

Rubber output fall hits tyre makers

Relying on imports as domestic production meets only 55% consumption: ATMA

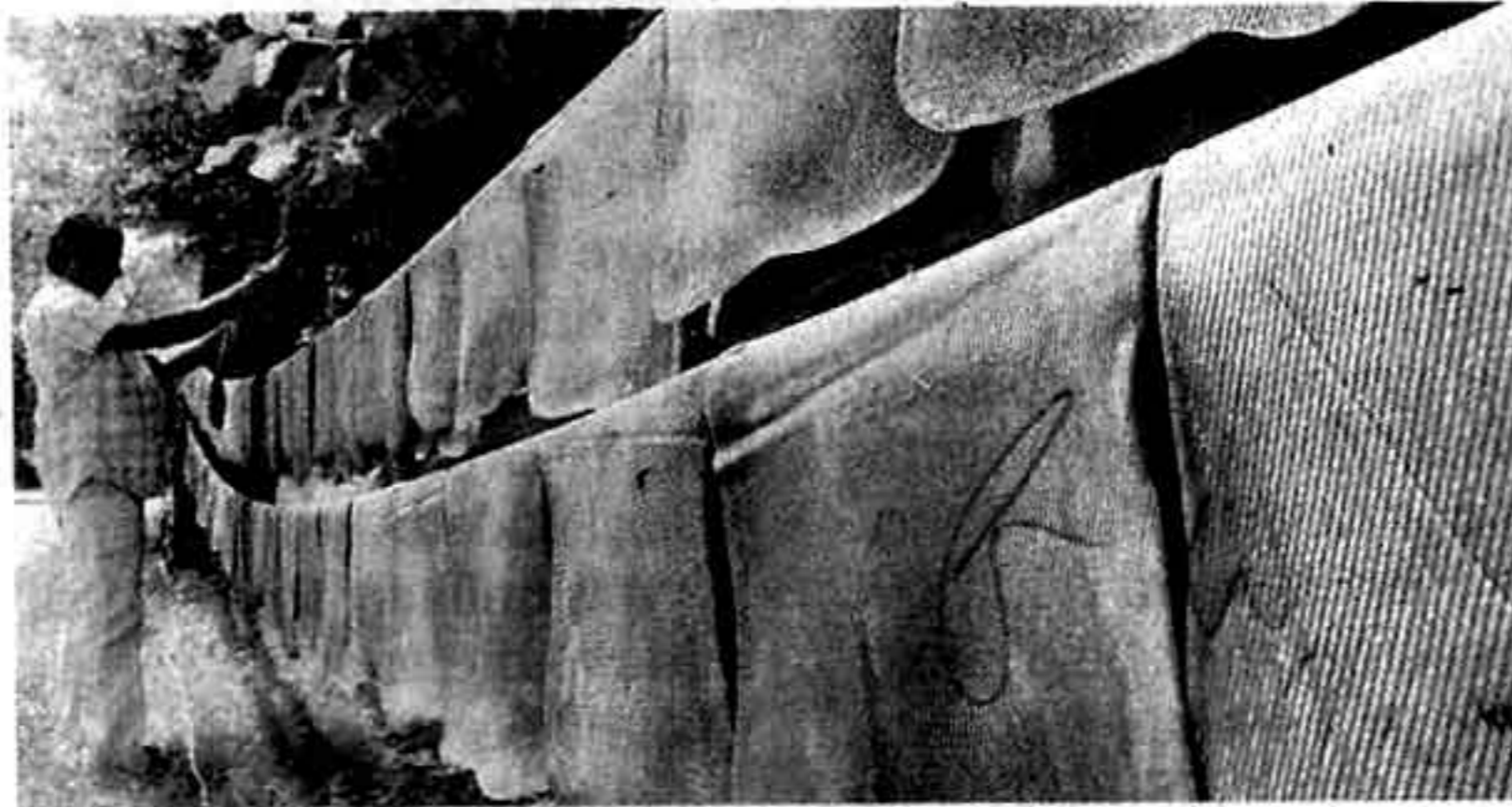
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A noticeable fall in natural rubber production in the country has raised concerns in the tyre industry, which has appealed to the Union Ministry of Commerce to take steps to ease availability of the raw material in the interest of the consuming industry.

Natural rubber consumption grew 12%, while production dropped 7% during the April-January period this financial year, said a communication from the tyre industry body Automotive Tyre Manufacturers Association (ATMA).

Gap widens

Rubber production-consumption gap during the April-January period last financial year was 3.16 lakh



Sticky wicket: A senior Rubber Board official said production had dipped in the current lean season. ■ K.K. MUSTAFAH

tonnes. This gap has widened to 4.63 lakh tonnes this financial year.

Rubber Board figures show that domestic rubber consumption touched 10.2 lakh tonnes between April and January while production was 5.6 lakh tonnes.

Director general of ATMA Rajiv Budhraj said that natural rubber consumption in

India had crossed the 10 lakh-tonne mark in the first 10 months of the financial year. The tyre-makers also said that with domestic rubber production meeting only 55% of the total consumption in the country, dependence on imports for consuming industry had increased by 30% as compared to the previous year.

Meanwhile, figures released by the Rubber Board showed that natural rubber production in January this year stood provisionally at 72,000 tonnes, compared to 73,000 tonnes in January 2018. Consumption was 97,000 tonnes during January, this year, compared to 99,000 tonnes during January last year.

A senior Rubber Board official told *The Hindu* that this being the lean season, production had dipped. Beginning November, farmers take a tapping rest.

This year, the problem has been compounded by extreme heat and dryness, which may prolong. A shortage in domestic production may not push up prices as conditions are good and production is expected to be normal internationally.