

# Rubber plantation : A new hope for rural tribals in Tripura

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## SUMMARY

This paper attempts to highlight the sources of income from rubber plantation. The results indicate that rubber plantation is expanding very quickly in Tripura. It is evident from the study that in Tripura various government agencies are present which are working for rehabilitate the tribal Jhumias through rubber plantation. Tribals can earn income from both immature and mature plantation but the scope of income in mature plantation is higher than immature plantation. Increasing employment is helpful for reducing poverty. There is large scope for employing more rural tribals in rubber plantation and it will also work against deforestation. Thus the paper suggests that Government of Tripura should afford more for expanding rubber plantation in rural areas for reducing unemployment.

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**R**ubber is an important commercial crop in Tripura. Government of Tripura earns large amount of revenue from this cash crop. Kerala and Tripura are the two states which are known for rubber cultivation. A rubber plant has to grow for about seven years before it can be tapped on a regular basis. Rubber based agro-forestry involves a complex and diverse cropping system that combines the growing of rubber and other agricultural crops in the area in a sustainable manner. Rubber has been identified as one of the thrust areas in Tripura, in view of its suitability to the terrain and the acceptability amongst the people. Tripura government is contemplating to utilise unused land across the state to make the state one of the major rubber producing states around the globe. The rubber park, a joint venture between the Tripura Industrial Development Corporation (TIDC) and the Rubber Board, is the second of its kind in the country after the rubber park in Kerala's Irapuram. The rubber plant (its botanical name is *Hevea brasiliensis*) produces sticky, white latex that is collected and processed to produce natural rubber. The *Hevea brasiliensis* plantations flourish in tropical temperatures. Rubber plantation is mostly situated on sloping and undulating lands.

Rubber plantation can be classified in two ways, immature plantation and mature plantation. Immature

plants are those whose ages are less than seven years and if it is more than seven year than it is called as mature plant. Apart from its commercial value, rubber planting has been recognized as a major economic activity around which the rehabilitation projects for 'shifting cultivators (Jhumias)' has been set up (Niar, 2009). The main objectives of this paper are to analyze the growth of rubber plantation in Tripura and to identify various sources of income from rubber plantation.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study is based on both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected through personal interview with the tribal tappers. Secondary data were collected through available literature in form of books, journals, reports and websites.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Rubber plantation is a popular cash crop among the rural tribals in Tripura. Rubber was introduced in Tripura in 1963 by the Forest department.

Table 1 indicates that in Tripura rubber plantation is expanding very rapidly from the initial stage.

Table 2 shows that rubber board is more ahead in rubber cultivation in Tripura (Economic Review of Tripura, 2009).

Rubber has already started influencing the socio-economic profile of rural tribals. The state government, right from the beginning has been giving great importance to rubber and the Rubber Board has been implementing a

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