PREFACE

The Indian Rubber Plantation sector dominated by smallholdings, accounts for almost 87% of the production. The preponderance of the small and marginal growers makes the sector vulnerable to fluctuations in price. Also they experience difficulty in gaining access to technology and information. In spite of the fact that 87% of the production is from the smallholding sector, they have very little influence on the market. The formation of small grower association under the RPS has formed an important departure from the conventional system of unscientific farming operations characterised by exploitation of small and marginal farmers by the middlemen. The formation of RPS at the regional and sub regional levels since the mid 1980s has imparted dynamism in all spheres of cultivation activities among the small and marginal rubber growers in Kerala. The RPS, numbering about 2100 at present, have made a significant impact in the modernization process of the rubber holding sector. Besides undertaking community processing and marketing of rubber it also distributes about 30-40 plantations requisites to the small growers at reasonable prices. It also ensures adoption of recommended agricultural operations by the growers. A study on the evolution of the RPS would point out that the self reliant approach based on the concept that community management and local self reliance are key organizing themes and recognizing that development is ultimately achieved by individuals and families that have the freedom and opportunity to create a future of their own choosing through a moulding of local and external knowledge and resources, has
been recognized only by a few. Of the 2052 RPS only a few are working efficiently and a large number of them have to improve significantly if they are to be of service to the growers. A number of issues affecting the working of RPS have to sorted out with a view to help the RPS to become stronger in rendering various types of services to the member growers. The RPS should be instrumental in assessing the local situation in order to identify the felt needs of small growers at the grass root level and also to develop strategies accordingly. A number of strategies and activities have to be designed to enhance the efficiency and affectivity of RPS which is considered to be the most potent weapon to fight against various evils which hinder the growth and development of rubber plantation industry in Kerala. A research study about RPS is considered to be a right step in the proper direction at the right time especially in the era of globalization.

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