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CHAPTER 3

RUBBER BOARD AND
RUBBER PRODUCERS’ SOCIETIES

3.1. THE RUBBER BOARD

The Indian Rubber Board was constituted under the Rubber (Production and Marketing) Act, enacted by the Indian Parliament in 1947. The major task entrusted with the Board, at the time of its constitution, was promotion of the natural rubber (NR) industry under the guidance and control of the Government of India.

The Act which came into force on 19 April 1947, has undergone many changes over the past 50 years. The Rubber (Production and Marketing) Amendment Act of 1954 made certain changes in the constitution of the Board and amended the name as ‘The Rubber Board’. The Act clearly defined the role of the Rubber Board in the development of the industry and the Board was assigned with the task of implementing various development schemes. The Act was later amended in 1960, and in 1994. The Rubber Rules, 1955, providing guidelines to carry out the purpose of the Rubber Act, also have undergone many changes in course of time.
3.1.1 CONSTITUTION

The Rubber Board functions under the Ministry of Commerce of the Government of India and has 26 members consisting of:

1. A whole-time Chairman appointed by the Central Government

2. Two members to represent the State of Tamil Nadu, one of whom shall be a person representing rubber producing interest.

3. Eight members to represent the State of Kerala, six of whom shall represent rubber producing interests, three of such six being persons representing the small growers.

4. Ten members to be nominated by the Central Government, of whom two shall represent the manufactures and four labour.

5. Three members of Parliament of whom two shall be elected by the House of People and one by the Council of States.

6. The Executive Director and the Rubber Production Commissioner of the Rubber Board appointed by the Central Government, as ex officio members.

7. The Board has a Secretary appointed by the Central Government. One of the members of the Board is elected as Vice-Chairman whose term of office is one year. The Board has seven subcommittees: Executive
Committee, Research and Development Committee, Planting Committee, Market Development Committee, Labour Welfare Committee, Statistics and Import/Export Committee and Staff Affairs Committee, constituted to review the activities vis-à-vis functions, examine proposals and make recommendations to the Board. The Board and the subcommittees meet periodically.

3.1.2 **FUNCTIONS**

The Rubber Act lays down the following functions for the Rubber Board 3:

1) It shall be the duty of the Board to promote, by such measures as it thinks fit, the development of the rubber industry

2) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing provision, the measures referred to therein may provide for:

3) Undertaking, assisting or encouraging scientific, technological and economic research

4) Training students in improved methods of planting, cultivation, manuring and spraying

5) The supply of technical advice to rubber growers

6) Improving the marketing of rubber

7) The collection of statistics from owners of estates, dealers and manufactures
8) Securing better working conditions and the provisions and improvement of amenities and incentives of workers

9) Carrying out any other duties which may be vested with the Board as per rules made under this act

10) It shall also be the duty of the Board:

11) To advise the Central Government on all matters relating to the development of the rubber industry, including the import and export of rubber

12) To advise the Central Government with regard to participation in any international conference or scheme relating to rubber

13) To submit the Central Government and such other authorities as may be prescribed, half-yearly reports on its activities and the working of this Act

14) To prepare and furnish such other reports relating to the rubber industry as may be required by the Central Government from time to time (The Act, 1947).

3.1.3 FUNDS

The Board maintains two funds, the General Fund and the Pool Fund.
3.1.3.1 **General Fund**

Cess on rubber is a duty of excise on the quantum of raw rubber produced in the country. The rate of cess in force from September 1998 is Rs. 1.50 per kg. It is collected by the Board and remitted to the Consolidated Fund of India after retaining two percent as collection charges. The Central Government makes grants to the Board through appropriations as approved by the Indian Parliament, to be utilized for the purpose of the Rubber Act. Amounts thus received by the Board form major portion of the receipts to the general fund. Other forms of collections to the General Fund include license fees, proceeds from sale of rubber produced in Board’s research or demonstration farms proceeds from sale of planting materials raised in Board’s nurseries, fees for services and miscellaneous receipts. This fund is utilized to meet the cost measures and functions under the Rubber Act and Rules.

3.1.3.2 **Pool Fund**

Amounts generated from sale of rubber imported or purchased from internal market, transfers from General Fund with previous approval of the Central Government and cash realizations implementation of schemes for the small growers constitute the Pool Fund. The Pool Fund is applied only for the rehabilitation of the small growers. Measures like replanting with high yielding materials and planting new areas with rubber in the smallholding sector are financed from the Pool Fund.
3.1.4 **ACTIVITIES**

The activities of the Board can broadly be classified under regulatory, research, development, collection of statistics and planning, labour welfare and collaboration with international organizations.

3.1.4.1 **Regulatory**

In India, Natural Rubber (NR) is a commodity with regulated transactions. Its production, sale and consumption have to be carried out under valid licenses.

3.1.4.1.1 **License for New Planting or Replanting**

For fresh planting or replanting of rubber, a license has been prescribed under the Rubber Rules. The Development Officer in charge of the Regional office having jurisdiction over the concerned area issues the license separately for new planting and replanting. Each license specifies the area of new planting or replanting and is valid for the calendar year of issue or part thereof. It is obligatory on the part of each license to use only high yielding planting materials as approved by the Board. Every license holder has the obligation to furnish to the Board details of the area newly planted or replanted.

3.1.4.1.2 **Registration of Estates**

Every owner of rubber plantation has the obligation to register his name in the books of the Board. Owner includes any agent, a mortgagee in possession and a lessee of an estate. Registration is granted assigning a registration number after
verification of the applicant’s title to the land, location, extent planted, the year of planting and variety of planting materials used. Registration is normally effected Talukwise. Separate registration is given to estate owned by the same person in different Taluks unless such estate is contiguous and lying as one unit. Registration once made continues in force until it is cancelled. The registration of an estate can be transferred in whole in part to a successor in title or any person who has otherwise acquired the title.

Under the Rubber Act and Rules, owners of rubber plantations are classified into two groups, viz. small growers and large growers. Small growers is defined as owner whose rubber plantation does not exceed 20.23ha (50 acres) in area.

Every small grower when required to do so and every large grower has to furnish to the Rubber Board monthly returns giving the particulars of rubber produced, stock held or disposed of and annual return giving particulars of the area under rubber, production of rubber, manuring, plant protection and the labour employed in the prescribed form. Since the number of smallholdings has now crossed manageable proportion, census is conducted to estimate the area under rubber and the annual production from that sector.

3.1.4.1.3 General License

The Rubber Act stipulates that no person shall sell or otherwise dispose of, and no person shall buy or otherwise acquire rubber, except under and in accordance with the terms of a general or special license issued by the Board. The Board has by due notification issued a general license to all registered rubber
growers to sell or otherwise dispose of rubber and another general license to all manufactures to acquire rubber not exceeding 68.03 kg (150lb) per year. For quantities exceeding this, a special license has to be obtained.

3.1.4.1.4 Dealer’s License

Every person, other than a processor, who wants special license to purchase, sell or otherwise deal in rubber is granted the license if the Board is satisfied with the suitability of the applicant, after remittance of the prescribed fee. Every licensed dealer should submit to the Board true and correct monthly returns in the prescribed forms giving the particulars of rubber acquired, stock held or disposed of.

3.1.4.1.5 Processor’s License

Every person who wants to acquire rubber for processing or to sell the rubber so processed or otherwise, should obtain a special license from the Board. The Board may issue a license if it is satisfied with the economic feasibility of the processing venture, the suitability of the applicant and the proposed site, availability of the raw materials, possession of technical know-how, arrangement for the technical specification of the processed rubber and remittance of prescribed fee. The processors of solid block rubber and concentrated latex should grade and market the produce in conformity with the standards specified by the Bureau of Indian Standards from time to time. Every processor should furnish to the Board monthly returns from the prescribed form giving particulars of rubber used out of own production or by acquisition, stock held, and the quantity disposed of.
3.1.4.1.6 Manufacturer’s License

A person who desires to manufacture any article in the making of which rubber is used has to obtain a manufacturer’s licence from the Rubber Board. The licence is issued for acquiring a specific quantity of rubber. He can obtain the licence by submitting the application in the prescribed form along with the licence fee and service charge. Every manufacture should furnish to the Board monthly returns in the prescribed form providing particulars of rubber acquired, stock held, consumed or disposed of and an annual return in the prescribed form, giving particulars of consumption of various kinds of rubber in relation to the end products.

3.1.4.1.7 Interstate Transport

Transport of rubber across state boundaries is regulated through a declaration made by the transporter in the manner laid down in the Rubber Rules. Regulation of transport helps to ensure movement of rubber only to licensed traders or manufacturers and that the whole quantum transacted is accounted for levy of cess.

3.1.4.1.8 Control on Import and Export

Import and export of NR are regulated by the Central Government on the basis of policies adopted and decisions taken from time to time. As per the present Export and Import (Exim) Policy of 1997-2002, there is no restriction on export of any grade of NR but its free import is not permitted.
The Rubber Board regularly collects statistics from various sources and makes projections and forecasts of future supply of requirements and advises the Government on quantum to be imported or exported. When domestic production falls short of domestic consumption, the Board advises to import, against Public Notice to the extent of deficit. Trading houses which export rubber products are entitled to import rubber under Special Import Licence (SIL). Imports-under Public Notice and the SIL attracts customs duty. Exporters of rubber goods can import rubber without duty to the extent needed for production of goods for export under the Duty Entitlement Pass Book (DEPB) scheme.

If domestic industry is not able to fully consume the rubber produced internally, recommendation for export of rubber is made. All intending exporters may obtain a Registration–cum – Membership Certificate (RCMC) from the Rubber Board.

3.1.4.1.9  **Control on Price**

The Central Government pursues a policy of maintaining remunerative price for rubber related to the cost of production. NR price in India was brought under statutory control in 1942, which marked beginning of the Government intervention in the market. In the past, the Government used to fix minimum and maximum price of rubber. The minimum price was operative from May 1942 to August 1981(except for a short gap from October 1946 to November 1947), but the maximum price only during December 1947 to December 1963 and from October 1967 to November 1968. Both minimum and maximum prices were also
operative from February 1986 to January 1991 and only the minimum price since then, which currently is the benchmark price

3.1.4.2 **Research**

Scientific research has a vital role to play in the commercial exploitation of an agricultural commodity like NR with multidimensional industrial uses. In order to evolve agricultural technologies best-suited to Indian conditions, the Rubber Board developed its own research facilities by establishing the Rubber Research Institute of India (RRII) in 1955. The broad research priorities are improvement in productivity of NR, reduction in cost of production, improvement in quality competitiveness by modernizing post-harvest technology and development of location-specific cultural operations, exploitation techniques and plant protection methods.

3.1.4.2.1 **Areas of Research**

The thrust areas of research work undertaken by the RRII are:

1. Agronomy and Soils: investigations on the nutritional requirements of rubber, irrigation, intercropping, cover crop management, weed control and the study of the rubber growing soils.

2. Agricultural Economics: Studies relating to economic aspects of NR cultivation, processing, marketing and end uses, studies on different aspects of ancillary sources of income and by-products and assessment of economic feasibility of new recommendations.
3. Biotechnology: Development of tissue culture and other culture systems for propagation and crop improvement of Hevea.

4. Botany: Breeding, evaluation and selection of high yielding clones, propagation techniques, planting methods, anatomical studies and cytogenetic investigations.

5. Germplasm: Introduction, conservation and evaluation of Hevea germplasm.


8. Rubber Chemistry, Physics and Technology: Improvement in primary processing of rubber, its chemical modification, rubber product manufacture and quality control of processed rubber.

3.1.4.2.2 Major Contributions

Sustained research and adoption of a new technology by the rubber growing community have been instrumental in India’s achievement of the highest productivity among the NR producing countries. The RRII has been successful in evolving through breeding, the outstanding rubber clone RRII 105 and releasing it for commercial cultivation. The clone has gained very wide acceptance and has touched average commercial yield of 2400 kg per ha. and 16 other clones with
very high yield potential are in the experimental stage. Systematic research has evolved appropriate agrotechnology for rubber production and helped in developing agromangement techniques and rubber-based farming systems for sustainable agriculture both in traditional and non-traditional areas. The institute has been successful in maintaining the indigenously developed and introduced cultivars and a good number wild genotypes in germplasm conservatories. The RRII has developed efficient and competitive measures for management of all diseases and pests in rubber plantations. Location-specific and clone-specific exploitation systems have been identified. Popularization of discriminatory fertilizer recommendation system of rubber and the development of Diagnosis and Recommendation Integrated System (DRIS) are noteworthy. Other notable contributions include development of protocols for tissue culture propagation of high yielding clones and for somatic embryogenesis, efficient utilization of ancillary products, environment-friendly waste management. Identification of alternative latex coagulants, improved drying system, technology development for production of modified forms of NR and formulation and process aids for different rubber products.

3.1.4.3 Development

The Rubber Board has been implementing schemes for (1) improving productivity of the existing plantations and reducing cost of production, (2) increasing total production through expansion of rubber cultivation, (3) modernization of crop processing and (4) improving the marketing of smallholders’ crop.
3.1.4.3.1. Rubber Plantation Development Scheme

Separate schemes were implemented to promote replanting and new planting of rubber. A replanting subsidy scheme was in operation from 1957 to 1979, under which 53605 ha of senile rubber plantations were replanted with high yielding clones adopting scientific cultivation practices, the achievement being about 62 per cent of the target (Rubber Board, 1980). Three other schemes (Upkeep Loan Scheme, New Planting Loan Scheme and Revised Loan Scheme) were also introduced during 1962-79 to modernize the smallholding sector which covered an area of 3857 ha. A one-year pilot scheme implemented in 1979 resulted in new planting of 6532 ha.

The Rubber Plantation Development Scheme offering financial assistance for both replanting and new planting was launched in 1980. The scheme covered both small growers (up to 20 ha) and large growers. During the first phase of the scheme (1980-84) the financial incentive for the smallholder sector was 66.6 per cent more compared to that for the large growers (Rs. 5000 and Rs.3000 per ha respectively. Smallholders possessing rubber area below 6 ha were provide special assistance to meet partially the cost of planting materials and fertilizer. Credit from commercial banks was also available, for which interest was subsidized for smallholders to the extent of three per cent by the Rubber Board.

During the second phase (1985-89) of the scheme, the subsidy (Rs. 5000 per ha) was limited to growers of 5 ha or less in traditional area, but without restriction for growers in the non-traditional regions where the agrotechnology of
rubber farming had not become popular. All growers made eligible for credit finance from banks and for the three per cent subsidy on interest. Planting material subsidy was also granted at the rate of Rs. 6 per plant for using plants of advanced growth like polybag plants (limited to 450 plants per ha).

The third phase of the scheme covered three years (1990-92), with the same rates of assistance. The fourth phase is under implementation from 1993, concurrent with the World-Bank-assisted (International Development Assistance) Rubber Project. The financial incentive was raised to Rs. 8000 per ha. and in the traditional region it is limited to 2 ha for growers whose individual rubber area does not exceed 5 ha. In view of the increase in planting cost the financial incentives were revised in 1997. Small growers possessing rubber area of 5 ha and below in the traditional region (Kerala and Tamil Nadu) now receive planting grant of Rs. 18000 per ha, for extending/replanting the rubber area up to 2 ha. Financial assistance at this rate is available also to large growers in non-traditional region for area up to 20 ha. Smallholders in the non-traditional region are also eligible considering the climatic constraints prevalent in most of the potential areas in the state.

Incentive for use of advanced planting materials is continued at the same rate of Rs. 6 per plant. Growers belonging to scheduled cast/tribe are eligible for the assistance at Rs. 8 per plant. With the use of advanced planting materials, it is expected that rubber trees attain tappability even by the sixth year. The payment is released based on adoption of various technologies recommended by the Board and also plants attaining the specified girth. The minimum qualified girth is
15, 20, 28, 36 and 43 cm for the third to the seventh year respectively. The schemes are result linked, but liberal. Incentives under the fourth phase is met out of the World Bank grant to the Rubber Board.

The total area replanted / new planted under the Rubber Plantation Development Scheme under the four phases is 271504 ha; 72740 ha under phase I, 77147 ha under phase II, 45547 ha under phase III and 76070 ha (up to March 1999) under phase IV. Phase I and Phase II were of five-year periods while phase III was for three years. Phase IV started in 1993 has covered six years. Significantly high productivity has been achieved in the holdings which have been participating in RPD schemes.

3.1.4.3.2. World Bank-assisted Rubber Project

The Rubber Board has been implementing a World Bank-assisted Rubber Project effective from January 1994 with the main objective of expanding and strengthening the rubber plantation sector to increase production by smallholders, improve processing and increase on- and off-farm employment. The project mainly covers Kerala and Tamil Nadu in the traditional sector and Tripura in the non-traditional sector. The main components of the project are (1) replanting in traditional areas (30500 ha) (2) new planting in traditional and non-traditional areas (45000 ha) (3) productivity enhancement in 100000 ha of smallholdings in traditional areas (4) establishment/upgradation of rubber and rubber wood processing facilities (5) institutional strengthening of Rubber Board and (6)
development of participating women and tribal population, particularly in Tripura. The IDA credit finances about 68 per cent of the total estimated project cost.

3.1.4.3.3. **Supply of Planting Materials and Cover Crops**

The Board publishes every year a list of clones approved for planting and takes appropriate steps to ensure that the materials are available to growers in adequate quantum at reasonable prices. It maintains eight nurseries (total extent 47.36 ha) in the traditional region and another eight (total area 28.81 ha) in the non-traditional region. The planting materials are distributed mainly to small growers at concessional rates. Large growers are given supplies to a limited extent at cost price. The Board is also implementing a Sponsored Nursery Scheme whereby cooperative institutions are encouraged to maintain nurseries to supply materials of high quality to the small growers at reasonable price.

Rubber growers are encouraged to establish suitable ground cover in the plantations from the initial year for improving the soil structure and fertility, suppressing weed growth, preventing soil erosion and keeping down the soil temperature in summer. Seeds of the leguminous cover crops is supplied through the Board’s Regional Offices, in conveniently sized packets. Subsidy in price, to the extent of 20 per cent of the cost, is allowed to smallholders.

3.1.4.3.4. **Improvement of Crop Processing and Presentation**

Small growers in India generally market their crops as sheet rubber, the quality of which needs improvement in general. In order to improve the quality,
the Board subsidizes the cost of hand-operating sheeting rollers of standard specifications and provides financial and technical assistance for establishing small smoke houses in individual holdings. To popularize modern methods of processing amongst small growers, cooperative societies are assisted to set up facilities for production of technically specified rubber, centrifuged latex and pale latex crepe.

3.1.4.3.5. **Technical Advice to Growers**

Rubber Board has been promoting the production of NR through advisory, extension and communication services to growers free of cost. The field service units, set up throughout the important rubber growing centres, attend to implementation of plantation development and input distribution schemes and advise the growers on seasonal operations and scientific cultural practices. These units also undertake mass contact activities such as village-level group discussions, seminars, study classes, exhibitions and annual campaign meetings on selected topics. The mobile laboratories of the RRII render on-the-spot discriminatory fertilizer advice to small growers at nominal cost.

Demonstration and discussion on scientific methods on tapping, panel protection, rain guarding and chemical yield stimulation are also arranged. The Tappers Training Schools (Plate 75.g) at different plantation centres offer regular training to small growers and their sponsored tappers in tapping and primary processing of the crop.
Growers are encouraged to elicit technical and other information through correspondence. Technical and general information is also given through publication of free advisory leaflets, subsidized journals, articles in news dailies, broadcast of talks, interviews and lessons over radio and screening of instructional films.

3.1.4.3.6. **Training and Technical Consultancy**

Specialized training in various aspects of rubber production and processing provides trained manpower for the plantation and manufacturing sectors. Regular training programmes are arranged separately for smallholders and estate personnel on cultivation of rubber, cultural practices, plant protection and crop processing.

‘Sasthradarsan’, a one-day familiarization training programme at the RRII, is also arranged free of cost to enable rubber smallholders gain first hand knowledge about the research and development programmes undertaken to improve cultural practices, plant protection and crop processing.

Problems in the production processes raised by the participants are examined for identification of solutions. Consultancy services are provided to the rubber goods manufacturing units through project identification, market survey, preparation of project feasibility report and assistance in trial runs. Existing units draw assistance for improving quality of products, reducing cost of production, products diversification and identifying export markets. A full – fledged training
centre is under establishment close to the RRII for conducting integrated training courses for rubber producers, processors, traders and rubber goods manufacturers.

3.1.4.3.7. **Special assistance to the weaker sections**

The Board provides special assistance for the weaker section among the growers belonging to tribal and scheduled caste communities. The special assistance includes: (1) cash subsidy at enhanced rate (Rs. 22000 per ha spread over the 6 to 7 year immaturity period) (2) supply of high quality planting materials free of cost, (3) reimbursement of cost of planting material (Rs. 8 per plant limited to Rs.4000 per ha), (4) fertilizer at 50 percent subsidized cost during the first three years (limited to Rs.1000 per ha), (5) subsidy for boundary protection (Rs. 2200 to Rs.4000 per ha depending on holding size) and (6) fee concession of 50 per cent in training programmes.

3.1.4.3.8. **Board’s Publications**

The Board publishes books, periodicals and pamphlets to disseminate scientific methods of rubber cultivation and crop processing to publicize various schemes and to build up awareness on the status of the industry.

‘(book in English), ‘Directory of Rubber Products Exporters’ (English), ‘Plant
and Soil Analysis ‘(book in English), ‘Rubber Board Bulletin’ (Quarterly in
English)’, Rubber Research Institute of India Annual Report ‘(English), and the
‘Indian Journal of Natural Rubber Research ‘(half –yearly, international
Scientific Journal in English). A large number of technical and advisory
pamphlets are also brought out in English and local languages. Scientists and
technical officers have published over 2000 papers in leading national and
international journals and popular periodicals.

The Board published the Handbook of Natural Rubber Production in India
(a manual in English covering all aspects of NR production and post-harvest
technology) in 1980. This book’ Natural Rubber: Agromanagement and Crop
Processing’ is published to incorporate all relevant information up to date.

3.1.4.4. Collection of Statistics and Planning

The Rubber Board collects basic statistics from rubber growers, dealers,
processors and manufacturers and monitor periodically the demand and supply of
rubber. The Board prepares perspective plans and works out strategies for
augmenting domestic production, monitors developments in the international
scene and renders advice to the Government of India on international
developments and the steps to be taken for rubber development in the country.
3.1.4.5 Labour Welfare Scheme

Under provisions of the Rubber Act, The Rubber Board implements labour welfare measures to secure better working conditions and provisions for the improvement of amenities and incentives for rubber plantation workers in the organized and unorganized sectors. The welfare measures include stipend and scholarship schemes for education of workers’ children, group insurance-cum deposit scheme, subsidy scheme for construction of own houses, assistance for sanitary facilities and scheme for medical attendance.

3.1.4.6 International Collaborations

Research and development in NR transcend national boundaries and are today undertaken with global perspective and understandings amongst planners, decision makers, scientists and development workers. Many spheres require active collaboration at bilateral and/or multilateral levels. India is a member of the International Rubber Study Group (IRSG), the Association of the Natural Rubber Producing Countries (ANRPC) and the International Rubber Research and Development Board (IRRDB). These bodies foster cooperation in rubber research and development and try to improve the service of NR to the humanity in terms of technological properties and supply at reasonable price. The RRII has research/academic linkages with several universities and research institutions and is a recognized centre for advanced studies.
3.2 RUBBER PRODUCERS’ SOCIETIES

Rubber Producers' Societies are voluntary self help associations of small growers of natural rubber, registered under the Charitable Societies Act and envisaged to function as non profit making institutions imparting technical and scientific know how to the members for the general improvement of the area and in particular for the economic and social welfare of the small growers of rubber. They are the village level associations of small rubber growers formed to act as self help groups to do whatever possible for the progress and development of rubber cultivation and all its allied activities.

3.2.1 ORIGIN AND GROWTH

The primary rubber marketing co-operatives were set up to cater to the interests of its member growers. However, over the years many of these societies have lost direct access and links with most of their grower members, mainly due to the fact that the society is operating in towns while growers are at interior villages. As such the need for an agency which can feel the pulse of the growers to act as a connecting link between the society and the growers was very keenly felt. Similarly, with the encouragement of the Rubber Board many processing factories have been set up in the co-operative sector. These factories were established with the objective of upgrading small growers’ rubber which in the normal course would have been converted into lower quality sheet and crepe and thereby
ensuring a better return to the growers. In order to ensure uninterrupted supply of fresh raw material like latex and scrap rubber directly from the small growers to feed these factories, a net work of collection centres became an absolute necessity. Besides, the share of the co-operative sector in the total rubber market continues to be negligible despite the various incentives and encouragement given by the Rubber Board. The main reason for this is identified as the lack of a net work of collection agencies operating right at the door step of the growers for procuring rubber for these societies at reasonable prices. Therefore the need of a suitable agency to procure rubber from small growers channelling it to the primary societies was felt. This would eventually result in the co-operative sector emerging as the market leader in rubber. Similarly, modernization of small holdings being a stupendous task due to the existence of large number of units, lower size of holdings, low productivity, interior processing and marketing and so on, it become practically impossible to reach each individual grower for improving his lot. Therefore the setting up of an effective agency through which this can be achieved becomes an absolute necessity.

In the above context, the setting up of a voluntary organization of genuine farmers formed at their own initiative within the proximity of their holdings with the sole objective of furthering common interest without being profit motivated was mooted. The concept of Rubber Producers’ Societies was thus evolved by the Rubber Board under the above circumstances. Due to various incentives and encouragement given by the Rubber Board many Rubber Producers’ Societies have been set up. At present there are 2052 Rubber Producers’ Societies approved by the Rubber Board. Many more are also being set up.
3.2.2 FEATURES OF RUBBER PRODUCERS’ SOCIETIES

Distinguishing features of Rubber Producers’ Societies are given below:

- Operate in small compact areas having radius of 2 to 3 kms.

- Membership is in the range of 50-200. Only small rubber growers having rubber holding located within the operational area of concerned Rubber Producers’ Societies can be members.

- Each Member should contribute Rs.50/- as entrance fee and Rs.10/- as annual subscription.

- Function non-politically and on democratic lines. Administration through elected Director Board headed by President. Directors are to be elected by rotation.

- Rubber Board’s local Field Officer will be nominated to the Board of Directors of the Society.

- The General Body should meet regularly once in every quarter and should take policy decisions and review progress of implementations as well as performance. The General Body should as far as possible meet in members’ holdings and should discuss technical and development issues of interest and concern. Rubber Board’s Field Officer to participate in such discussions.
Designated Chartered Accountant should annually audit and certify the accounts of the Rubber Producers’ Societies. The accounts should be presented to the Director Board and General Body from time to time.

Should not engage regular employees. Anyone engaged for any assistance should work on a fair commission paid on the basis of actual work turned out.

3.2.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE RUBBER PRODUCERS’ SOCIETIES

The Society shall be a non-profit-making institution aimed at imparting technical and scientific know how to the members for the general improvement of the area and in particular for the economic and social welfare of the small farmers of rubber.

Without prejudice to the generality of the above object, the following shall be the aims and purposes of the Society:

- To disseminate knowledge on the latest improvements in cultivation of rubber tapping, collection and processing of latex and scrap rubber.

- To act as an agent of the concerned state Government and of the Rubber Board for implementing extension programmes and developmental activities.

- To ensure maximum productivity and returns to the small farmers by serving as a connecting link between the farmers and the societies.
• To organize collective marketing of latex and scrap of the members through collection centres and thereby to demonstrate the economics of collective marketing and distribute the benefit so derived to the member rubber growers.

• To arrange for and carry out leaf and soil analysis and other tests aimed at maximization of the utility value of inputs in the rubber holdings and thus assist in cost reduction in their operations.

• To organize other welfare and educational programmes for the benefit of the members.

• To keep liaison with the Rubber Board and the Processing Societies and also to obtain technical guidance on agricultural processing and marketing of rubber as and when necessary.

• To raise necessary funds by way of admission fees, subscription from members, donations, loans and advances from members, public, bank and other financial institutions, co-operative societies, Rubber Board and Government, and,

• To do such other things including acquisition of immovable and movable properties as are incidental and conductive to the attainment of the above objectives.
3.2.4 FUNCTIONS AND ACTIVITIES OF RUBBER PRODUCERS’ SOCIETIES

- Assist in transfer of technology to members.

- Undertake (or assist) common marketing of members’ rubber grade-wise and at remunerative prices.

- Establish and run common crop processing facilities that help members to upgrade quality of rubber.

- Promote and assist group approach for new planting, replanting, productivity enhancement and availing of bank finance. Rubber Board grants etc.

- Raise nurseries and supply high yielding planting materials to members.

- Receive supplies of various inputs from Rubber Board and other possible sources and distribute among eligible members.

- Participate in joint ventures of Rubber Producers’ Societies Undertaken on regional basis, with or without Rubber Board assistance, for furthering common interest of members.
These RPS numbering about 2052 now have a significant impact in the modernization process of the rubber holding sector\(^7\). Besides community processing and marketing, it also distributes plantations requisities to the small growers at reasonable prices and also ensure adoption of critical agricultural operations not only by growers themselves but also RPS undertaking the job such as prophylactic spraying and micron spraying for control of diseases. A beginning has been made where RPS have taken up the role of a service provider also besides involvement in the generation of high yielding planting materials and helping in collection of statistics.

Rubber Processing and Marketing involves high technology and investment. The RPS by themselves could not ensure such infrastructure development. To overcome this, Private Limited Companies as joint ventures of Rubber Producers’ Societies and Rubber Board were formed during late 80s and early 90s aimed at setting up processing factories and taking up trading of latex, sheet rubber, field coagulum and agro inputs. The company with 98% shares (49 share) contributed by RPS and 2% shares (1 share) by the Board form regional level apex bodies of Rubber Producers’ Societies.

The sector needs more support from different sources. Due to the increase in the number, the RPS could not be supported by Rubber Board's Extension Officers to the extent it should have. Moreover, motivation among the officers themselves for the need for forming and supporting such organizations has not been very high\(^8\). More importantly, awareness among the growers about the need for this set up also was found wanting pointing to the necessity of intervention.
3.2.5 RUBBER PRODUCERS’ SOCIETIES AND NATURAL RUBBER

3.2.5.1. Latex

Natural Rubber is collected from plantations as Latex and field coagulum (scrap rubber). Generally, latex accounts for 70 to 80 percent of the crop, the rest being field coagulum. Latex can be processed into (1) Ribbed Sheets, (2) Pale Latex Crepe (PLC), or Sole crepe, (3) Technically Specified Rubbers (TSR) and Speciality Rubbers, and (4) preserved field latex and latex concentrate.

A number of rubber products like foam, elastic thread, carpet backings, adhesive, gloves, balloons, rubber band and other dipped goods are made directly from latex. Fresh latex, as such, is not suitable for long-term storage. Therefore, it is necessary to store latex for long periods with appropriate chemical treatments. For the ease of transportation and of production of various articles, it is also necessary to raise the rubber content of latex.

Natural rubber latex is a colloid, like milk. For all applications of latex rubber, it is essential to maintain its colloidal character. This could be achieved through preservation.

Any attempt to preserve latex shall, therefore, aim at preventing bacterial activity in latex. This is achieved by adding chemicals having bactericidal activity. Such chemicals, called preservatives, apart from destroying or deactivating microorganisms, very often enhance the colloidal stability of latex. Ammonia was
the first and even now is the most popular preservative for latex. Certain other chemicals are also used along with lower concentrations of ammonia. These are called secondary preservatives.

3.2.5.2. **Ribbed Smoked Sheets**

Conversion of fresh Natural Rubber (NR) latex into Ribbed Smoked Sheets is the oldest method of processing. This is widely adopted by rubber growers due to its simplicity, lower cost of processing and the viability even when the quantity of latex is small. Sheet rubber commands a predominant share in the Indian Natural Rubber Market as the proportion of smallholdings in the country is very high.

Raw rubber sheets are of various types like Ribbed Smoked Sheets (RSS), Air Dried Sheets (ADS) and sun-dried sheets, depending on the method adopted for drying. The operations involved in making sheet rubber include sieving, bulking and standardization of latex, addition of chemicals, coagulation, sheeting, dripping and drying.

Sheets taken out from the smoke house after drying, are removed from the reapers and visually examined by holding them against clear light to see any speck or impurity remaining inside. These are sorted into different grades on the basis of colour, translucency, presence of mould, oxidized spots, blisters, bubbles, dirt, sand and other foreign matter, as per the international standards of quality and packing for natural rubber prepared by the Rubber Manufacturers’ Association,
New York described in the Green Book. There are six grades of sheet rubber and they are designated as No. IX, RSS, No. 1 RSS, No. 2 RSS, No. 3 RSS, No. 4 RSS and No. 5 RSS.

3.2.5.3. **Scrap**

The ratio of latex to field coagulum varies depending on the age of the trees, tapping system, climatic conditions, clone, stimulation, time of collection, stability of latex, etc. All forms of coagulated rubber obtained from the field are collectively known as field coagulum. It includes the rubber removed from the collection cup (cup lump, shell scrap or cup scrap), tapping cut (tree lace, panel scrap) trunk of the tree (dried rubber from the latex over flown from the tapping cut), the cup once in a year (black shell) and from the ground beneath the collection cup (earth scrap). Field coagulum is processed into crepe rubbers of TSR. Different grades of field coagulum crepe are used in appropriate proportions in blends with other forms of natural rubber to make products such as tyres, footwear, retreads, mechanical goods, extruded items, etc.

3.2.6 **BYE-LAWS OF THE RUBBER PRODUCERS’ SOCIETIES**

Bye-laws are the rules and regulations which govern the management and administration of RPS. They give proper guidance and direction through which the societies should function to achieve the objectives. These bye-laws are laid down as per the provisions in the Charitable Societies Act which governs the RPS. These are given below:
3.2.6.1 **Membership:**

The membership of the society is restricted to the Rubber Growers in the area of operation and who agree to market the rubber latex and scrap produced in his holding situated in the area through the society, subject to the following conditions:

1. He should have attained the age of majority and should be competent to contract.

2. He should pay the prescribed admission fee and the subscriptions.

3. He should abide by the rules and regulations of the society and should not be engaged in any activities detrimental to the objective of the society or in competition with it.

4. He should regularly market his rubber latex and scrap through the society at least up to a minimum quantity equivalent to 750 kg of DRC per hectare per year.

A member will lose his membership if he disqualifies himself on any of the above grounds. He can also retire or resign from the Society by giving notice and the society may accept such request provided he has no dues or liabilities to the society and he is not in custody of any property or valuables of the society.

Every person who desires to become a member shall apply in the prescribed form along with an admission fee of Rs.50/- and an annual subscription of Rs.10 /-. The annual subscription shall be paid by the members regularly.
3.2.6.2 Funds of the Society

The funds of the society shall be raised by way of

1. Admission fee

2. Annual subscription

3. Donations, loans and advances from the members

4. Donations, loans, subsidies and advances from non-members, banks and other financial institutions, co-operative societies, Rubber Board and Government.

3.2.6.3 General Body

The Society shall convene the first General Body meeting of all the members within a period of 3 months from the date of registration and thereafter annually but not later than one month after the end of the accounting year. The quorum for the general body meeting shall be 1/3 of the eligible members in the membership roll of the society or twenty which ever is less.

The Executive Committee on its own initiative or on written request from 1/3 of the eligible members shall convene a special general body meeting to transact special or urgent business.
3.2.6.3.1 **Powers and duties of General Body**

a. The ultimate authority of the society vests in the general body. General Body will decide by simple majority all matters not specifically delegated to the Executive Committee under these rules.

When ever it shall appear to the Executive Committee that it is advisable to alter, extend or abridge in particular the purpose/purposes for which the society has been established or to amalgamate the society either wholly/partially with any other society, the Executive Committee shall present the proposal for the same with the concurrence of the Rubber Board to the members of the society and convene a special meeting for the consideration thereof by the General Body, by giving 10 days prior notice regarding the proposed amendment. Such amendments as are agreed to by 3/5 of the members shall be carried into effect.

b. The General Body shall in its first meeting elect from among themselves the President of the Society. He in turn will immediately thereafter conduct the election of six members of the executive committee. The president will hold office for 3 years and two members of the Executive Committee will retire every year. The members who are to retire at the end of 1st year and 2nd year respectively will be chosen by drawing of lots. But for this all elected members of the Executive Committee will hold office for a period of 3 years. There is no bar for re-election of a retiring member. Only the members who have supplied 750 kg of rubber per hectare of their holding through the society will alone be entitled to vote and to stand for election from the 2nd year. The annual report and the annual
accounts of the society duly approved by the Executive Committee and audited by the auditor appointed by the Executive Committee in the case of first year accounts and subsequent years by the auditor appointed by the Annual general Body shall be presented to the general body for consideration and approval. The General Body shall have the power to approve the budget presented by the Executive Committee with or without modification. It shall also lay down policy guidelines, future activities of the society and suggestions for improving the internal management including the disciplinary matters. The general body of the society may authorize or delegate the powers in these respects including the preparation of necessary bye-laws, rules and regulations for the proper management of its affairs wherever required to the President/Executive Committee.

c. The general body shall appoint an Auditor for the Society and the period of appointment shall be for an year except in the case of first year.

3.2.6.4 Management

The management of the society shall vest in the Executive Committee consisting of the president and 6 persons elected by the general body from among its members. Rubber Board will have the right to nominate one of its officers to the Executive Committee if it so desires.

The committee shall prepare a list of members and keep it open at the office of the society during the office hours. It shall also keep a copy of Societies Registration Act and Rules, Memorandum of Association and Rules and
Regulations, Bye-laws, if any, for the inspection of the same by the members. The Executive Committee shall conduct the affairs of the society in accordance with the objectives and policies defined and the rules and regulations as amended from time to time. The quorum of the Executive Committee shall be 4 including the President /Vice President. The committee shall meet as often as required but at least once in a month. The Committee may invite representatives of the Rubber Board, Financing Institutions, Processing Society, Co-operative Rubber marketing Society of the area and other specialists as special invitees to the meetings. The Executive Committee shall elect from among the elected members, a vice President. The services of the President and Vice president are gratuitous.

Each member of the Executive Committee shall have one vote and in case of equality of votes, the President shall have a casting vote.

An Executive Committee member may resign at any time, but such resignation shall take effect only on the date on which it is accepted by the Committee.

A member of the Executive Committee, if absents himself from four consecutive meetings of the committee, without the prior permission of the President shall cease to be a member of the Committee. Interim vacancies in the Executive Committee shall be filled in by co-option by the President from among the members of the society.
3.2.6.4.1 **Powers and Duties of the Executive Committee**

The property of the society shall be managed by the President and he shall take care of the properties and use the funds of the society for carrying out the objectives of the society in accordance with the decision of the Executive committee.

The Executive Committee may delegate any of its powers to the President as may be required for the day to day functioning of the Society.

**The committee shall:-**

1. Be responsible to file with the Registrar all statements, returns, and lists of the members of the Society and the governing body and such other information as may be required under the Act and Rules.

2. Arrange/cause to be arranged the first general body meeting within 3 months of its registration of the society and subsequent annual meeting in time.

3. Elect the office bearers subsequently at Annual general meetings from among the elected members, as provided herein.

4. Present to the general body the annual report and also the annual accounts duly audited for the consideration and approval of the general body.

5. Have the powers to admit members as per the rules.
6. Take decisions on any contract to be entered into on behalf of the society with the Processing Institutions or Co-operative Societies or Financial Institution or Rubber Board for the purpose of carrying out the objectives of the society and authorize signatories to such contract.

7. Arrange for the purchase and sale of agricultural inputs required for the members as well as for marketing of rubber produced by them through the processing societies.

8. Scrutinize the annual budget of the Society and recommend the same for general body for its approval.

9. Sanction the expenditure for the management of the society within the approved budget.

10. Take decision to own or hire or obtain on lease buildings, and other properties for storing and marketing of agricultural inputs and latex and rubber scrap.

11. Organize agricultural development /extension programme for the benefit of the growers.

12. Approve the appointment and removal of a staff and commission agent and decide their remuneration/rate of commission and other terms and conditions of service within the limit of sanctioned budget with the concurrence of the Rubber Board.
13. Scrutinize and approve the monthly receipts and disbursement statements.

14. Verify the stock kept in godowns at least once in 3 months and at the end of the year.

15. Make sub rules/bye-laws for the day to day operation of the society and act according to such rules. The Executive Committee may however, get the sub rules/bye-laws approved/ratified by the general body.

16. Do such acts and transact such other business as are consistent with the objectives of the Society and as may be incidental to the administration of the Society.

17. Prepare/cause to prepare, annually, in such forms as may be specified by the Registrar (a) a statement showing the receipts and disbursements for the year (b) income and expenditure account (c) a balance sheet (d) such other statements as may be required.

18. Punish by way of fine, the members who try to add other materials to the latex they supply.

The Executive Committee may while ensure the operations of the Society in accordance with the objectives, shall generate adequate funds from the internal source. It may resort to external source of funds on dire necessity with the approval of Rubber Board for achieving the goals set by the Society.
The executive Committee shall authorize the President, Vice-President and another Committee Member to open and operate a Bank Account with any Nationalized or Co-operative Bank in the area on behalf of the society. The account shall be jointly operated by two such persons. Funds not required for immediate disbursement shall be deposited in the bank.

3.2.6.4.2 **Powers and Duties of the President:**

The President shall: -

- Preside over all meetings of the general body and the Executive Committee of the Society. In the case of equal division of votes, he shall exercise a casting vote.

- Have the power to sanction contingency expenditure subject to provisions in the approved budget. All expenditure made in this manner shall be placed before the next executive committee for ratification/approval.

- Be responsible for the management and overall supervision of the activities of the Society.

- Have the power to take disciplinary action against the commission agents of the Society.

- Be responsible to present before Executive Committee all policy matters with his recommendation for approval and also to present the same before General Body with the recommendation/approval of the Committee.
- Have necessary authority to correspond with general public, Government Department, other Institutions, on behalf of the Society.

- Keep liaison with the Rubber Board, Processing Co-operative Society and financial Institutions and ensure smooth functioning of the society.

- Have such other powers as may be delegated to him by the Executive Committee, so that all the objectives of the Society are achieved as per policies framed by the Executive Committee.

3.2.6.4.3 Powers and Duties of the Vice-President:

The Vice-President shall have all the powers and duties of the president in the absence of the latter. The president may also delegate such of the powers and duties assigned to him to any other committee member with due approval of the Executive Committee.

3.2.6.4.4. Miscellaneous

For the purpose of improving the financial position and future development of the Society, a compulsory recovery at the rate of 5 (five) paise per kg. DRC of Rubber sold to the society shall be made and the amount so recovered shall be credited to a separate Development Fund Account. Decisions about utilization of this fund are to be taken with the approval of the Rubber Board only.

The society shall not appoint any person except a latex collection agent who can be given a commission, subject to a maximum of 15 (fifteen) paise per kg. of DRC of rubber collected.
The society may sue or be sued in the name of its president.

For all matters not specifically provided in these rules, the society may frame any rules and regulations from time to time consistent with the Memorandum of Association as amended from time to time and in accordance with the Societies Registration Act and Rules. The provisions under the Societies Registration Act and Rules shall govern in all such matters which are not specifically provided for in the rules and regulations of the society and so specified in the rules and regulations but are inconsistent with provisions under the Act and Rules.

3.2.7 SCHEMES FOR RUBBER PRODUCERS’ SOCIETIES

A number of schemes are designed by the Rubber Board for the benefit of RPS. These schemes are framed to cover almost all the various aspects of the working of RPS. The management, the members and the RPS in general are benefited much from these schemes. Brief descriptions of the current schemes are given below:

3.2.7.1. Scheme to Support RPS Having Group Processing Centre

RPS having group processing center functioning well are offered with financial assistance of Rs.51,000/- or 75% of the actual cost whichever is less to purchase computer and peripherals. In addition to this Rs.3000/- is provided for imparting computer training.
3.2.7.2. **Scheme for Distribution of Estate Inputs for Small Growers**

Rubber Plantation Development Scheme under 10th plan has a component for productivity enhancement which envisages procurement and distribution of plantation inputs such as Copper Oxychloride, spray oil, rain guarding plastic and rain guarding compound to small growers through RPS. As per the scheme, a price concession amounting to 9.025% of the cost of inputs is given to member growers of RPS. Board’s companies / RPS / SHG involved in distribution will be paid service charge of 10% of the actual cost of inputs distributed to meet their expenditure on go down charges, loading and unloading and other incidental expense.

3.2.7.3. **Scheme for Providing Nucleus Source Materials**

As per the scheme the selected RPS / SHG will be provided with nucleus source materials for generating quality planting material in their area of operation, as an income generation activity. Selected RPS/SHG is eligible for 100 numbers of brown budded stumps or 20 meters of bud wood of various high yielding clones as nucleus source material to raise rubber nursery under the scheme. The financial assistance is limited to 50% of the total cost of the nucleus planting material purchased at the Board’s approved rate, which is being fixed every year.
3.2.7.4. **Financial Assistance to RPSs/SHGs for Extra Income**

The scheme is to provide financial assistance to RPS/SHG for extra income generation by Apiculture. The assistance is extended for a minimum of 10 growers and maximum of 20 growers in one SHG/RPS. The assistance is limited to Rs.2000/- per beneficiary.

3.2.7.5. **Scheme for Construction of Store-Room for Storage**

RPS having group processing centers are provided with financial assistance of Rs. 1,85,000/- or 50% of the actual cost whichever is less to set up Store room for storage of rubber sheets.

3.2.7.6. **Scheme for Setting up of Latex Collection Center**

Financial assistance is provided to RPS having 5 cents of own land to the tune of Rs.2, 10,000/- or 50% of the actual cost whichever is less for setting up Latex Collection Center and Training Hall.

3.2.7.7. **Assistance to Purchase Latex Collection Equipments**

RPS that purchase equipments required to set up latex collection center are provided financial assistance of Rs. 10,000/- or 50% of the cost whichever is less to purchase platform balance, chemical balance and hot air oven including its transportation / installation charges.
3.2.7.8. **Schemes for Establishing Eco-Friendly Group Process**

Financial and technical assistance are provided to RPS / Co-operative societies which own 20 cents of land for setting up of full fledged eco-friendly / technology transfer center. Financial assistance to the tune of Rs. 6,62,500/- or 50% of the actual cost whichever is less is given to the RPS / Co-operative Societies are shown below:

**T23. Financial Assistance for Group Process Centre**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>Amount (Rs.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a Group Processing Center</td>
<td>1,77,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b Smoke House</td>
<td>1,37,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c Training Hall</td>
<td>1,10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d Effluent Treatment Plant</td>
<td>75,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e Aeration Tank</td>
<td>17,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f Processing Equipments and other accessories</td>
<td>1,25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g Furniture and other training facilities</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Rubber Research Institute
3.2.7.9. **RPS as Technology Transfer Centres**

About 200 RPS are equipped with facilities for conducting training programmes. Short duration intensive training in tapping is conducted every year to impart training in scientific method of tapping and processing of latex. Campaign meetings are also conducted every year with active support of the RPS to popularize modern technology of rubber cultivation and processing. Training programme for imparting training in account maintenance, capacity building etc are also conducted along with other topics on rubber cultivation in these centers. In addition to seminars, group meetings, the statutory meetings of RPS are also conducted frequently.

3.2.7.10. **Formation of Self Help Group to Strengthen Participatory Extension among Nominal Growers as well as Women Growers**

In order to strengthen participatory extension among marginal Rubber Growers, the Rubber Board has encouraged formation of Rubber Swasraya Sangham (SHG). These may be formed independently or affiliated with the RPS.

The areas identified for supporting RPS/SHG are as follows

Financial assistance for purchase of Latex Collection Equipments to set up Latex/Scrap/sheet collection center.
1. Financial assistance to arrange training programme related to rubber sector such as
   
a) Beekeeping

   b) Nursery Management

   c) Processing of Latex into quality sheet/preservation of latex, grading etc.

   d) Capacity Building

   e) Account maintenance etc

2. Financial assistance for Apiculture.

3. Providing technical assistance and supply of nucleus planting material at concessional rates to raise source bud wood nursery.

3.2.7.11. **Financial Assistance to RPS/SHG for Extra income**

    **Generation from Rubber Plantation by Adopting Apiculture**

    The scheme is to provide financial assistance to RPS/SHG for extra income generation by Apiculture. The financial assistance is extended for a minimum of 10 growers and a maximum of 20 growers in one SHG/RPS. The financial assistance is limited to Rs.2000/- per beneficiary.
REFERENCE


2 ibid. p8


6 ibid. p 5

7 The Rubber Board. Rubber Publications 2002. 11th January 2007 p 15


9 ibid. p 36


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