

# TIMBER PRODUCTION POTENTIAL OF RUBBER (*HEVEA BRASILIENSIS*) CLONES IN NORTH EAST INDIA

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The study was conducted in three rubber clone experimental trials to examine their timber volume potential in North East India. Clonal variability in timber volume was observed. Clone RR208 was the highest per tree timber yielder followed by RRIM 600 among the eight clones studied. Girth class-wise variability in timber volume was the highest in lower girth class (below 70 cm) and a higher concentration of trees was observed in the girth class 70 to 90 cm. The relationship between girth and timber volume among the clones and within the clones was found to be positive. The power equation of girth (G) at 150 cm height and available green timber volume (V) for clone RRIM 600 was  $V = 0.000002 G^{2.6375}$ . The average timber volume was  $0.3 \text{ m}^3 \text{ tree}^{-1}$ . Average availability of timber was  $88.2 \text{ m}^3 \text{ ha}^{-1}$  at the age of 24 years for the clone RRIM 600. Potential rubber timber availability in NE India was estimated as 2.37 million cubic meters. The newly introduced clones, like RR249 recommended for planting in the region has been observed to have higher timber volume and may further contribute to availability of rubber wood timber in the region.

**Keywords:** Rubber timber, clones, North East India

## INTRODUCTION

The demand for timber has increased many folds in recent years in domestic and international markets. Environmental sustainability demands maintenance of forests without their exploitation for timber. The most suitable eco-friendly alternative source of timber is rubber plantations as these plantations are maintained in a sustained replanting rotation of 22-30 years with minimum environmental damage. Rubber (*Hevea brasiliensis*) wood has become an industrial raw material only a few decades ago mainly as a substitute for tropical timber species. Tapping of natural rubber trees,

usually starts in the seventh year after planting and continues for 20 to 25 years. After 25 years, a decline in latex production makes further tapping of the trees uneconomic. The trees are then felled and replanted with new plants. Thus the rubber plantation serves as a sustainable source of rubber as well as timber.

Rubber cultivation has been extended to North East (NE) region of India to increase rubber production due to non-availability of land in the traditional rubber growing areas and to reduce the gap between the demand and supply of rubber. The Northeastern states have great potential for natural rubber