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DIPLOMA IN PLANTATION INDUSTRY MANAGEMENT (DPIM)

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INTRODUCTION TO RUBBER

Natural rubber (NR) is a major industrial raw material harvested from the rubber tree. Among the twenty odd plant species that are known to produce rubber, no less than twelve belong to the *Hevea brasiliensis* from the Euphorbiaceae family is economically exploited. The tree is a native of the Amazonian rain forest of South America. Hevea is tropical crop that can survive within 1,000km north and south of the equator, except for the arid regions. It requires 180-250cm of rainfall per year and a temperature of 25-35 degree Celsius. Rubber can be planted to a maximum elevation of 500m above the sea level. It acquires a deep firm soil of the loamy texture with free drainage and tolerates a water table of 100cm from the surface and below. The rubber tree is a perennial crop with an economic life-span of approximately thirty years. When fully matured, it can reach a height of 18-20 meter. Originally identified as a forest vegetation, Hevea wood is a valuable tropical timber which comes under the semi-hard category and most suitable for the furniture industry. Its latex, harvested from the tree, has been major contributor to the NR industry towards the development of various rubber and rubber-based products.