A ROAD MAP FOR ATTAINING SELF-RELIANCE IN NATURAL RUBBER PRODUCTION IN INDIA BY 2030

James Jacob, Joby Joseph and T. Siju

Rubber Research Institute of India, Rubber Board, Kottayam-686 009, Kerala, India

Received: 29 June 2018 Accepted: 18 July 2018

Jacob, J., Joseph, J. and Siju, T. (2018). A road map for attaining self-reliance in natural rubber production in India by 2030. *Rubber Science*, **31**(2): 83-91.

Indian natural rubber (NR) plantation sector supports an industry that is vital to the nation's industrial and economic growth. Sustained extension efforts supported by focused research and development by the Rubber Board in the past more than 60 years helped establish a robust NR production base in the country, characterised by a steady expansion in area under cultivation and increase in productivity and total production. This helped India achieve near self-sufficiency in NR production until 2010. The rubber products manufacturing industry and earnings from export of value added rubber products registered a robust growth over the years. As the Indian economy is expected to maintain its buoyancy in growth, it is estimated that by 2030 the country would require about 20 lakh tonnes of NR per year. Present production is in the range of 6 to 7 lakh tons per year, although there exists the potential to produce about 10 lakh tons a year. Between now and 2030, the country should double its domestic NR production potential to become self-reliant and avoid excessive dependence on import of this critical and strategic industrial raw material. This calls for a mission mode approach with sufficient public and private investments to expand NR cultivation to more areas, replant old and senile holdings and increase productivity of existing holdings for which a road map is presented.

Key words: Export, GDP, Import, Indian rubber industry, Natural rubber, Rubber Board, Self-reliance

INTRODUCTION

Natural rubber plays a pivotal role in the economy of a fast developing nation like India (Joseph and Jacob, 2018) through its direct role in industrial growth. Based on the proportion of natural rubber (NR) and synthetic rubbers (SRs) consumed, it is estimated that the per capita NR consumption in India is hardly 0.76 kg, whereas the world average is 1.66 kg (Rubber Board, 2017; Population Reference Bureau, 2015). In developed and fast developing economies including China, this is well above 2.5 kg yr^{-1}. Demand for NR in the country will steadily grow even as Indian economy remains buoyant and NR is likely to continue to play a catalytic role in India's industrial and economic growth (Joseph and Jacob, 2018).

Major NR consuming countries in the world have strategies to ensure uninterrupted supply of this critical raw material for their industry. Although China doesn't have large extents of climatically suitable regions to grow NR, it grows NR in the southern

Correspondence: James Jacob (Email: james@rubberboard.org.in)