

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

MISSIONS! MISSIONS!! MISSIONS!!!

On the 28th of October 2010, AFD, KfW and the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) undertook a visit to the Rubber Outgrower Projects. The team was taken to Anwiansu, a locality in the Nzema East District with a total of Two Hundred and Seventy Six hectares (276 ha) and Sixty Seven (67) outgrowers. After brief introductory remarks by the Project Director, Mr. Emmanuel A. Owusu, the team led by Mr. Jose Tissier wanted some of the outgrowers whose farms are in production to share with them some of the benefits they had derived from rubber. Sharing his own experience as a farmer, the paramount chief of the Nsein Traditional Area, Awulae Agyefi Kwame III said he has over 10 acres of coconut farm, oil palm plantation of similar size and rubber plantation of 10 acres, all of which are being harvested. According to him, his monthly average net income from rubber is about ten times that from his oil palm and coconut plantations. He therefore praised the Project Management Team and the Financiers for the assistance they provide to the rubber farmers. He however appealed to the Development Partners especially KfW to initiate the process of bringing a new phase since the selection of new farmers for phase IV is already almost exhausted. According to him, there were still a lot of farmers who wish to join the rubber projects but because there is a ceiling on the number of farmers to be selected to join each phase of the rubber project, a lot more people are still waiting for their turn to be selected. He also assured the financiers of availability of land and the willingness of the farmers to put their farms in good maintenance state when selected. Awulae Agyefi Kwame III again made an appeal to the donors to separate the money meant for rubber projects from other tree crops. In this way, more farmers would have the opportunity of being selected to join the outgrower scheme. On his part, Mr. Jose Tissier assured the farmers that they as Development Partners would also have to discuss the issues raised with the Government because normally, the Government has its own development agenda. The farmers also unanimously appealed to the Government through MOFA to rehabilitate the roads which are in poor conditions in the rubber growing areas, as stipulated in the project documents. The farmers were assured that a consultant was recruited to inspect all the roads which had been earmarked for rehabilitation and that MOFA was in the process of awarding the contract to a contractor for work to commence by the first quarter of 2011. The leader of the team, Mr. Jose Tissier commended the farmers for their hard work. The Project Director also thanked the team for making time to interact with the rubber outgrowers. He expressed the hope that the issues raised would be considered.



Editor-in-Chief: Robert Kofi Appiah, Editorial Board: E. A. Owusu, A. A. Aikins and J. Adu-Boahen. Published and designed by the Rubber Outgrower Unit of Ghana Rubber Estates Limited, P. O. Box 228, Takoradi



RUBBER OUTGROWER UNIT (ROU)

PLAN YOUR FUTURE;
PLANT RUBBER TREES

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FRENCH AMBASSADOR TO GHANA PAYS VISIT



His Excellency, Mr Francis Hurtus

On Wednesday 24th November, 2010, His Excellency the French Ambassador to Ghana, Mr. Francis Hurtus paid a one day working visit to the Rubber Outgrower Plantations Project (ROPP). He was met on arrival by the Managing Director of the Ghana Rubber Estates Limited, Mr. Marc Genot, the Project Director, Mr. E.A Owusu and the Project Operations Manager, Mr. A.A Aikins. His interactions with the rubber outgrowers took place in an outgrower rubber plantations at Morrison Junction in the Ahanta West District of the Western Region.

In his introductory remarks, the Project Director expressed gratitude to the French Government for the immense support it had demonstrated towards the various phases of the rubber outgrower projects. He further told a brief history of the outgrower projects since 1995 when the World Bank, the AFD and the Government of Ghana took the initiative to finance the first phase of the projects. He added that, AFD had participated in the financing of all the various phases of the project and that with the current phase, it was significant to mention that AFD is the only financier. He informed the ambassador that, to date, three thousand seven hundred (3,700) farmers have been assisted to plant fourteen thousand eight hundred and six hectares (14,806 ha) of rubber and the contribution of AFD cannot be overemphasized. Interacting with the farmers, the Ambassador wanted to know from them their main

pre-occupation before the introduction of the rubber projects and how the project had impacted their lives. In response, the General Secretary of the Rubber Outgrowers and Agents Association (ROAA), Mr. Paul L. Appiah said he is a trained teacher by profession and also a farmer but stopped working with the Ghana Education Service (G.E.S) over fifteen years ago. According to him, he would have been promoted to the rank of Assistant Director if he were still with G.E.S with a total monthly remuneration of less than six hundred Ghana cedis. He continued that with his 4 hectares (10 acres) of rubber, he now receives a net average income of Two thousand Ghana cedis every month and this had enabled him to complete some projects which would have been difficult for him to even initiate if he were still with G.E.S. Another farmer also recounted how his colleagues from Senior High School decided to migrate to the cities for greener pastures but he refused to join them and said he wanted to plant rubber in the late 1990's. According to him, through the income he gets from his rubber farm, he had been able to cater for his siblings and some of them had completed their first degrees. As he puts it, "I now live a good life".

There were several testimonies from the farmers which really showed that the aim of the rubber project to alleviate poverty was being realized in the lives of the outgrowers.

On his part, the Managing Director of GREL, Mr. Genot advised the outgrowers not to use all their farmlands for rubber. According to him, he believed in diversification of crops and recommended the planting of oil palm on their low lying areas.

The Ambassador was very impressed about how the rubber projects had positively impacted several lives and therefore congratulated the Project staff for their efforts.

In their concluding remarks, the farmers made a passionate appeal to the French Government through the Ambassador to make Phase V a reality since there are several farmers who wish to enter the scheme.

The Project Director also expressed appreciation to the Ambassador for the visit.

Prudent Management of Your Rubber Trees



THE PROJECT DIRECTOR, MR. E. A. OWUSU (middle)

As the year draws to an end, I want to use the opportunity to wish all the stakeholders in the rubber industry a very Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year. I also wish to use the opportunity to comment on some observations being practiced by some outgrowers this year. First of all, the rubber prices have been extremely favourable to outgrowers.

Because of this, every outgrower who delivers rubber to the GREL factory goes home with a smile irrespective of the weight of the rubber, even though the higher the production, the more money one gets. As a result, some outgrowers are not respecting the 3-Farm System anymore. Some of you are now practicing 2-Farm System in order that you may have a good yield. I want to caution such farmers that is a wrong practice and must be stopped. It is a well known fact that the economic importance of the tree is the bark. Practicing 2-Farm System would eventually lead to early exhaustion of the bark, so what should be consumed in five years normally gets finished in three years. The outgrower loses two years of production through careless consumption of the bark and this is very significant when it is translated into monetary terms. For instance, the average price of rubber in 2010 is Gh.¢ 1.5/kg and the average annual production of rubber per hectare is 2,906 kg(wet). By simple calculation, a farmer who loses two years production therefore loses (Gh.¢ 1.5 x 2, 906 x 2) which is Gh.¢ 8,718. Again, some outgrowers have also resorted to stimulating their trees with stimulants which are not recommended by the Project. This may lead to immediate increase in production but be assured of the fact that the chemical may cause panel dryness and in some cases death of the trees.

Be Warned Against Theft of Inputs Because ...



The Rubber Outgrower Unit (ROU) of the Ghana Rubber Estates Limited (GREL) has been educating rubber farmers and the general public against theft of inputs and cup lumps on both GREL's fields and the outgrower fields for time now. Some people have also decided not to pay heed to this education and perhaps thought it was a mere joke. One of such people is Mr. Justice Armah (alias Adama) who was caught by the Security men of GREL on Monday November 8, 2010 while wiping of cup lumps was underway in the GREL plantations.

The Takoradi Circuit Court B on Thursday November 11, 2010 sentenced him to eight (8) months imprisonment for stealing a sack of rubber cup lumps belonging to GREL. The Judge found Mr. Armah, who hails from GyabengKrom in the Ahanta West District of the Western Region, guilty on charges of unlawful entry and stealing. The Rubber Outgrower Unit wishes to caution outgrowers again that, when you are caught stealing inputs or cup lumps from GREL or outgrower fields, the culprit shall be prosecuted.



Programme for Land Preparation, Planting & Field Maintenance 2011

MONTH	ACTIVITY
December - February	Underbrushing, Felling and Crosscutting
Mid March to Mid April	1 st Burning, Piling, 2 nd Burning, Broadcast of Cover Crop Seeds
Mid March to end of April	Lining and Pegging, Holing
Mid April to Mid May	Filling of replacement bags
May/June	Planting
June to December	Post planting operations (Refirming, line opening, Line cleaning, Slashing, Pruning, Soil conservation, etc).
Sept. to October	Fertilizer Application

The Story of Appreciation

A young person who excelled academically applied for a managerial position in a large company. He passed the first interview, the director did the last interview, made the last decision. The director discovered from the CV that the youth's academic achievements were excellent all the way from secondary school until postgraduate research never had a year when he did not score. The director asked, "Did you obtain any scholarships in school?" the youth answered "none". The director asked, "Was it your father who paid for your school fees?" The youth answered, "My father passed away when I was one year old, it was my mother who paid for my school fees. The director asked, "Where did your mother work?" The youth answered, "My mother worked as clothes cleaner. The director requested the youth to show his hands. The youth showed a pair of hands that were smooth and perfect. The director asked, "Have you ever helped your mother wash the clothes before?" The youth answered, "Never, my mother always wanted me to study and read more books. Furthermore, my mother can wash clothes faster than me. The director said, "I have a request. When you go back today, go and clean your mother's hands, and then see me tomorrow morning.* The youth felt that his chance of landing the job was high. When he went back, he happily requested his mother to let him clean her hands. His mother felt strange, happy but with mixed feelings, she showed her hands to the kid. The youth cleaned his mother's hands slowly. His tear fell as he did that. It was the first time he noticed that his mother's hands were so wrinkled, and there were so many bruises in her hands. Some bruises were so painful that his mother shivered when they were cleaned with water. This was the first time the youth realized that it was this pair of hands that washed the clothes everyday to enable him to pay the school fee. The bruises in the mother's hands were the price that the mother had to pay for his graduation, academic excellence and his future. *Story to continue in the next bulletin.*

Guard Your Trees Against Physical Injury

Rubber trees suffer from injuries most of the time. Prominent among them is fire damage. This is quite a common incident in rubber cultivation, especially during the wintering season, as the condition is dry and there are a lot of dry leaves on the ground. The cause of the fire is mostly accidental. Rat hunters and palm wine tappers are most of the time found to be the cause of the fire outbreak in rubber plantations. Young plants can be killed outright. Leaves of older trees become scorched, turn brown and eventually fall. The affected bark bleeds, and later is invaded by borer beetles which eventually kill the tree. Trees affected by fire damage must be immediately (before the borer beetles come in) white-washed with a mixture of 500 grams dehydrated lime in 1 litre of water. This is to reduce the radiation effect of sunlight on the already scorched bark and at the same time keeps away the borer beetles. Later, the affected dead tissues must be removed and the resultant wounds treated with suitable wound dressing such as neutral grease. As the dry season approaches, outgrowers must ensure that a high level of maintenance culture is maintained.

General slashing must be completed by December whiles cleaning of the intra row lines must commence as soon as possible. Again, fire belt must be created around rubber farms which share common boundaries with newly cleared farms in order that during burning of the newly cleared farms, the rubber farms would not be affected. Another common physical injury caused to rubber trees is what is normally referred to as "Poisoning" of the rubber trees. This usually happens during herbicide spraying, when the spray drifts come into contact with the rubber tree or the spraying is done on the rubber leaves. Large patches of whitened dead tissues are seen on the leaves which are later invaded by saprophytic fungi, and finally drop. The bark is killed in irregular patches, followed by exudation of latex and invasion of borer beetles. Damage can also be caused by uptake of herbicides split on the ground by the roots. The resultant effect is the dieback of the terminal to the roots. As a form of prevention, preparation of herbicide mixtures should not be done near the rubber trees. Spray drifts should not be allowed to get into contact with the tree or the leaves of the trees.