

OCCURRENCE OF *COLLETOTRICHUM* LEAF SPOT DISEASE OF RUBBER IN INDIA

A disease with severe spotting on rubber leaves leading to defoliation in some cases has been found recently in certain plantations in South India. The disease appears to be widespread and very serious. Severe incidence was noticed on six-year old trees of RRII 105 and RRIM 701 in 1983 in an estate in Manimala, Kerala State. Subsequently the disease was found in many other rubber growing areas also, affecting both mature trees and budwood plants. The disease makes its appearance on the leaves during February-March and the infected leaves persist throughout the year. This disease has been reported earlier in Malaysia (John, 1952) and it was described as *Colletotrichum* leaf disease. There is another leaf disease of rubber known as anthracnose which is also caused by *Colletotrichum gloeosporoides*. The symptoms of *Colletotrichum* leaf disease and anthracnose are quite different, though the pathogen involved in both diseases is the same. The present paper is a report of the incidence of *Colletotrichum* leaf spot disease of rubber in India.

The *Colletotrichum* leaf disease was first reported on rubber seedlings in Ceylon and the pathogen was identified as *Colletotrichum heveae* Petch (Petch, 1906). Later in Malaysia a species of *Colletotrichum* attacking seedlings in nursery and young rubber trees in the field in association with *Helminthosporium* and *Gloeosporium* was reported (Beeley, 1937). A species of *Colletotrichum*, different from *Colletotrichum heveae*, was observed by Altson (Altson, 1950 a) and he has also reported an anthracnose on rubber caused by *Colletotrichum ficus* Koorders (Altson, 1950 b). In India the pathogen *Colletotrichum* was first observed on rubber in Andamans (Mitra and Mehta, 1938) and its occurrence in the mainland was known when the anthracnose (secondary leaf spot) caused by *Glomerella cingulata* was described (Ramakrishnan and Radhakrishna Pillay, 1961). Though several species of *Colletotrichum* and *Gloeosporium* are reported on rubber, they represent conidial stages of *Glomerella cingulata* S. & V. S. (Carpenter and Stevenson, 1954). However, the symptoms caused by *Gloeosporium*