

## Constraints Faced in the Functioning of Poothrikka Rubber Producer's Society, Ernakulam District, Kerala

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Agriculture not only ensures food security, fodder and other raw-materials as feedstock for industries, it also serves as the source of livelihood for majority of the Indian population. Taking into account of the very large number of small plantation holdings in the country, Rubber Board promoted Rubber Producers' Societies (RPSs) to play an unparalleled and significant impact in the modernization process of the rubber holding sector [1]. RPS is a voluntary self-help association of small growers of NR, registered under the 12<sup>th</sup> Travancore Cochin Literary, Scientific and Charitable Societies Act of 1956 functioning on a model bylaw drawn and circulated by the Rubber Board. As on 31-3-2018, there were 2459 RPSs formed and functioning under the patronage of Rubber Board.

While marketing agriculture produce, Indian farmers get only a very small portion of the value of the produce. A major part of the value is eaten up by the middlemen or money lender [2]. The preponderance of small rubber growers makes the sector vulnerable to exploitation by middlemen eventually results in price fluctuations and also difficulties in gaining access to technology and information. Ultimately this situation forces the farmers to get away from the rubber cultivation. Majority of small farmers are not having enough financial resources or reserves to manage the market dynamics influenced by the middlemen or market leading corporate companies [3]. Hence institutional support built upon a community basis would help empowering the framework of small farmers to manage adequate market strengths and also this would help farmers to get a realistic margin. But these institutions also face barriers in their smooth functioning. Therefore, the present study is an attempt to examine the constraints faced by Poothrikka RPS from the perspective of executive committee members in its functioning.

The study was done in Ernakulam district of Kerala state during the year 2020. Ernakulam district was purposively selected due to the travel restrictions made by the government due to Covid-19 pandemic. From Ernakulam district Poothrikka Rubber Producers' Society was selected which has

category 'A' classification based on criteria such as conduct of statutory meetings, status of auditing of accounts, infrastructure facilities, participation in the Rubber Board schemes/extension programmes etc. Since the study examines the problems faced by the society, the view of management of the society was carried out using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using index methodology. The total management of the society is vested in the president and executive committee members. The responses to questions were plotted on a five-point Likert scale. The scale used the responses such as strongly agree, agree, moderately agree, disagree and strongly disagree and the scores assigned to these rating were 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The survey was conducted during the month of June - July 2020. The formula of index is as follows:

$$\text{Index} = \frac{\sum_{i=1} \sum_{j=1} S_{ij}}{\sum \text{Max} S_j}$$

i = respondents

j = problems/constrain

$S_j$  = Score of j<sup>th</sup> factor

$S_{ij}$  = Total score of j<sup>th</sup> factor of the i<sup>th</sup> respondent

Max.  $S_j$  = Maximum score for the j<sup>th</sup> factor

Based on the index obtained, the results were compared to a standard derived:

Scores obtained	Constrains category	Color classification
0-20	Negligible	
21-40	Tolerable	
41-60	Risk	
61-80	Severe	
81-100	Chronic	

The key function of management in general is to manage society in accordance with the declared objectives, policies, rules and sub rules amended from time to time. Tasks that fall under executive committee's purview includes enrollment of members, election of office bearers, procurement and distribution of various estate inputs, procurement and sale of produce from the growers for better marketing etc. Problems which occur meanwhile carrying out these functions in the society are called functional problems. For the purpose of the study, the functional problems of the society are classified into:

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- a. Problems related to production
- b. Problems related to procurement
- c. Problems related to processing
- d. Problems related to marketing

The activities undertaken for the enhancement of latex production can be defined as production functions of the society. For this purpose, the society is entrusted with the supply of estate inputs to the member farmers, extension services, training etc. The problems which occur while carrying out these functions in the society are called production problems.

a). *Problems related to production*

Table 1 Problems related to production

Statements	Score	Index	Intensity
Latest technical knowledge is not disseminated to the growers in the area of latex production	13	37	Tolerable
Leaf and soil analysis and other tests are not conducted for better production	13	37	Tolerable
Lack of nurseries for supplying good quality, high yielding planting materials to the needy growers	33	94	Chronic
Estate inputs are not distributed to the growers	9	26	Tolerable
Price fluctuations prevailing in the market affects the cultivation	27	77	Severe
Composite index	95	54	

From the (Table 1) explains the problems related to production in Poothrikka RPS. Lack of nursery for supplying good quality, high yielding planting materials to the needy growers was found to be a problem since it fell under the category of ‘chronic’ [4]. And also, the management opined that price fluctuations prevailing in the market affects the cultivation to an extent and members are showing less interest in cultivating rubber since the price in the market is

unattractive. It was analyzed to be a ‘severe’ problem affecting the smooth functioning of the society which is needed to be rectified in order to uplift rubber cultivation [5].

b). *Problems related to procurement*

The problems faced during procurement or collection of latex, sheets, scrap etc. is defined as the procurement problems faced in procurement by the society.

Table 2 Problems related to procurement

Statements	Score	Index	Intensity
No regular supply of latex from members	21	60	Risk
Price fluctuations in the market affect the procurement of latex	27	77	Severe
Procurement get reduced due to the unavailability of tapping equipment’s	7	20	Negligible
Lack of transportation affects the quantity of procurement	7	20	Negligible
Lack of collection centers to procure the latex of member growers	7	20	Negligible
Composite index	69	39	

From the (Table 2) it is understood that there exist some problems in the society related to procurement. The composite index was calculated as 39 which fell in the category of ‘tolerable’. The statement ‘no regular supply of latex from members’ fell in the category of ‘risk’ since it has an index of 60 whereas ‘price fluctuations in the market affect the procurement of latex’ was identified as a ‘chronic’ issue existing in the society [6].

c). *Problems related to processing*

From the aforementioned investigation, the problems faced during processing of collected latex are defined as the problems related to processing by the society. It is clear from the (Table 3) that all the statements had fallen in the category of 0-20, which says that the mentioned problems are ‘negligible’. The composite index was found to be 20 which again fell in the same category [7].

Table 3 Problems related to processing

Statements	Score	Index	Intensity
Smoke houses and joint community processing center does not improve the quality of the product	7	20	Negligible
No sufficient technology to produce good quality sheets	7	20	Negligible
Contaminated water from the processing center pollutes the surrounding area.	7	20	Negligible
Difficulty in storage of processed sheets	7	20	Negligible
Non-utilization of ETP	7	20	Negligible
Composite index	35	20	

d). *Problems related to marketing*

The problems which occur while carrying out the marketing of processed sheets and latex in the society are called marketing problems. From the (Table 4) it is clear that “price fluctuations prevailing in the market” and “difficulty in trading with Rubber Board’s trading companies” were the

identified problems in marketing. The society sells the produce to private dealers since the trading companies of the Rubber Board offers them less price. The composite index calculated is 55 which fell under the category of ‘risk’ [8]. Therefore, necessary measures should be adopted by the society to create a smooth marketing channel which assures a guaranteed return.

Table 4 Problems related to marketing

Statements	Score	Index	Intensity
Procured latex and processed sheets are not marketed collectively at a better price	8	23	Tolerable
Price fluctuations prevailing in the market affects marketing	34	97	Chronic
Difficulty in trading with Rubber Board's trading companies	34	97	Chronic
Difficulty in dealing with private dealers	12	34	Tolerable
Difficulty in transportation for marketing	9	26	Tolerable
Composite index	97	55	

### SUMMARY

The Indian plantation sector is overwhelmed by little possessions, which represent 88% of the total rubber production in the nation. The rubber marketing co-operatives promoted by the Rubber Board from early 1960s could not effectively reach the large number of farmers due to the political and beurocratic control. So, Rubber Board advanced the arrangement of grass root level associations at the village level called Rubber Producers' Societies, so as to convey proper innovation to boost the profitability and creation of small holdings to meet the increasing need for natural rubber. The present study examined the constraints faced in the

functioning of Poothrikka Rubber Producers' Society in district Ernakulam of Kerala. To examine the objective primary data were collected from the president and executive committee members of the society. The constraints were studied in the stages of production, procurement, processing and marketing of natural rubber and analyzed using index methodology. "Lack of nurseries for supplying good quality, high yielding planting materials to the needy growers", "irregular supply of latex from members", "difficulty in trading with Rubber Board's trading companies" and "price fluctuations in the market" were identified as the major constraints faced by the society.

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