

Apinya Ratanachai 2008: Information Sources, Communication Channels, and Adoption of Rubber Production Practices: A Case Study of Rubber Smallholders in Hat Yai District Songkhla Province. Doctor of Philosophy (Tropical Agriculture), Major Field: Tropical Agriculture, Interdisciplinary Graduate Program. Thesis Advisor: Associate Professor Jumnongruk Udomsade, Ph.D. 202 pages.

The objectives were to study information sources, communication channels, and adoption of rubber smallholders in Hat Yai district, Songkhla province about rubber production practices. The study was undertaken through an interview schedule. Data were analyzed and presented through percentage, mean, chi-square and Kendall's tau\_b correlation.

Results reveal that the total average age of rubber smallholders was 51.88 years with elementary education. Majority of them were Buddhists and the average family member was 4.51 persons. The average rubber plantation size was 14.51 rais per household, average of labor was 2.26 persons per household, mean of years of experience in rubber production was 25.08 years and the average income per year was 193,993.80 baht. The important information sources were neighbor or friend, relatives, and Rubber Replanting Aid Fund official. The main communication channels for personal method were office visit and home and rubber plantation visit, the channels for group method were meeting, agricultural day festival, training course, and rubber smallholders receive information from television and village broadcasting tower in mass method. All rubber smallholders adopted rubber clone, planting, and weed or disease control. Almost smallholders adopted pruning and fertilizers while more than half of smallholders adopt tapping system. The characteristics which relate to information sources were age, education, credit, number of labor, size of plantation, income, and experience in production while communication channels were related to age, education, religion, credit, number of labor, size of plantation, income, experience in production, and member of organization. Neighbor or friend, merchant inside community and salesman were related to adoption of rubber practices while field trip and agricultural day festival were related to adoption of rubber practices. The important problems were unspreading of news, lack of rubber information, no time for information, lack of contact with officer, and lack of interest from officer.

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Thesis Advisor's signature

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