

ECONOMICS OF RAINGUARDING : A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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The comparative cost advantages of two types of rainguarding of rubber trees are analysed on the basis of a field survey. Using the survey data and secondary information, an investigation of the average yield which will justify rainguarding is also carried out through discounted cash flow analysis. The study found that the minimum average yield required for recommending rainguarding is 675 kg/ha.

Key words – Rainguarding, Polythene sheets, Tapping shade, Cost of rainguarding, Benefit-cost ratio, Discounted cash flow analysis.

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INTRODUCTION

Rainguarding is one of the techniques suggested for enhancing rubber production by increasing the number of tapping days. An estimated 75 to 100 tapping days are lost every year during the rainy season and rainguarding is recommended if 25 or more tapping days are lost every year (Sethuraj & George, 1980). Two types of rainguarding are followed in India:

- (a) Polythene sheet rainguarding; i.e., fixing the polythene sheet above the tapping cut so as to cover the tapping panel (Fig. 1), and
- (b) Tapping shade rainguarding; i.e., fixing the tapping shade above the tapping panel so as to divert the flow of water (Fig. 2).

With a view to finding the economics of the two types of rainguarding a field study was undertaken in Palai-Thodupuzha region

of Kerala in 1988, with the following objectives:

- (1) Relative cost differences between the two types of rainguarding,
- (2) Performance of these types and
- (3) Yield level at which rainguarding will be justified.

METHODOLOGY

A sample population of 50 smallholdings was selected randomly from the Palai-Thodupuzha region of Kerala, with equal representation for polythene sheet rainguarding and tapping shade rainguarding. The data were collected by interviewing the growers and visiting the fields.

The average yield at which rainguarding is profitable has been calculated by the approved method of economic evaluation of investment viz., the discounted cash flow analysis (Kahlon & Singh, 1980). The