

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 utilize public funds to improve the living standards of the rural communities.

Plan Your Future;



Plant Rubber Trees

The Paraa

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RUBBER OUTGROWER UNIT (ROU)

PLAN YOUR FUTURE;
PLANT RUBBER TREES

INVEST TO GENERATE CASH

Tree crop farming is a medium to long term investment. Unlike the production of annual crops where the farmer normally prepares the land, sows the crop, nurtures the crop and finally harvests within the year, a farmer has to spend a lot of resources to nurture the tree crops during the immature period without any income for a long period of time. However, at maturity, production increases over time resulting in increased income for the farmer. Rubber, unlike oil palm or cocoa, takes seven (7) years to start producing. Some outgrowers might be tempted to "take short cut" on the maintenance of the farm. This may be detrimental to the growth of the rubber trees as

the trees are responsive to the maintenance regime of the farm. The technical assistance given to outgrowers by GREL is therefore designed to help the outgrowers create a quality plantation with the best industrial practices. Presently, as a result of the good maintenance schedule on some outgrower farms, a few of them are producing more kilogram of

rubber per hectare of land as compared with the kilogram of rubber per hectare produced on GREL's plantations for the same age of trees. Perhaps, outgrowers must be reminded that an initial cost has been incurred through the purchase of stumps, fertilizers, chemicals and other services through the loans, which eventually would be paid for by the cuplumps during maturity.

With the application of the right techniques therefore and the determination of meeting the minimum maintenance requirement by the rubber tree, I have no doubts that you will be able to repay the loan as scheduled and have a sustained income in the future.



Mr. Marc Genot
Managing Director of GREL

Lining, Pegging and Holing Begins

Basically, an outgrower's farm is lined and pegged in order to achieve optimum density (total trees per hectare). It is normally undertaken from late March to end of April. It is preceded by a report of completion of land preparation by the outgrower to the Project office. As part of the outgrower's responsibilities, he/she is supposed to provide five (5) man-days for every hectare of land lined and pegged. The recommended planting distance for rubber is 6m x 3m rectangular spacing giving a density of 555 trees per hectare. On a relatively flat land, the 6m base line is

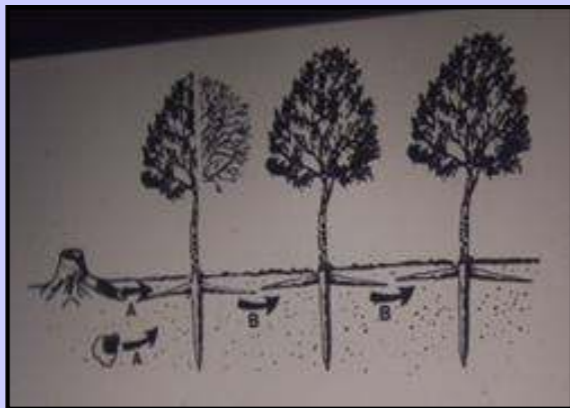
constructed along East-West direction with the 3m directed North-South. Future planting sites are located with pegs of 90cm high and aligned accordingly. On undulating land, the 3m is directed across the slope to ease farm operations and avoid erosion. This operation is enhanced by using cables which are tagged. One cable is tagged at 6m intervals whiles another is tagged at 3m intervals. Both cables are used to construct a box which could contain about 60 pegs. Immediately after lining and Pegging, holing is carried out.

This activity is solely undertaken by the outgrower either by him/her self or through a hire labour. The standard dimension of a planting hole is 40cm x 40cm x 60cm in order to create enough root space for the rubber stumps to develop. Practically, this can be ensured by using a locally designed template made up of an 80cm stick divided into equal halves with a 60cm stick horizontally. The holes are dug with earth chisel and spade. It should be emphasized that the top soil must be separated from the sub soil.

Root and Leaf Diseases control

Root disease (*Fomes*) are by far the greatest phytosanitary constraints on outgrower fields. Among the signs and symptoms of the root diseases infection on rubber trees are out of season flowering of the trees, yellowing and withering of leaves which turn reddish brown and fall and sometimes regeneration of new leaves which are smaller and paler in colour. Following the withering process, the branches gradually die with the growth of carpophores found at the root collar, leading to the eventual death of the tree. When uncovered roots are examined, yellowish mycelium cords running lengthwise down the affected trees are found. Exhaustive detection of *Fomes* is an operation undertaken by the project every six (6) months in May and November when the trees are two (2) years old and above. It must be emphasized however that outside these months, detection could also be carried out by the project on the request of the outgrower on noticing that a rubber tree is exhibiting the signs and symptoms of the disease.

Detection and control of *Fomes* which is scheduled for May is carried out by a gang of five (5) people who walk through the farm line by line (row by row). All trees suspected of having the disease are identified, after which a second more precise level of detection to confirm the presence of *Fomes* is carried out. Once a tree is confirmed of having the disease, treatment begins.



Mode of spread of *Fomes*

Treatment combines both mechanical action involving partial or total isolation by a 30cm to 40cm deep trench, 1m radius from the tree trunk and chemical Action which involves the application of fungicide granules. Currently, 'Sumi' 8 with active ingredients of diniconazole which is a systemic fungicide is used for the treatment of *Fomes*.

Leaf disease (*Corynespora cassicola*) is also a disease of rubber which attacks mostly IRCA 18 clones. It is a fungi disease and when it attacks the rubber tree, all the leaves fall prematurely. It is detected by visual inspection of the canopy (leaves) for brown fish bone symptom at the onset of refoliation. It is treated with aerial spraying with the recommended fungicide during the refoliation process. On outgrower fields, a boom sprayer is used. It is refreshing to note that, the treatment of leaf disease on outgrower fields commenced in March 09.



Signs and symptoms of *Fomes*-root disease



Dead tree with carpophores-a symptom of *Fomes* disease



Brown fish bone-symptom of *Corynespora cassicola*-leaf disease

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Mr. Emmanuel A. Owusu
The Project Director

It Is Still Possible !!!

The frequently asked question among outgrowers nowadays is whether it is possible to save some of the revenue realized from the sale of rubber after the 25% loan deductions and operational cost deductions. The answer is yes, it is still possible. Outgrowers who are fully engaged in farming activities are encouraged to be deeply involved in the various operations on the farm. Instead of engaging the services of a tapper to tap less than 600 trees, the outgrower

may decide to undertake the activity by him/her self. In immature farm, a day's task of undertaking inter-row slashing and line cleaning on 100 rubber plant spaces could be carried out by the outgrower. An outgrower who undertakes these activities would be able to save the money which otherwise would have been used to pay for the cost of operating the farm. It is hoped that, as you start implementing these instructions, it would be possible to save some money for other needs.

It is now a fact that rubber prices have fallen on the world market. This has affected the quantum of money that an outgrower gets for a kilogram of rubber sold to GREL.



PSC of PPCG Pays Visit to Rubber Project

The Programme for the Promotion of Perennial Crops in Ghana (PPCG) has rubber, oil palm and coconut as its components. As with all organizations and projects, the PPCG has its Board of Directors known as the Project Steering Committee (PSC). The composition of the PSC is made up of MOFA, MoFEP, the financial operators, the technical operator, ROAA and BOPOA with the development partners mainly AFD and KfW being observers.

On the 18th of March, members of the committee paid a working visit to the rubber project. The Project Director and the Operations Manager led the delegation to inspect some outgrower farms at Yediyesele, Wassa Nsuaem and Agona Ahanta. After interacting with a cross section of Outgrowers, they praised the management and the entire staff of the Project and asked them to work even harder to achieve the vision of the project.

ROU Organizes Seminar for a Section of Outgrowers

Seminars are an important way of learning by discussing and questioning issues and also learn from each other. It is against this background that Outgrowers whose rubber trees were due for opening in February this year were invited by the Project for a seminar on tapping and stimulant application.

On tapping, the outgrowers were asked to strictly adhere to the technical instructions on quality tapping and quality of cup lumps. The facilitators underscored the need for them to always endeavour to apply grease on the wounds created during tapping and be mindful of the bark consumption angle of slope, front and back channels.

On stimulant application, Outgrowers were reminded that the schedule had been revised from four (4) applications in a year for the trees which are already being tapped to six (6) applications in the months of January, April, May, July, September and November. However, for trees in their first year of tapping, the frequency

shall be four (4) rounds in May, July, September and November. According to the facilitators, the recommended chemical for stimulation is the ethephon (2-chloro-ethyl phosphonic acid) with 2.5% active ingredients. They further stated that the chemical causes delay in early coagulation of the latex vessels by releasing ethylene into the plant tissues resulting in enhanced latex flow. They assured the outgrowers that the product would be prepared by the project and deliver to them (Outgrowers) the quantities required by each outgrower based on the number of tappable trees in each farm.

“Upon receipt of the prepared stimulant, dip an improvised brush made from a small stick into the product once and apply on the tapping panel just above the cut”, they added. As a result of how beneficial the seminar was to the outgrowers, they also expressed appreciation to the management of the project and appealed to the Director to extend such seminars to their tappers.

Field Planting to Start in Late April

All the field operations carried out on rubber plantations are linked to planting of the rubber. This makes planting activity one of the most important operations in the establishment of rubber plantations. The how and when the activity is carried out is therefore crucial in determining the number of alive trees per hectare after the first year of planting.

This year's planting campaign is scheduled

to start from 27th April. Outgrowers would be notified at least one week before the date of planting in their respective locations to enable them make their holes ready. Outgrowers are also informed that the planting materials (stumps) would be delivered at their farm gate the day before their planting dates.

As a procedure, one budded stump should be planted per hole with the scion usually facing the north. This is to protect the eye

bud from direct contact with the sun to prevent it from dying. A simple farm tool such as the hoe is used to fill the hole with the top soil and firmed with a planting stick. The hoe is again used to gather soil around the stumps to the level of the root collar and stamped with the feet. Outgrowers are also reminded that application of termiticide at the rate of 10g per tree around the base of the stump would be done immediately after planting.

ROAA holds AGM

The Rubber Outgrowers and Agents Association (ROAA) held its 2008 annual general meeting on the 21st of March, 2009 at Baidoo Bonso Senior High School, Agona Ahanta. In his address, the chairman of the Association, Nana Asaa Kofi III gave a brief history of ROAA. He enumerated some of the achievements of the association during the year under review as being able to establish a rubber nursery and the waiver of the 3% African discount in the rubber price mechanism as a result of the negotiation between the executives of ROAA and the management of GREL. He further stated that the dues for the productive outgrowers had been increased from 0.6% to 1.5% and that the additional 0.9% dues was to be used to finance the ROAA nursery project and other developmental projects. Among the challenges outlined included the threat of mining activities in outgrower farms and the

fall of the rubber prices in the latter part of 2008.

The Director of crop services of MOFA in his speech read on his behalf by Mr. Joseph Baidoo-Williams congratulated the outgrowers and assured them that due to the interest generated by the farmers in the rubber project, the government was committed to financing the fourth phase of the project.



On his part, the managing director of GREL, Mr. Marc Genot also said because most outgrowers adhered to the technical instructions of the project, 25% of the total hectares planted in 2002 were opened at year six (6) and that this was no mean achievement. The project director, Mr. Emmanuel A. Owusu also commended the outgrowers for their hardwork. He noted that majority of outgrowers have a good plantation as a result of good maintenance schedule. According to him, this led to over achievement of the production targets by 13% during the year under review.

Elections were also held to elect new general secretary and treasurer. Mr. Paul L. Appiah and Mr. C. K. Selormey were re-elected as general secretary and treasurer respectively.

Health-Important Tips

- Answer the phone by LEFT ear.
- Do not drink coffee TWICE a day.
- Do not take pills with COLD water.
- Do not have HUGE meals after 5pm.
- Reduce the amount of OILY food you consume.
- Drink more WATER in the morning, less at night.
- Keep your distance from hand phone CHARGERS.
- Do not use headphones/earphone for LONG period of time.
- Best sleeping time is from 10pm at night to 6am in the morning.
- Do not lie down immediately after taking medicine before sleeping.
- When battery is down to the LAST grid/bar, do not answer the phone as the radiation is 1000 times.

Where is the other dollar?

Three salesmen decided to share a \$30 hotel room for one night and split the cost evenly between them. After they checked in, the hotel manager noticed that they should have been charged only \$25 for the room. So, he gave the porter five one-dollar bills and asked him to return the money to the three men. As the porter was walking to the salesmen's room, he wondered how he was going to split the five dollars evenly between the three salesmen. So, he put two dollars in his pocket and gave each of the three salesmen one dollar.

Now, if each of the salesmen paid \$10 for their share of the room and were given one dollar back, then they each would have paid \$9 for the room. Nine times three is twenty-seven, plus the two dollars the porter put in his own pocket is twenty-nine (9 x 3 = 27 + 2 = \$29).

Where is the other dollar?