

Rubber sector stares at ₹1,500cr loss

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Kottayam: The unprecedented rains have taken its toll on the rubber holdings in the state as well.

Though only a few plantations were directly affected by the floods, the continuous rains have resulted in abnormal leaf fall in the rubber trees. According to unofficial records, around 60% of the holdings have been affected by a fungal disease and a loss of around Rs 1,500 crore is feared as around one lakh trees have been affected. The production of natural rubber is also feared to fall short of the expected seven lakh tonnes this season by over one lakh tonnes. Meanwhile, the Rubber Board has begun a survey to assess the loss. According to a board official, the exact figures would be available by next week.

The normal leaf fall of rubber trees happens in the month of December. Usually, Bordeaux mixture is sprayed



Around 60% of holdings have been affected by a fungal disease resulting in leaf fall

on the leaves before the rains. However, since the rains started much early and continued for 5-6 months it was not possible this season. According to Rubber Board authorities, the yield loss would

be felt only in the coming months.

Meanwhile, the shortage of natural rubber has already been felt in the local markets. However, the upward trend in the price over the last few months would bring more natural rubber to the market soon, said George Valy, former president of the Indian Rubber Dealers Federation. "Farmers are struggling and they need money. They have even started selling rubber in the form of latex instead of latex sheet," he said. "If the farmers get good money, they will work hard to meet the demand. The tyre manufactures should show the big-heart to maintain the good price in these trying situation," he added.

The board had earlier postponed the India Rubber Meet owing to the grim situation caused by heavy rain and flood. The India Rubber Meet is jointly organized by the Rubber Board and the stakeholder associations in rubber and allied sectors.