

Promoting environmentally friendly and socially responsible rubber cultivation

Increasing demand for natural rubber over the past three decades has driven a massive expansion of rubber cultivation in Southeast Asia. This expansion has been achieved through the conversion of large areas of natural forest and traditional, diverse land-use types to monoculture plantations. The negative impacts of this conversion include loss of biodiversity, reduced soil health, impaired water supplies, increased erosion and increased green house gas emissions

There is an urgent need to assess the scale of these effects and to develop effective mitigation strategies. Moreover, exceptionally high prices in the late 2000s and early 2010s led to farmers planting rubber on marginal land that is unlikely to be profitable in the long term. Farmers therefore face an uncertain future as slowing demand and surpluses in international markets depress prices and climate change raises the risk of extreme weather and pest outbreaks.

Although income from rubber has brought wealth to some, it has also engendered severe social costs for others, including poor labour conditions, evictions and loss of access to resources. Those affected are therefore experiencing increased poverty and decreased food security. The environmental and social consequences of current rubber cultivation practices, international rubber market developments and climate change threaten the sustainability of the industry in the region.

The Sustainable Rubber Platform was established as a means of promoting the development of socially responsible and environmentally friendly practices across the industry. The Sustainable Rubber Conference 2016 will contribute to this effort by bringing together researchers, government and non-government agencies, policy makers and rubber producers, and by facilitating information-sharing and collaboration in pursuit of a fair and sustainable rubber industry.

2016

SUSTAINABLE RUBBER CONFERENCE

Xishuangbanna, China
16-19 Oct
Associated workshops 20-21 Oct





Themes

Ecology of rubber plantations

The expansion of rubber growing into environmentally marginal zones in southeast Asia has raised questions over the long-term viability of many plantations and their environmental impacts in one of the world's most biodiverse areas. It is therefore essential to gain a deeper understanding of the ecology of rubber plantations, and to investigate how the rubber industry can integrate environmental concerns into its business practices. Potentially beneficial techniques include mixed planting or zoning of rubber and other trees and crops, reduced agrochemical use, and improved soil management.

Modelling of change and impacts

In the context of accelerating climate change, accurate information and reliable models are essential prerequisites for the design of sustainable practices and policies in the rubber industry. Researchers are working with industry stakeholders in order to improve data quality in areas such as the impacts of climate change on temperature and other factors which influence rubber yields. Other important areas of research include carbon sequestration and emissions from rubber plantations and the social and environmental impacts of different management techniques.

Socio-economics of rubber-dominated landscapes

The highs and lows reached by rubber prices in recent years have provided growers with opportunities for increased income, but have also revealed their increased exposure to international market volatility. The expansion of monoculture rubber has in addition revealed serious challenges such as evictions, poor labour conditions and the impacts on food security of the conversion of arable land to plantations. Securing stable, diversified incomes for growers and safeguarding the livelihoods of all affected stakeholders is a key issue for all participants.

Policy and Practice

Policy at multiple levels must integrate the perspectives and needs of multiple stakeholders, yet national laws, industry body guidelines and individual or company practices are subject to institutional disconnects between policy making and on-the-ground implementation. The range of participants at the conference offers the opportunity to improve communication, collaboration and coordination amongst different stakeholders and to pave the way for future joint actions in support of a truly sustainable rubber industry.

Why attend?

Meet

Seize an opportunity to meet participants from all over the world, including private sector representatives, researchers, stakeholders and experts on different aspects of rubber cultivation.

Present

Keynote speakers and a number of selected scientists and practitioners will have the chance to present and discuss their work.

Share

Whether you're a young scientist or an expert, all conference proceedings and scientific papers will be made public via journals and online.

Make a difference

The conference is not just a forum for academic exchange; it also offers the chance to influence the future direction of the industry by connecting the private sector to current research on rubber ecosystems, socioeconomic issues, modelling techniques and policies.



Keynote Speakers



Jefferson Fox

Understanding the social and environmental implications of rubber plantations in Mainland SE Asia
Jefferson Fox is a Senior Fellow at the East-West Center. He received his Ph.D. in Development Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1983. Dr Fox's scholarship focuses on land-use and land-cover change in Asia and the possible cumulative impact of these changes on the region and the global environment. Dr Fox has co-edited several books, the most recent of which is *People and the Environment: Approaches for Linking Household and Community Surveys to Remote Sensing and GIS* (Kluwer Academic Press, 2003).



Thomas Giambelluca

Title TBA

Thomas Giambelluca is a Professor at the Department of Geography, University of Hawaii. His research is focused on the interaction between the atmosphere and the land surface in areas affected by human use. On the basis of field research in the Amazon Basin and northern Thailand, he is studying the effects of tropical deforestation on climate and hydrology. In Hawai'i, Professor Giambelluca is conducting field and modelling projects on climate and natural vegetation, restoration of degraded lands, and water resource management under changing land use and a warming climate.



Stefanie Goldberg

Greenhouse gas emissions from rubber plantations
Stefanie Goldberg is a Junior Fellow at the World Agroforestry Centre's East and Central Asia regional programme. Her research focuses on soil processes and particularly on greenhouse gas emissions under different land-use systems. Within the Green Rubber project, Dr Goldberg investigates the effect of rubber plantations on greenhouse gas emissions as well as underlying production and consumption processes within the soil.



Eric Penot

Rubber agroforestry systems in Indonesia and Thailand for sustainable agriculture and income stability

Eric Penot is a researcher working with CIRAD on innovation processes, farming systems modelling and stakeholder decision-making processes. After 8 years in Madagascar, he is currently based in Montpellier. Dr Penot's work focuses on agroforestry systems including rubber and clove crops, conservation agriculture, farming system analysis and innovation processes.



Andreas Neef

Rubber Booms, Land Policies and Land Grabs in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar

Andreas Neef is Director of the Development Studies programme at the University of Auckland. Having previously worked and studied in Japan and Germany, he has extensive research experience in Mainland Southeast Asia, West Africa, the South Pacific and the Middle East. He served two times as scientific advisor to the German Parliament on issues of global food security and on societal and political discourses on the commodification of biodiversity and ecosystem services.



Sivakumaran Seenivasagam

Sustainable Cultivation & Production of Rubber: Technical Aspects & Guidelines

Dr Seenivasagam is an Executive Director of Greenyield, an agro-technology group which specialises in yield enhancement and operates in Malaysia, Vietnam and Cambodia. He is also the Director of Research & Development at Greenyield. Dr Seenivasagam has extensive experience in the rubber industry, including working for the Rubber Research Institute of Malaysia, the Malaysian Rubber Board, Felcra Berhad, and the Common Fund for Commodities. His work has resulted in several patented technologies in the fields of labour saving technologies, organic fertilizer and latex extraction.

Impact

The conference aims to bring together a wide range of participants from the rubber industry to exchange information and plan future actions that will contribute towards a just and sustainable future for all stakeholders. The conference will focus on bridging the gap between scientific research and tangible change on the ground. This will require building partnerships between the private sector, government, researchers and other affected parties: therefore, the conference will include key players from the private sector whose active involvement will be crucial in designing practical and effective solutions to the challenges faced by the rubber industry.



Registration

Registration is now open at <http://sustainablerubber.org/conference-2016>.

Early birds can benefit from a reduced participation fee of **US\$ 150** until **15 August 2016**. Participants who register after this date will pay the normal fee of **US\$ 200** per person. The price includes a welcome pack, airport transfers, transfers from hotels to conference venue, reception, conference dinner, lunches, and coffee breaks on 17-19 October. Not included are accommodation, breakfasts, and dinners other than the conference dinner.

Abstracts

Researchers who would like to present their work at the conference are invited to submit an abstract of their work at <http://sustainablerubber.org/conference-2016>. Abstracts should include title, authors and institutions and should be a maximum of 300 words in length. The deadline for submission of abstracts is **August 31st, 2016**.

Location

The conference will be held in the Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanical Garden (XTBG), at the heart of southwest China's rubber-growing region in Xishuangbanna, southern Yunnan province.

The gardens are approximately 60 km (1 hr) from Jinghong International Airport (JHG). The conference organizers will arrange airport transfers, and a daily shuttle service from hotels to the conference venue.

A range of accommodation will be available; please see the conference website for more details.

Contact

If you have any questions about the conference, please get in touch with Ms Haiya Zhang at h.zhang@cgjar.org

Partners

