

Drastic drop in rubber cultivation in Sri Lanka

Mar 13, Colombo: Sri Lanka's rubber cultivation has declined drastically, over the last forty years, according to the Sri Lanka Rubber Research Institute (SLRRI).

Dr. W.M.G. Seneviratne, the Director of SLRRI in Agalawatta told media that the acreage of rubber plantations has reduced immensely within the last forty years.

He said that rubber was cultivated in 214,000 hectares in Sri Lanka in 1970s but it has dropped to 121,000 hectares now. He said that this may drop further in future.

The main reasons behind the decline has been identified as allotting land for house building, cultivators shifting to other more profitable crops and destabilized prices.

As solutions for the problem, the SLRRI has introduced new varieties of rubber that can be grown in dry zone and a cloned rubber variety that can be cultivated in home gardens.

These trees can be planted in small plots of lands with 20 feet distance between them. An adequate latex harvest can be collected from the trees.

Meanwhile a program introduced to grow rubber in the Eastern province has been successful, the SLRRI said.

Rubber was introduced to Eastern province in 2004 by the Adaptive Research Unit of RRISL and at the moment, there are about 230 acres of rubber in this region. First two rubber holdings planted have begun to produce latex and reached the standards required for harvesting.