

# Natural rubber production picks up in Maharashtra's Sawantwadi taluk

AIRIA chief says State government should help growers

**SUBRAMANI RA MANCOMBU**

Chennai, July 4

Sawantwadi taluk in Maharashtra's Sindhudurg district has established itself fully as a natural rubber producing (NR) centre with the annual production there increasing to 3,000 tonnes.

According to Sawar Dhanania, president, All India Rubber Industries Association (AIRIA), tyre firms such as Ceat and MRF are procuring some of their needs from Sawantwadi, where at least 2,000 acres have been brought under NR cultivation.

"Growers from Karnataka and Kerala have gone there for cultivation. Most dealers have also begun buying from there. They have



Sawar Dhanania, President, All India Rubber Industries Association

also begun selling farm equipment for the plantations besides providing planting materials approved by the Rubber Board," Dhanania told *BusinessLine*.

## Strengthening supply

More acreage is now expected to be brought under NR, whose cultivation began a few years ago. "AIRIA will discuss with the State government to help growers. If

the State agrees, then the supply chain can be strengthened," he said.

A few years ago, Sindhudurg district in the Sahyadri Hills began gaining popularity as the next destination for NR cultivation, with as many as 3,000 Kerala-based planters moving there. The district shares its border with Goa and Karnataka with the climate matching NR-growing region. Rubber plantations have also come up in Dodamarg taluk.

The Maharashtra government had discouraged NR cultivation saying it was an "exotic crop" and it could impact the district's natural vegetation. However, the current development shows that NR cultivation has got established.

## Role in expanding area

"MRF buys for its Goa plant and Ceat for its Pune unit," said the AIRIA president. The yield per acre was also at par with that of

Kerala and Karnataka, he said. Dhanania was responding to a question on AIRIA's role in expanding NR cultivation in the country, particularly the North-East region, to become self-sufficient in production.

Currently, Indian industries, import NR to fill the demand-supply gap. Last fiscal, rubber production had increased by over 50,000 tonnes to 7.75 lakh tonnes. However, the output has slipped from a high of 9.13 lt in 2012-13 to 6.51 lt in 2018-19.

During the past decade, NR imports have more than doubled to 5.46 lt from 2.62 lt.

Stating that AIRIA supports the Centre's initiative to improve NR production and thus attain self-sufficiency in meeting domestic demand, he said as most of AIRIA members were MSMEs, the association would not be able to do much in investing in the North-East to increase production.