors. The experience of natural rubber (NR)-based rehabilitation projects exhibited notable regional differences in India (Viswanathan and George, 2006; Joseph *et al.*, 2010). Though NR-based tribal rehabilitation projects were started in the traditional region of Kerala during the year 1986-87, the outcome is not comparable to that in Tripura. Among the targeted regions, tangible outcomes in Tripura have been more impressive in the backdrop of a steady growth in area under cultivation and substantial increase in the income of the