

## SOME PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH EDUCATING THE RUBBER SMALLHOLDERS IN SRI LANKA

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The poor performance of plantation and processing practices of rubber in most holdings in Sri Lanka are a result of inadequate technical know-how, particularly among smallholders. As such the education of smallholders should receive priority attention in an attempt to modernize the smallholding sector.

The success of extension educational programmes among rubber smallholders is however, much handicapped by the existence of a variety of constraints. Some of them are related to the transfer of technology itself while the rest is due to the inability of the grower to put their knowledge into effect as a result of other reasons, which fall into:

(a) socio-economic (b) communication (c) infrastructural and (d) crop factors.

The important socio-economic factors which dilute the extension efforts are the existence of absentee landlord and many co-owners, small-sized holdings, tenurial arrangements and combination of few crops.

The scattered nature, and inaccessibility of most smallholdings pose a severe communication problem for effective extension work. The infrastructural problems encountered in the education of the smallholders are the lack of proper distribution system for inputs, lack of efficient marketing network for processed products, lack of credit facilities and capital, problems of land title, and heavy work load on the available extension staff which necessarily dilutes the extension effort.

Among the crop factors are the slow nature of response of rubber crop to applied inputs, long immature phase, and the skill required to perform certain operations connected with rubber tapping and processing.