

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.

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Plant Rubber Trees



The Paraa

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GREL! THE BEST AGRICULTURAL COMPANY IN GHANA



Story by Jill Quaye-the trainings manager of GREL
GREL was recently adjudged the sixth 6th best company in Ghana for the year 2008 by the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC) for the best 100 companies in Ghana (Ghana Club 100). GREL was also adjudged the first in the Agricultural industry in Ghana. This recognition was made at an Awards Ceremony organised at the State House, Accra, on Friday, July 24, 2009. This is by no means a small achievement and calls for a recognition for all those who contributed to this success. GREL particularly wishes to salutes all rubber outgrowers and agents for their contribution to our success story. The ability of the outgrower to meet the quality standards of GREL by adhering to the field technical instructions of ROU and timely delivery of cup lumps to the factory for processing increased the capacity of GREL to meet the growing demands of its customers satisfactorily.

The Company also enjoyed good selling prices until the recession which hit the world in the latter part of 2008. However since the official declaration by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that the world economy is out of recession, the prices of rubber keep on rising. Keep adhering to the good technical advice from those ROU to continue meeting the quality standards of GREL. The outgrowers should also put in measures to control their expenditure in order to make more profit so that with the renewed interest from our formal customers who radically cut down their stocks during the recession GREL can continue to meet the demands of both the new and old customers and then our collective turn-over will continue to progress. We hope to be ranked the first best company on the Ghana Club 100 in the near future. GREL therefore joins hands with rubber outgrowers to shout a big Hooray. Congratulations.



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RUBBER OUTGROWER UNIT (ROU)

PLAN YOUR FUTURE;
PLANT RUBBER TREES

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The Young Farmer and His Farm in Production



Mr Marc Genot M.D.-GREL

One of the most important activities to be undertaken on a mature rubber plantation is tapping. Tapping, unlike operations such as harvesting of palm fruits in oil palm plantation or cocoa pods in cocoa farm require a much more skills and precision by the tapper. There are many Negative consequences which can result from bad tapping. Prominent among them are severe wounding, excessive bark consumption, poor angle of slope and short or long front or back channels.

These eventually lead to reduced production and finally lower income levels.

Stimulation of the rubber trees is also a skilled activity which requires attention. Wrong application of the stimulant solution to the rubber trees could be detrimental to the trees as panel dryness could occur when the trees are over-stimulated. This is why it is extremely preferable that these operations are performed by the outgrower if he or she is not engaged in any meaningful work. It is a fact that about 70% of hired tappers are not committed to the upkeep of the farms. The non-commitment of these tappers are seen in absenteeism, stealing of cup lumps, Poor tapping and wrong stimulant application.

Technically and economically, it will be in your best interest to carry out these activities on your rubber farms as much as possible.

Tapping for instance, takes about 30% to 40% of one's working hours on a 3 to 4 hectare rubber farm. This leaves about 60% to 70% of one's working hours for other activities. Currently a hired tapper who taps 3 to 4 hectares of rubber receives not less than Gh.¢ 120.00 as his or her monthly income. Again, the non-commitment of hired tappers could be conservatively estimated to be about Gh.¢ 50.00 per month. The probing question therefore is whether 30-40% of one's working hours is worth Gh.¢ 170.00 or not.

However, engaging the services of hired labour for less technical operations such as line cleaning, inter-row slashing and conveying of cup lumps from the farm to the collection point could be done.

On this note, on behalf of the management of GREL, I wish you a happy Berekadasada and Merry Christmas.

Girth Measurement Starts Again

Girth is the circumference of a tree. Girth measurement is therefore the measurement of the circumference of a (rubber) tree. It is an annual field activity carried out between the months of October and December to determine the growth of the trees.

In other words, girth measurement is a function of the growth rate of the rubber trees per annum. The benefit of this operation to the outgrower is to enable him/her to monitor the annual growth rate of his or her trees. This activity is undertaken by two (2) people in both cases.

One person numbers the trees with a green paint whiles the other measures the girth of the trees with a measuring tape. All outgrowers are entreated to undertake the inter-row slashing as well as the line cleaning before the date of activity to enhance the accuracy of the results.



Mr. Emmanuel A. Owusu
The Project Director

Time for Reflections

It would be recalled that a lot of fear and instability in the last quarter of 2008 through to the second quarter of 2009 were created among rubber outgrowers regarding the falling prices of rubber on the international market and whether or not GREL had the capacity to purchase all the rubber

produced by the outgrowers. As the Project Director of ROPP, I had to assure the outgrowers of GREL's commitment and the fact that prices of rubber would bounce back again. This led to my article in the third edition of "Paraa" entitled 'Do not panic'. Indeed, from a Gh.¢ 0.43 per kilogram of rubber in January 2009, a kilogram of rubber in November 2009 sells at Gh.¢ 1.10 representing an increase of 139%. In order to increase your revenue from the sale of your rubber, outgrowers have a responsibility of carefully and judiciously applying all the field technical instructions you have received through different forms of training.

Those in production particularly have to improve on their tapping skills in order not to destroy the bark of the trees. Where hired tappers have been engaged on the farm, farm owners have to efficiently and effectively monitor the treatment of the trees in terms of tapping and stimulant application. Plan your future therefore, by not only planting rubber, but also ensuring that you have a quality plantation.

As the year draws to an end, I want to use the opportunity to wish all our Moslem brothers and sisters a happy Barekadasada. To our Christian fellows, I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a very prosperous New Year.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SFO'S

Apart from the main-stream rubber outgrower projects, there exist another scheme called self finance outgrowers (SFO) which is suitable for individuals and institutions who are interested in establishing large scale rubber plantation. Again, the nature of some lands are such that they are not suitable for the cultivation of oil palm, coconut and cocoa. These lands may be hilly with more than 5% slope and gravely in nature. Rubber, unlike other tree crops, performs well in a wide range of soils, provided the land is not marshy, swampy, salty and/or permanently water-logged with slope of not more than 10%. Furthermore, unlike other investments in the agricultural sector where the delivery of quality extension services is limited, same cannot be said of rubber plantations established by SFO's through GREL. There is a whole section within the rubber outgrower unit (ROU) of GREL which is responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of SFO farms. Individuals and organizations with more than 10 hectares of land and wish to start a real investment which will guarantee a better future are encouraged to contact ROU of GREL for directions.

Unauthorized Panel Opening

Written by Mr. Robert Kojo Danquah

Unauthorized panel opening is an act of opening the rubber trees whether mature or immature by the outgrower him or herself. Recent field visits to tappable farms reveal that about 70% of outgrowers are guilty of this offence. Research has shown that when the rubber tree is opened and tapped at an angle of 35 degrees, the tapper cuts enough latex vessels to induce sufficient latex flow. Several irregularities occur when the trees are not opened by the panel opening team specially trained by the project. Very steep or flat angles and opening the trees above 1.3m height from the ground are some of the irregularities which normally occurs. The resultant effects include low rubber production, high tapping frequency and panel dryness. If your tree is due for opening, wait for the panel opening team and at the appropriate time, the tree would be opened.

The Rubber Price Mechanism-Its Evolution and Application

A special session of the Committee on Commodities of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was held over two (2) decades ago to assess the role international commodity agreements (ICAs) have played in attaining the objectives of the Integrated Programme for Commodities (IPC), particularly the objective of price stabilization. Prices of natural rubber are not uniform, as they vary (although they tend to have a quite high correlation) across types and grades, with variations between RSS and TSR grades (RSS being ribbed smoked sheet and TSR being technically specified rubber in block form). Separate quotations exist for latex concentrates and bulk concentrates.

The major markets include Singapore

SICOM), Tokyo (TOCOM), Kuala Lumpur, London, New York, Bangkok and Shanghai. It should be recalled that demand for natural rubber (NR) is derived, in that it depends on demand for determined final goods, notably tyres of which NR is a major component. Also, although technical requirements might constrain the ease of substituting synthetic rubber (SR) for NR, the share of NR in rubber consumption is likely to be affected by the price of its SR substitutes, which in turn is strongly influenced by the development in oil prices. The higher the oil prices are, the more attractive natural rubber is. Thus since the early 2000's, it appears NR prices have been gaining additional support from high and rising oil prices. Until the late 2008, prices in world major rubber exchange

markets have moved upwards since 2001. The price rise, in nominal terms, appears to have been due, among others, to increasing natural rubber demand from China, fuelled by ongoing growth in demand for automobiles and high oil prices.

In Ghana, international considerations such as rubber balance (interaction of demand and supply), natural rubber stock accumulation coupled with local factors such as currency fluctuations between the Ghana Cedi and US Dollar, the processing and handling cost which is estimated to be 38% of the freight on board (FOB) price and the actual dry rubber content (DRC) estimated to be 58.5% of cup lumps, figure among factors which determine the price of a kilogram of rubber purchased from outgrowers by the Ghana Rubber Estates Limited (GREL).

Feasibility Study For ROPP IV Conducted

Following the successful completion of the third phase of the project even before time, the services of a consultant was therefore engaged to conduct a feasibility studies for a new phase. The consultant scheduled four (4) separate meetings with outgrowers from four (4) Districts out of the seven (7) operational Districts of the project. Farmers who had applied to join the scheme were also invited to the meetings. In all the meeting centres, the outgrowers expressed their gratitude to the donors for their support and appealed for additional funds to enable the 'applicants in waiting' to also benefit from the project. They however indicated to the consultant that one of the significant features which distinguish the rubber outgrower projects from other projects is the payment of partial cash advance (refund) and that any considerations to reduce it has the potential to affect the up-keep of the farm. The applicant in waiting also assured the consultant of land availability if a new phase is granted. Against this background, the phase IV is likely to commence in 2010. It would involve the selection of 2,750 outgrowers in the Western and Central Regions to plant 10,500 ha of rubber, of which 1000 outgrowers would be selected and planted for in 2010. As a procedure, farmers who would eventually be short-listed to join the scheme would be required to submit their personal information, information regarding their lands and

It must be noted that an inspection of identity card would be conducted by the ROU staff to avoid impersonation.

The prospective outgrower would be required to submit a copy of the indenture covering his or her land to the office, failure of which a copy of the land declaration form would be given to him or her to be filled by him or herself and two other witnesses and duly signed by the gazetted divisional or the paramount chief of the area. The prospective outgrower would be expected to return the completed form to the Project office within two (2) weeks, after which time the Project management team reserves the right to replace him or her. After submission of the form, a convenient date would be scheduled by the operational manager and the prospective outgrower to carry out inspection of the land intended to be used for the rubber project. After the procedure for selection has been exhausted, the prospective outgrower would be officially informed of his status whether he or she has been selected or not within one week after land inspection. It must be emphasized that even after being selected, if a dispute arises over the land before the planting season in 2010, you might be de-selected if the