

EXTENT OF ADOPTION OF RECOMMENDED AGRONOMIC PRACTICES IN NATURAL RUBBER PLANTATIONS OF SOUTH INDIA

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A field survey was conducted to assess the extent of adoption of various agronomic practices in the rubber growing regions of Kerala, Kanyakumari, Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra. Primary data was collected by a well-structured questionnaire with a series of questions related to the adoption of agronomic practices recommended by the Rubber Board of India by interviewing a total of 10760 farmers. In all the rubber growing regions of South India, majority of the growers used polybag plants of clone RRII 105 as the planting material and planting was done in pits of size 75 cm³. Land preparation operations like digging pits and making terrace were done manually in the entire rubber growing regions of Goa, whereas it was 83, 76 and 92 per cent in Kerala, Karnataka and Kanyakumari, respectively and the use of earth movers becoming common in these regions. In Maharashtra, more than 90 per cent of the rubber growers followed mechanical mode for land preparation. More than 86 per cent of the rubber growers in South India adopted manual method of weed control both in immature and mature rubber plantations. Only less than 2.4 per cent of the growers applied herbicides in rubber plantations. Banana was the widely accepted intercrop in all states especially in Tamil Nadu (94%) and Goa (100%). In Maharashtra around 50 per cent of the farmers adopted pineapple intercropping where as in Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, the percentage of adoption was 11, 9 and 3, respectively. Construction of terraces for conserving soil and water was the widely accepted conservation practice in all states and combination of conservation practices for controlling soil erosion was followed only in Kerala, which shows the need for concerted efforts to increase the adoption of integrated soil and water conservation practices in NR plantations particularly in the context of increasing drought and cost of cultivation. The observations from the present study will be useful in identifying areas where further institutional intervention is needed and also stress the importance of renewed extension efforts for diffusion of the recent technological innovations.

Key words: Agro-management practices, Extent of adoption, *Hevea brasiliensis*, Natural rubber

INTRODUCTION

Adoption of improved agronomic practices in natural rubber (NR) cultivation is important to ensure its commercial

sustainability. Technologies are continuously evolved or modified to increase the productivity and efficiency and reduce cost. This will improve the income of the farmers and also help the long term sustainability of