

MARKETING EFFICIENCY OF NATURAL RUBBER BY ORGANIZED AND UNORGANIZED SMALL GROWERS IN TRIPURA - AN ANALYSIS

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This study examines the price spread of sheet rubber in Tripura *vis-à-vis* small rubber growers organized under the Rubber Producers Societies (RPS) - Block Planting Scheme (BPS) network and unorganized growers. The study was based on primary data collected from 305 small rubber growers and 39 market functionaries. The net price of sheet rubber received by growers in the organized sector was about 90 per cent of the buyer's price. Conversely, the growers' share in the unorganized sector was found ranging from 83 to 86 per cent. The better marketing efficiency of growers organized under the RPS-BPS network over the unorganized growers has been reflected in terms of lower price-spread, higher efficiency index and increased growers' share. The study suggests appropriate institutional interventions for more coverage of the small rubber growers under RPS.

Keywords: Block planting units, Marketing efficiency, Natural rubber, Rubber producers societies, Tripura

INTRODUCTION

The Rubber Board in collaboration with the state government agencies has been making concerted attempts to promote rubber cultivation in Tripura during the past four decades. The achievements in rubber cultivation and production are widely acknowledged and the dedicated efforts have transformed the agricultural sector in the targeted regions from traditional shifting cultivation (Jhum) to settled mode of income intensive rubber cultivation (Dey, S.K., 2009). Although there were systematic attempts to analyse the achievements in the cultivation and production of natural rubber (NR), no such attempt has been made so far to

evaluate the status of primary processing and marketing in the state. Apparently, the growers outside the ambit of Block Planting Scheme (BPS) - Rubber Producers Societies (RPS) network are exposed to unscientific methods of processing and exploitation by the intermediaries (Rajeevan and Majumdar, 2005). Another important factor which underlines the need of a comparative study is the geographical isolation of the state (Barah, 2007; Birthal, 2010) and its implications on marketing of NR by the organised *vis-à-vis* the unorganised growers covered under the institutionalized support mechanisms. Moreover, the unorganized small and marginal farmers are ignorant