

The Rubber Outgrowers Unit (ROU) is the extension wing of the Ghana Rubber Estates Limited (GREL) responsible for the implementation of the Rubber Outgrower Plantations Project (ROPP). ROPP is a government project aimed at assisting Outgrowers to alleviate poverty. The vision of the unit is economic empowerment through rubber cultivation for sustainable rural community development to alleviate poverty.

Its mission statement are to deliver quality and affordable inputs and services to rubber Outgrowers through advance and innovative technology; to enable Outgrowers have sustainable income, enjoy a better living and to contribute to national development and to collaborate with all stakeholders to effectively and efficiently

Plan Your Future;



Plant Rubber Trees

ROU Organizes Tapping Refresher Course for Outgrowers' Tappers

Good tapping is essential to obtaining high yield from a rubber tree. In order to continually improve the skills of tappers on outgrower farms, ROU organizes two main tapping training for outgrowers and their tappers within the year. The first training, which is normally a four-week programme is organized in April, where outgrowers whose farms are opened for tapping for the first time are aided to acquire skills in order to tap the rubber in the right and acceptable manner. The second training, which normally comes off from October to November is mostly community based. The Mature Farm Coordination Section of ROU draws up comprehensive programme to address the tapping challenges identified in the various communities. During the monthly tapping inspection, it was observed that most of the tappers were creating wounds to the trees during tapping, discipline in terms of respect for tapping frequencies, tapping at the right period (not any time of the day) were not followed, excessive bark consumption, poor angle of slope and shallow or deep tapping. Again, cleanliness of tapping equipments were also found to unacceptable. The tappers were therefore taken through the processes of correcting all the anomalies and it is hoped that, good tapping skills would be demonstrated on outgrower farms.



ROU headman issuing instruction to the tappers



Tapping training in session



The Paraa

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 3

NOVEMBER 2011

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AFD, KfW Pay Visit



KfW in a meeting with farmers at Yediyelese

The Rubber Outgrower Plantations Project is one the few Poverty Alleviation Programmes in Ghana which is living up to its vision of empowering its beneficiaries economically. Due to the success story of the project as a result of sound and prudent management by the Project Management Team (PMT), the project has become one of the flagships of projects being implemented by the development partners. There is therefore no wonder that the project has become a priority point of call for visiting development partner missions to Ghana. During the quarter under review, the KfW and AFD paid separate working visits to the project. The first to come was the KfW. After being briefed on the operations of the Project by the Project Director Mr. E. A. Owusu, they were taken to the field to inspect outgrower farms at Yediyelese. They also took the opportunity to meet with the outgrowers in the community. They were particularly interested in the major occupation in the community before the introduction of the Rubber Projects. They were informed that the major pre-occupation in the community were the production of charcoal, fire wood and coconut.

Recounting their bitter experiences with the Cape Saint Paul Wilt Disease (CSPWD) which had wiped off all their investments in coconut plantations, the outgrowers could not hide their appreciation to the development partners for the assistance they had received in planting rubber. The outgrowers whose rubber trees are in production also added that they could now afford to send their children to school, even up to the Tertiary level and also undertake various projects which hitherto were practically impossible for them. The outgrowers however made an appeal for the extension of support and assistance to the many other farmers who also want to plant rubber but due to the limited number of farmers who are to be selected to participate in each phase of the project have not been able to benefit from the scheme to date. The AFD on their visit were also taken to the fields of outgrowers who had been enrolled in the food crop programme being implemented by GREL. One of the beneficiaries at Ankyernin informed them about how beneficial the food crop programme was helping the farmers under the scheme.



AFD on field visit to food crop farm at Ankyernin

WHY MUST OUTGROWERS ADOPT E-ZWICH ?



THE PROJECT DIRECTOR, MR. E. A. OWUSU

In our quest to deliver timely and quality extension services based on technological innovations to rubber outgrowers, ROU has begun introducing outgrowers to the use of E-zwich. The exercise became very important as a result of complaints in delay of payments and frustrations some farmers go through at the bank after delivering their cup lumps to the GREL factory.

ROU, in collaboration with GhIPSS (a subsidiary of Bank of Ghana) organized an educational forum for the outgrowers whose farms are in production, whilst also created an opportunity for them to get registered. Almost one hundred (100) outgrowers have now been registered. As part of GREL's contribution to ensuring that, the adoption of E-zwich by outgrowers become workable, GREL has secured a piece of land, adjacent to ROU office and would put up a Point of Sale (POS) terminal. Again, a lorry washing bay would also be built on the same piece of land. It is anticipated that while the outgrower waits and washes the lorry which delivered the crop at the factory, processing of the production voucher and loading of funds onto his/her E-zwich would also be on-going. The end result is that, payment for crop delivered at the GREL factory would be effected after two (2) hours of delivery and therefore withdrawal of cash can be made immediately from the POS. Other benefits of E-zwich to the card holder is that, it minimizes the risk of losing cash through carelessness, robbery, impersonation. It also gives the card holder a wide range of retail and banking services at any POS terminal.

Depth of Tapping

The bark of the rubber tree is made up of several layers. The outermost is called the corky bark, which acts as a protective layer. In the second layer, which is the hard bark stone cells and several unorganized latex vessel rings can be found. The greater number of latex vessel rings are found in the soft bark, which forms the third layer. The latex vessels in the bark are in rings which are closer to one another as they reach the wood. Between the bark and the wood is the cambium layer, with the medullary rays running horizontally across the bark.

Tapping requires skills, which can be acquired by constant practice. The efficiency of the tapper can influence the yield obtained. As the number of latex vessel rings are greater towards the inside, tapping must be deep enough to sever as many latex vessels as possible. However, to avoid cutting the cambium, 1 mm of bark should be left untapped. This will enable faster renewal of bark. Tapping to adequate depth can give three times the amount of yield compared to shallow tapping. On the other hand, too deep tapping results in lower dry rubber content (DRC) of latex, because the resultant latex gets mixed up with water from the cambium layer. Too deep tapping also damages the cambium and this result in wounds, and uneven renewed bark, rendering tapping difficult later on. If tapping has been done well, the regenerated bark is smooth and should be thick enough for re-tapping after 7-9 years.

The table below shows the relationship between rings of latex vessels severed and depth of tapping.

Depth of tapping (mm from cambium)	Number of latex vessel rings severed
2.0	38
1.5	48
1.0	62
0.5	80

Jokes! Jokes!! Jokes!!!

The College Boy

A young man hired by a supermarket reported for his first day of work.

The manager greeted him with a warm handshake and a smile, gave him a broom and said, "Your first job will be to sweep out the store."

"But I'm a college graduate," the young man replied indignantly.

"Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know that," said the manager.

"Here, give me the broom - I'll show you how."

SECURING OUR FUTURE AGAINST FOOD INSECURITY



Millions of women and children are starving, millions of them go to bed every night on an empty stomach and millions more are facing "silent tsunami" malnutrition. In ten (10) or so minutes, 100 children around the world die from hunger-related causes with one quarter of those deaths occurring in Africa which Ghana is part. This is as a result of food insecurity. And even if a severely hungry child does not die, and most do not, they will carry the burden of under-nutrition for life, both physically and mentally. This is what we do not want to see happen in Ghana or as a matter of concern not happen in rubber growing areas. For this reasons, the Rubber Out grower Plantations Project of GREL this year instituted the FOOD CROP department to educate and train farmers in food crop production using Good Agricultural Practices (GAP). This will help farmers increase their food crop yield per unit area and enhance food security.

A number of demonstration farms have been established in all the sectors within our operational areas with different crops.



It is of no deniable facts that the rubber project is immensely contributing to alleviating poverty in Ghana. And as such more farmers are growing rubber and doing little to their food crop farms. Farmers plant their food crops anyhow without following Good Agricultural Practice involving the use of improved seeds from appropriate sources, planting in rows, following good fertilizer application management, proper and timely management of weeds.

We must know that one of the key causes of food insecurity is the inadequate food exchange or trade between places of abundant harvests and those with deficit harvest. Therefore all rubber out growers should strictly follow Good Agricultural practice, maximize their lands and also reserve portions of their lands for solely food crops production in order to produce more and quality foods for



the rubber growing communities and beyond to enhance food security. Also as part of Rubber Out grower Plantations Project (ROPP) of GREL's commitment and contribution to ensuring food security in Ghana, it will be partnering with B-BOVID LIMITED, a social entrepreneur in agro-business and alternative livelihood from 2012 to establish model demonstration farms on the premises of B-BOVID LIMITED to train farmers on good agricultural practices in general food crop production, post-harvest lost reduction, animal keeping, the practice of integrated farming system as well as ICT and farming as a business. Farmers will be organized and taken there periodically to see and learn from what will be established there.

For this reason all rubber out grower farmers are entreated to make good use of their farm lands to produce more but quality food stuffs by strictly adhering to good agronomic practices (GAP).