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Rubber for Timber: An Addition to the Value Chain*

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Prior to the 1980s, the export of raw rubber held a lion's share of the total industry's exports but as a result of policy shifts since the implementation of the first Industrial Master Plan (1986-1995), manufacturing of rubber-based products and heveawood-based furniture have assumed pole position in export income. Breeding research at MRB has successfully produced clones for dual purposes viz. latex and timber, known as latex timber clones (LTC). These clones have been recommended for commercial planting in the forest plantation programme of which 60 per cent of the planted areas are for rubber and the rest of the areas are for recommended forest species. Based on the projection of establishment of 25 000 hectares per year, rubber occupies 15 000 hectares which gives an additional 225 000 hectares of rubber area by end of the programme i.e. 2021. The available latex harvesting technologies are able to produce 1.8 to 2.0 tonnes per hectare per year from the onset of tapping which gives a total of 14 - 16 tonnes per hectares in 7 years of tapping and a log volume of 630 m³ per hectare at the end of the cycle (15 years planting cycle). The economic analysis indicates that the internal rate of return per hectare is approximately at 16 per cent.

This paper presents the overview on the research activities of short planting cycle concept and economics of rubberwood extraction as an addition to the value chain of rubber cultivation.

Keywords: *Technologies, latex timber clones, heveawood, value-addition, economic analysis.*

