

**A Study on the Problems of Small Rubber Growers with Special Reference to Kodanchery Panchayath, Kozhikode District**

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**Introduction**

Kerala has a long tradition in the cultivation of plantation crops. Rubber, tea, coffee and cardamom are the major plantation crops in Kerala. Now the state represents 45 percent of the total area under plantation crops in the country. Rubber plantation had its beginning in India during the first decade of the present century. Kerala holds a dominant position both in the area of cultivation as well as in the production of natural rubber in India. Kerala at present has more than 85 percent of the total cultivation and nearly 93 percent of the total production of natural rubber in India. The earliest rubber plantations in India were large-scale agricultural enterprises operating on commercial lines, engaging regular hired labour. Because of the high remuneration from rubber in the early years of the century, small-scale cultivation also started developing. Rubber attracted small-scale cultivators by virtue of its capacity to provide steady returns for long period. Moreover, rubber can be cultivated even on inferior lands. In Kerala the Land Reforms Act and Rubber Development Schemes of Rubber Board have accelerated this process. Now rubber economy is over whelmingly smallholder- oriented.

Under the Rubber Act (1947) Rules, owners of rubber plantations are classified in to two groups viz; small growers and large growers. A small grower is defined as an owner whose rubber plantation does not exceed 20.23 hectares (50 acres) an owner having more than 50 acres of rubber cultivation is considered to be large grower. About 9 lakhs small holders occupy 93 percent of total rubber area and contributing 85 percent of total rubber

Production in Kerala. During the period 1960-61 to 1999-2000<sup>1</sup> the proportion of area of Small holdings had increased from 65.06 to 93<sup>2</sup> percent. Concurrently the relative share of area under estates had declined from 34.94 to 7 percent. With the changes in area of production, per hectare yield of smallholdings and estates has also changed. The productivity gap between estates and smallholdings has been narrowed down. It was more than 50 percent in 1960-61<sup>3</sup>. After 30 years, i.e.; in 1990-91<sup>4</sup> the percentage difference declined to 13.89. Kerala represents 88 percent of small holding rubber cultivation area in the country.

**Scope of the Study**

The state of Kerala occupies 1.2 percent of the total area of the country and accommodates nearly 4 percent of the population in India. The state of Kerala, with 90 percent of the total production of natural rubber in India, is the largest producer of natural rubber. The spreading of the area under cultivation, adoption of innovative approaches in different operational aspects, improvements in the field of procurement and marketing, involvement of better community participation through Rubber Producer's Society etc. had a pivotal role in elevating the position of natural rubber production in Kerala.

The Indian rubber plantation sector is dominated by small holdings, which account for almost 93 per cent of the total rubber production in the country. Small rubber growers suffer from problems like low productivity, poor quality of processing and weak marketing system. The prevalence of smallholdings makes the sector vulnerable to fluctuations in price, exploitation by middlemen, etc.

At this point a micro level study about the 'problems of small rubber producers' in Malabar region, especially focused Kodanchery Panchayath, Kozhikode will be a relevant document nowadays. So the study has wide scope even it studies only micro level analyzing.

### **Limitations of the Study**

- ❖ The time period and the duration for the collection of primary data is limited.
- ❖ Possibility of ignorance of certain facts by the respondents may affect this study accordingly; the findings may have its own limitations.
- ❖ Problems of small rubber growers are the wide topic, but the problems may differ in different regions in Kerala.
- ❖ The large scale of natural rubber import will affect our domestic market and its price. The future import needs to be controlled according to the government policies. So this micro level study based on the current Rubber Industry and government policies.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- ❖ To identify the various problems faced by the small Rubber Growers.
- ❖ To provide suitable suggestions for improving the natural rubber production.
- ❖ To examine the assistance provided by the Rubber Board.

### **Statement of the Problem**

I have adopted this topic for research because to know about the various problems faced by small rubber growers in rubber production. Thus the micro level study helps to find out the problems associated with rubber production and marketing.

This study was done with the respondents of Kodanchery Panchayath, Kozhikode District, this is because most of people are engaged with rubber production and marketing in this selected area.

### **Research Design**

The research design is the determination and statement of general research approach of strategy adopted for the particular product. It is the heart of the planning which the design adheres to the research objected which will ensure that the needs will be served.

### **Primary Data**

The primary data has been collected by conducting direct interview using structured questionnaire.

### **Secondary Data**

The secondary data are collected from books, journals, and internet.

### **Analysis**

Analysis is done on the basis of simple Percentage and statistical analysis.

### **Sampling Technique**

In this study the research had adopted convenient sampling technique.

### **Sampling Size**

Sampling size taken from the study is 150 respondents.

### **Statistical Tools Used**

#### **1. Simple Percentage Analysis**

#### **2. Range Analysis**

### **Selection of Sample**

The Kodanchery Panchayath constituted the universe of the study. The panchayath ward was selected purposively: out of 21 panchayath wards, there are 3 were selected randomly, based on the extent of rubber cultivation they were ward 10, 16, 20.

### **Mode of Collection of Primary Data**

A preliminary survey was undertaken in the study area with a view to gain insight into the profile of the region. Based on the information gathered from the cultivators and other functionaries, an interview schedule was prepared. The schedule was pretested and finalized.

The selected respondents were contacted in person to get the required information. Since the farmers were providing information based on their recall, crosschecks were made to minimize the recall bias.

### **Period of Enquiry**

The enquiry made during the month of January – June 2015 and the information provided by them related to the year 2014-2015.

### **Design of the Study**

The study on the problems and challenges of small rubber growers was undertaken in Kodanchery panchayath, Kozhikode district in Kerala was chosen deliberately for the study because there are large numbers of rubber cultivators in Malabar region.

### **Scheme of the Study**

**CHAPTER 1:** General introduction, Scope of the study, Statement of the problem, Objectives of the study, Research Methodology, Limitation of the study.

**CHAPTER 2:** Review of Literature.

**CHAPTER 3:** The Rubber Industry and the Rubber Board

**CHAPTER 4:** Data Analysis and Interpretation.

**CHAPTER 5:** Findings of the study, Suggestion, Conclusion, Bibliography, Questionnaire.

### **Tools of Analysis**

In this study only conventional methods of analysis such as simple tabulation and percentage analysis were used.

**Analysis and interpretation:**

**Table No.1. Type of human labour employed**

Sl. No	Type of labour	No. of Respondents	Percentage
A	Self	60	40
B	Permanent	17	11
C	Casual	73	49
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>

**Inference:** From the above table it is clear that, out of 150 respondents, 40% of them are self employed, majority of them appoints casual employed and 11% only permanent.

**Table No.2. Sources of finance**

Sl. No	Sources of finance	No. of Respondents	Percentage
A	Owned funds	142	95
B	Borrowed funds	6	4
C	Both	2	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>

**Inference:** From the above table it is clear that, out of 150 respondents, majority of them 95% are doing rubber cultivation by using owned fund, there are few 4% using borrowed fund the same way only very few 1% of them are using both two funds equally.

**Table No.3. Where do you sale the rubber? / The rubber sales to....**

Sl. No	Sales through	No. of Respondents	Percentage
A	Manufacturers	4	3
B	Wholesale traders	20	13
C	Local merchants	100	67
D	Co-operative marketing societies	26	17
E	Export	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>

**Inference:** From the above table it is illustrate that out of 150 respondents, 67% of them sales the rubber to local merchants, 17% of them sales through co-operative marketing societies, 13% of them sales to wholesale traders, 3% of them

are sales to manufacturers directly and any of them not sales to exporting of rubber.

**Table No.4. Where do you store the rubber?**

Sl. no	Nature of Storing	No. of Respondents	Percentage
A	Own premises	130	87
B	Co-operative godowns	20	13
C	Regulated marketing godowns	0	0
D	Others	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>

**Inference:** From the above table shows that out of 150 respondents, majority of them (87%) are stores the rubber own premises, the same time 13% of them are storing rubber under co-operative godowns and none of them storing rubber anywhere else.

Hence I infer that the rubber growers taking more risk by storing rubber own premises.

**Table No.5. Problems faced by the rubber producers**

PROBLEMS	TOTAL MEAN SCORE	RANK
Price fluctuation	240	1
Unavailability of skilled labours	431	3
Increasing cost of production	298	2
Climate change	685	7
Problems with rubber trees	494	4
Poor marketing	534	5
Government policy	590	6
Unfair deal of local merchants	690	8

**Inference:** Table 3.22 reveals that the price fluctuation is the major problem encountered by the cultivators in sales of produce, followed by increasing cost of production, unavailability of skilled labours was ranked third. Problems with rubber trees, poor marketing, government policy, unfair deal of local merchants were also the rubber problems stated by the cultivators.

**Table No.6. Suggestions for improving rubber production**

While conducting the study, the rubber producers requested to suggest many suitable solutions to improve the natural rubber production. The structured questionnaire prepared for them and the cultivators ranked such suggestions according to their priority. Here the lowest score was ranked first and largest score ranked last.

SUGGESTIONS	TOTAL MEAN SCORE	RANK
Price stability	200	1
Training for skilled rubber tappers	471	3
Control over the import of rubber	549	5
Provide financial assistance	334	2
More number of co-operative societies	613	6
Enforcement of licensing to local merchants	667	8
Provision for adequate market information	630	7
Cooperation of Rubber Board and growers	498	4

**Inference:** Table 3.23 reveals that the price stability is the major solution suggested by the cultivators followed by provide financial assistance, training for skilled tappers was ranked third. Co-operation of rubber board and growers, control over import of rubber, more number of co-operative societies, provision for adequate market information, enforcement of licensing to local merchants were also the suggestions stated by the rubber producers.

**Table No.7. If sales to manufacturers, Wholesalers, local merchants, and export; specify the reason for not selling through co-operative marketing societies:**

Sl. No	Reasons	No. of respondents	Percentage
A	Price not competitive	60	48
B	Insisting on grading	12	9.5
C	Delay in payment	12	9.5
D	Distance from the village	6	5
E	Non supply of agricultural inputs	18	15
F	Excess rules and regulations	16	13
G	Others, specify	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>124</b>	<b>100</b>

**Inference:** From the above table shows that, out of 124 respondents, majority of them (48%) argue that they are not willing to sale the rubber to co-operative societies because price not competitive for them. 15% of them says non

supply of agricultural inputs is the reason, 13% of them says excess of rules and regulations are the reason, 9.5% each respondents says insisting on grading and delay in payment, 5% of them says distance is the main reason. Here are not mentioned any other reasons by the respondents.

### **Findings**

- Majority of rubber cultivators are belongs in between 35-45 years.
- 97% of respondents are male cultivators.
- 88% of rubber growers having cultivation land below 5 acres.
- 87% of annual production of natural rubber in between 2500-5000 kg.
- 71% of rubber grower's sale rubber in their locality.
- The total rubber sales engaged within 45 km.
- 63% of respondents having primary education.
- 81% of the rubber producers are belongs in agriculture sector.
- 49% of human labour employed is casual nature.
- The respondent's main source of income from rubber cultivation (83%).
- The main source of finance taken them by owned funds and it is 95%.
- 84% of respondents having awareness regarding the assistance provided by Rubber Board.
- 126 respondents specified nature of assistance they receives and 24 respondents specified no assistance from Rubber Board and reasons.
- 73% of respondents believe Rubber Board assists them in a satisfactory manner and 27% specified their dissatisfaction.
- 110 of respondents specified their reason of satisfaction and 40 of them specifies reasons of dissatisfaction.
- 87% of rubber growers store the rubber their own premises and 13% stored in co-operative godowns.
- 100% of growers know about grading in natural rubber.
- 67% of rubber grower's sale the rubber to local merchants and nobody try to export.
- 124 respondents not willing to sell the rubber to co-operative marketing society and only 26 respondents are willing to sale to co-operative marketing society.
- The price fluctuation is the most important problem faced by them and increasing cost of production, unavailability of skilled labours, problems with rubber trees, are followed by the first problem.
- The respondents suggest such solutions and they ranked first in price stability, second provide better financial assistance third training for skilled tappers etc.

### **Suggestions**

- The govt. and Rubber Board should take measures to prevent the fluctuations in price. Government should make measures to reduce the import of natural rubber from other countries. The price of natural rubber in international market is cheaper than Indian price.
- Govt. bodies like Rubber Board and NABARD should purchase directly from the farmers in order to avoid middlemen so the farmers will get better price.
- Ordinary farmers don't know about the international market condition and demand for rubber. So the good market information system will provide them necessary information about these will help them to meet the current demand.
- Rate of natural rubber varies from merchant to merchants in local area. So avoid the activities of local merchants by establishing many co-operative societies for purchasing rubber.
- To provide better quality rubber tree seeds from the authorized rubber nurseries promoted by Rubber Board.

- The Rubber Board make sure that, conducting motivational seminars, tapping training for labours providing quality estate inputs etc. through its field offices and for different regions.

### **Conclusion**

From the micro level study it can be concluded that, the state of Kerala with 90% of the total production of natural rubber in India, is the largest producer of natural rubber. These rubber producers of Kerala are dominated by small holdings therefore small rubber producers are main contributors of natural rubber to the Indian rubber industry.

Hence the small holding producers actually facing with several problems like poor quality, low productivity, weak marketing system, lack of skilled labours etc. Problems of small growers are common but it may differ from different areas or regions. The govt. and Rubber Board take care and make more steps to boost and protect small rubber producers by considering their contributions to the country and society.

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