

NEW EXOTIC *HEVEA* CLONES FOR PLANTING RECOMMENDATION IN THE TRADITIONAL RUBBER GROWING AREAS IN INDIA

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Four exotic rubber clones from Prang Besar (PB) estate, Malaysia *viz.* PB 255, PB 280, PB 312 and PB 314 were introduced to India in 1985. Their suitability for cultivation in the country was under evaluation in various field trials initiated during the period 1988-1996. Six on-station trials were laid out across the traditional rubber growing tract of India including three field trials in Kerala state, two in *Hevea* Breeding Sub Station (HBSS), Nettana, in South Karnataka and one in *Hevea* Breeding Sub Station, Keeriparai, in Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu. On-Farm Trial (OFT) of these clones were also undertaken in large estates in four locations. Based on the superiority in early performance over the high yielding check clone RRIM 105, all the four clones were upgraded to the Category II of the planting recommendation during 2009. The present paper reports the long term performance from 10 field trials over a period of 25 years with a view to upgrading these clones to Category I and to reveal their region specificity before release to the farmers.

Key words: Disease tolerance, Exotic clones, Growth, Region specificity, Yield

INTRODUCTION

The commercial cultivation of natural rubber worldwide was rendered possible only by the introduction of the versatile species, *Hevea brasiliensis* to different countries in South and South East Asia and subsequent evolution of clones suited to the local agro climatic conditions. In India, introduction of popular exotic clones dates back to the 1950s and this brought in remarkable achievement in the early years of cultivation. The pre-1950

introductions from Indonesia and the pre-1956 introductions from Malaya and Ceylon are well documented (Mydin and Saraswathyamma, 2005). The clones RRIM 600 (Malaysia) and GT1 (Indonesia) stand out in terms of wide adoption in India in the early years. In later years a number of bilateral and multilateral clone exchange programmes were effected under the auspices of the Association of Natural Rubber Producing Countries (ANRPC) and International Rubber