

RUBBER WOOD MARKET IN INDIA : EMERGING CHANGES

V. HARIDASAN

Rubber Research Institute of India, Kottayam - 686 009.

ABSTRACT

This paper tries to evaluate the contribution of rubber wood to the wood based industry in Kerala and Kanyakumari district of Tamilnadu. The main consumer of rubber wood is the packing case manufacturing industry, accounting for about 13.6 million cft. The present study has attempted to evaluate the consumption of rubber wood in other sectors of wood based industry viz. plywood, splinters, veneers, accessories to textile mills and furniture. These industries consumed about 93000 cmt of rubber wood. The main conclusion of the study is that the rubber wood is supplying about 68 per cent of the requirements of small scale wood based industry in Kerala.

INTRODUCTION

Until three decades ago, rubber wood was used only as firewood in India. In the sixties it began to be used for manufacturing packing cases. With the rapid industrialisation of the country and the exhaustion of low-priced wood sources, more and more people turned to rubber wood for a number of uses. Packing case manufacturing industry however continues to be the most important consumer of rubber wood in India. The present study attempts to evaluate the use of rubber wood in other sectors of wood-based industry.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The data required for the study were collected by visiting the units consuming rubber wood. In the first stage the lists of factories producing plywood, veneers, splinters etc. were collected from the Industries Department of Kerala and the Kanyakumari District Industries Centre, Nagercoil. Making use of the lists, visits were made to the factories in 1985-86. A

total of 273 units could be covered for this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table I shows the distribution of units in Kerala and Kanyakumari District of Tamil Nadu. The total quantity of rubber wood consumed by the 273 units was 3.27 million cft. (92.7 thousand cmt.) in 1984-85. Of this quantity, 98.5 per cent was accounted for by the units in Kerala.

Table II shows the units producing plywood and the quantity of rubber-wood consumed by them. It will be seen that 35 per cent of the total consumption of rubber wood in the plywood sector was in Calicut district. Some plywood units in the district also produced veneers and splinters as well. The largest number of units was also in the same district. There was no plywood unit in Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu.

Excepting five units, the plywood produced by all was mainly used for manufacturing tea chest and the size of

Table I. Districtwise distribution of units using rubber wood.

| District | No. of units | Total quantity (in Cmt) |
|----------------|--------------|---------------------------------|
| Alleppey | 16 | 909.09 (0.98%) |
| Kottayam | 27 | 9597.85 (10.36%) |
| Ernakulam | 18 | 5700.93 (6.15%) |
| Trichur | 41 | 12399.89 (13.38%) |
| Palghat | 18 | 4604.93 (4.97%) |
| Malappuram | 5 | 1515.15 (1.63%) |
| Calicut | 69 | 20101.95 (21.69%) |
| Cannanore | 11 | 12772.59 (13.78%) |
| Quilon | 42 | 21580.99 (23.29%) |
| Pathanamthitta | 4 | 1416.03 (1.53%) |
| Idukky | 5 | 730.67 (0.79%) |
| Total Kerala | 256 | 91330.07 (98.55%) - 3224865 Cft |
| Kanyakumari | 17 | 1342.40 (1.45%) |
| Grand total | 273 | 92672.47 (100%) - 3272265 Cft |

Table II. Districtwise consumption of rubber wood in Plywood Industry (in Cmt).

| District | No. of units | Plywood | Plywood & Veneer | Plywood & Splinters |
|----------------|--------------|----------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Alleppey | 2 | 178.42 (0.37%) | | |
| Kottayam | 7 | 5392.24 (11.04%) | | |
| Ernakulam | 9 | 4384.03 (8.97%) | | |
| Trichur | 16 | 6737.47 (13.79%) | | |
| Palghat | 1 | 283.20 (0.58%) | | |
| Malappuram | 2 | 552.25 (1.13%) | | |
| Calicut | 54 | 17170.77 (35.25%) | 382.33 (100%) | 637.21 (100%) |
| Cannanore | 6 | 11781.37 (24.12%) | | |
| Quilon | 12 | 1008.21 (2.07%) | | |
| Pathanamthitta | 2 | 1359.39 (2.78%) | | |
| Idukky | - | - | | |
| Kanyakumari | - | - | - | - |
| Total | 111 | 48847.35 (100%) | 382.33 (100%) | 637.21 (100%) |
| | | (1724800 Cft) | (13500 Cft) | (22500 Cft) |

Table III. Districtwise consumption of rubber wood (in Cmt).
(Veneers & Splinters)

| District | No. of units | Veneers | Splinters | Veneers & Splinters |
|----------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Aleppey | 14 | - | 314.36 (6.54%) | 416.31 (1.52%) |
| Kottayam | 18 | 2480.88 (32.33%) | 934.58 (19.46%) | 382.33 (1.40%) |
| Ernakulam | 9 | 288.87 (3.76%) | 722.18 (15.04%) | 305.86 (1.12%) |
| Trichur | 14 | 3797.79 (49.48%) | - | 373.83 (1.37%) |
| Palghat | 16 | - | - | 4236.76 (15.51%) |
| Malappuram | 3 | - | 962.90 (20.05%) | - |
| Calicut | 15 | 410.65 (5.35%) | 1246.11 (25.94%) | 254.89 (0.93%) |
| Cannanore | 5 | - | 566.41 (11.79%) | 424.81 (1.56%) |
| Quilon | 28 | - | - | 19541.21 (71.55%) |
| Pathanamthitta | 2 | - | 56.64 (1.18%) | - |
| Idukky | 5 | 169.92 (2.22%) | - | 560.75 (2.05%) |
| Total Kerala | 129 | 7148.11 (93.14%) (252400 Cft) | 4803.18 (100%) (169600 Cft) | 26496.75 (97.01%) (935600 Cft) |
| Kanyakumari | 17 | 527.76 (6.86%) | - | 815.63 (2.99%) |
| Grand total | 146 | 7674.87 (100%) (271000 Cft) | 4803.18 (100%) (169600 Cft) | 27312.38 (100%) (964400 Cft) |

the plywood was usually around 75 × 75 cm with three plys of wood (around 3 mm thickness). Some units also produced plywood for seat and back of chairs. The plywood produced by the units also found use in the manufacture of suit cases. Other five units were fairly large ones and they produced plywood of different sizes and qualities. They were found

using some form of chemical treatment for rubber wood. They used rubber wood for inside ply of commercial plywood when quality wood was in short supply. Three of the five units also occasionally used rubber wood as block-board for flush doors. No plywood factory was found using the chemical impregnation method for treating rubber wood.

Table IV. Districtwise consumption of rubber wood (in Cmt).
(Other than Plywood, Veneers & Splinters)

| District | No. of units | Quantity |
|----------------|--------------|--------------------------------|
| Alleppey | - | - |
| Kottayam | 2 | 407.82 (13.53%) |
| Ernakulam | - | - |
| Trichur | 11 | 1490.80 (49.45%) |
| Palghat | 1 | 84.96 (2.82%) |
| Malappuram | - | - |
| Calicut | - | - |
| Cannanore | - | - |
| Quilon | 2 | 1030.87 (34.20%) |
| Pathanamthitta | - | - |
| Idukky | - | - |
| Kanyakumari | - | - |
| Grand total | 16 | 3014.45 (100%) (106440 Cft) |

Table III shows the units producing veneers and splinters for safety matches. Although rubber wood is not ideal for veneers and splinters, due to nonavailability of soft wood in adequate quantity it is being used by the industry. Quilon district has the largest share of consumption in this sector followed by Palghat district.

Table IV shows the details of the rubber wood consumption in other spheres of the industry. There were only 16 units in this sector. The main items they produced were bobbins and shuttles for textile mills. In Kottayam district one unit produced door and window frames and shutters and also furniture, after chemical impregnation treatment of

Table V. Estimated soft-wood registered with the government department of Kerala.
(256 units)

(SSI Registration)

| Department | Quantity in cmt. | | | |
|---|------------------|----------------------|----------|----------|
| | Plywood | Veneers Splinters | Others | Total |
| Industries Department (Installed capacity | 60000 | 53000 | 23000 | 136000 |
| Forest Department (Allotted) | 9000 | 5600 | 4200 | 18800 |
| | (15.00%) | (10.56%) | (18.26%) | (13.82%) |
| Rubber wood consumption according to the study of Rubber Board | 49867.00 | 38448.03 | 3014.44 | 91329.07 |
| | (83.52%) | (73.06%) | (13.28%) | (67.63%) |

rubber wood. In the same district another unit was producing panelling material after treating rubber wood. But the unit discontinued that line of operation recently.

Table V shows the installed capacity and the quantity of wood distributed to the units in Kerala. The Table shows that only about 14% of installed capacity was met from the supply of wood from the Forest Department. It also shows that around 68 per cent of the capacity was

met by rubber wood purchased from the open market.

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