



## THE ROLE OF RUBBER (*HEVEA BRASILIENSIS*) PLANTATION IN CARBON STORAGE AT BANDARBANS HILL TRACT, BANGLADESH

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### ABSTRACT

The study appraised rubber tree plantations at Bandarbands Hill Tract in Bangladesh, to measure the biomass in plantations of different ages and to determine the organic carbon content and CO<sub>2</sub> equivalence. The DBH and biomass growth were increased with the age of the plantations so as the carbon storage and carbon-di-oxide equivalence (CO<sub>2</sub>e). All of them were sharply increased upto 15<sup>th</sup> year from the beginning and become slower after 15<sup>th</sup> year. The average DBH, above-ground biomass, below-ground biomass, total biomass, carbon storage and carbon-di-oxide equivalence for rubber plantation were 15.15cm, 160.12 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup>, 27.41 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup>, 187.54 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup>, 93.97 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> and 344.14 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> respectively. The highest DBH (1.54 87cm ha<sup>-1</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup>) and biomass (53.29 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup>) growth were found between 10 to 15 years of rubber plantation where the average growth of DBH (1.01cm ha<sup>-1</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup>) and biomass (23.71 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup>). An average 11663.42 Tk ha<sup>-1</sup>yr<sup>-1</sup> earn for rubber plantation in Bandarban hill tract only for keeping the tree in field. Three types of DBH based models were developed with strong mean R<sup>2</sup> (Power = 0.99; Polynomial = 0.98 and Linear = 0.90) and all were highly significant ( $P < 0.05$ ). The result will be explored the value of rubber plantation and helped the policy maker for advancing the management of forest in hilly area of Bangladesh.

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## INTRODUCTION

Global Warming and climate change, the most talked issues in the present world. These are the consequence of raised greenhouse gases mainly CO<sub>2</sub> (Kumar 2011, Zhang et al. 2011). The combustion of fossil fuel, deforestation, agricultural and industrial processes are responsible for raising the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere (Sharma et al. 2010, Detwiler and Hall. 1988, Pfaff et al., 2000). The atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) growth is varying (Wayburn, 2000; Munishi et al., 2000; Munishi and Shear, 2004) and the terrestrial ecosystems playing a major role in carbon sink (Brown, 1997, 1999; Dixon, 1996; Munishi, 2001; Munishi and Shear, 2004). Forests are giant sponges that soak huge amounts of carbon dioxide (Corpus et al. 2014) but deforestation proceeds faster than forest re-growth (Houghton et al., 1987). Fortunately, tree farming cover 396108 ha in 2005, and still 2% expanding annually throughout the world, while about half of the total increased through tree plantations (Dijk and Keenan, 2007).

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Tree farming like rubber (*Hevea brasiliensis*) cultivation opens new opportunities to the small-scale farmers and environmentally suitable compared to shifting cultivation. In contrary, create new plantation near natural forest decreases the diversity of forest (Rahaman et al. 2020), but the growing demand for rubber and rubber product insisted on the commercial plantation of rubber in Bangladesh. It will be an excellent tool to cope with the food, wood, energy, ecology, poverty crises and lessen the deforestation rate of forestlands in Bangladesh. Rubber (*Hevea brasiliensis*) is one of the cash crops that is the source of natural latex and also used in furniture industries (Arokiaraj et al., 2002; Tissari, 2002). Large-scale rubber plantations were established in the central and eastern hilly parts of Bangladesh (BFIDC, 1995). At present, both the governmental and private sectors 18,954 ha plantation of *H. brasiliensis* has been developed and planned to expand its further 1214 ha during 2020 (BFIDC, 2015; Hossain, 2016). Rubber trees are storing a huge amount of carbon from the environment with latex production. The leaves of rubber trees are used as fodder, seeds are the ingredient in poultry feed and seed cakes (Akhter et al., 2013). Rubberwood has also used for making furniture, plywood, particleboard, chemical pulping and packing cases (Sattar, 1991; Sattar, 1995; Das, 1995). Presently, rubber plantation meets only 30% of the total current domestic raw rubber demand (ADB, 1997). Kyoto protocol, REDD+ and carbon

trading allagreements try to reduce the emission of CO<sub>2</sub> and enhancing the role of conservation of forest (Gardner *et al.* 2011). Bangladesh has already ratified the Kyoto protocol, REDD+ and included herself in carbon trading mechanisms. Some studies revealed that the rubberplantations in southern Braziland Asia accumulated a largesrange of carbon ranges from 1.4 to 6.7 MgC ha<sup>-1</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup>(Cunha *et al.*, 2000; Cotta *et al.*, 2006; Wauters *et al.*, 2008; Dey, 2005; Yang *et al.*, 2005). Some studies were done about the prospectus and economic feasibility of rubber plantation (Ali 1985, Rakkibu *et al.* 2003; Sattar, 1995; Sarkar 2006) but study about rubber biomass and carbon measurement is still rare in Bangladesh.However, Islam (2017) and Mahmood *et al.* (2021) developed allometric biomass models for rubber plantation recently. So, it is essential to evaluate the biomass or carbon stock of the rubber plantations for getting the carbon trading facilities. Thisstudy calculated the amount of carbon that can be sequestered by a rubber tree plantation through biomass measurements in rubber tree stands of different ages in Bandarbars hill tract, Bangladesh.

## MATERIALS AND METHOD

**Study area:** Bandarban district is the most remote district of the country with a 4,479 km<sup>2</sup> area where 2,15,934 Bengalis and 1,42,401 indigenous people in the district (BBS, 2011).It lies between 22°11' and 22°30' north latitudes and between 92° 04' and 92° 41' east longitudes(BBS, 2011).The religious composition of the population in 2011 was 50.8% Muslim, 31.7% Buddhist, 10.1% Christian, 3.4% Hindu and 4.0% others(BBS, 2011). There are more than fifteen ethnic minorities including Marma, Rakhine, Mru (Mro/Murong), Bawm, Khyang, Tripura (Tipra/Tipperah), Lushei (Lushei), Khumi, Chak, Kuki, Chakma and Tanchangya (Tenchungya) living in the district besides the Bengalis. Forestry, fisheries, and livestock are the main source of household income and both shifting cultivators and rubber cultivators were found in the study area (BBS, 2011).This study area has tropical climatic conditions and is moist, warm and equable. Likeother parts of the country, this area also experiences three seasons such as summer, monsoon, and winter season. There is rain during the monsoon and little or no rainfall during the winter season.The average temperature was 26.10°C, and the minimum and maximum temperatures were recorded as 10°C in December-January and 34.8°C from May to March to June (BBS, 2011).

**Sample design and size:** The distribution of rubber plantations in this region was uneven and discrete. So, purposive sampling was used for data collection.The plantations were selected through snow-ball methods during the reconnaissance survey.A total twenty-eight sample plots from different ages plantations were selected. The size of each sampling plot was 10m × 10 m. Diameter less than 3cm was cast off purposively.

**Biomass and Carbon measurement:** DBH is the most significant and easily measured variable from other variables for biomass accretion in forest sector (Haygreen and Bowler, 1989; Jackson, 1992; Malimbwi *et al.*, 1994; Munishi *et al.*, 2000, Munishi and Shear, 2004). For wide graphical and diameter range, Chave *et al.* (2005) was developed a set of allometric equation for tropical trees that used frequently.By using Chave's(2005) allometric equation above ground biomass of the rubberplantations was estimated and below ground biomass was calculated using the most cost effective and practical method suggested by Cairns *et al.* (1997). Appraised biomass was multiplied by the wood carbon content (50%) because almost all carbon measurement projects in the tropical forest assume that all tissues (i.e., wood, leaves and roots) consist of 50% carbon on a dry mass basis (Chave *et al.* 2005, Haygreen and Bowler, 1989; Munishi and Shear, 2004). The total carbon stock can be converted to CO<sub>2</sub>e by multiplying carbon stock by 3.67 (Kauffman and Donato, 2012). One tonne (Mg) of CO<sub>2</sub> is equal to one CER (Certified Emission Reduction) as per the remaining carbon trading mechanism and at present the market price of one CER is \$0.4 (UNFCCC, 2017). To attain the economic value of CO<sub>2</sub> sequestered the total CO<sub>2</sub>e is multiplied with CER where 1 US Dollar (\$) = 84.72 Tk, Date: 30/04/2021. Statistical analysis was done in Microsoft Office Excel 2019.

## RESULTS

It was found that the rotation period played a vital role in the rubber plantations. With the increase in the age of the plantations the average DBH, biomass, carbon storage and carbon-di-oxide equivalence (CO<sub>2</sub>e) were increased. All of them were sharply increased up to the 15<sup>th</sup> year and the highest average DBH (30.38 cm), above-ground biomass (617.61 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup>), below-ground biomass (98.01 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup>), total biomass (715.69 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup>), carbon storage (357.84 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup>) and carbon di-oxide equivalence (1313.30 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup>) were found for 30-years of rubber plantation (Table-1). The growth was slower after the 15<sup>th</sup> years so as DBH, above-ground biomass, below-ground biomass, total biomass, carbon storage and carbon-di-oxide equivalence. The average DBH, above ground biomass, below ground biomass, total biomass, carbon storage and carbon di-oxide equivalence for rubber plantation were 15.15cm, 160.12 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup>, 27.41 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup>, 187.54 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup>, 93.97 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> and 344.14 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> respectively (Table-1). The result has explored the value of rubber plantation in carbon trading mechanism because of storing a higher amount of carbon in its body parts. As per the existing carbon trading mechanism, a single rubber plantation of one year can earn 258.68 Tk ha<sup>-1</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup> where a 30-year plantation simply earns 45557.82 Tk ha<sup>-1</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup> only for keeping the tree in the field. An average of 11663.42 Tk ha<sup>-1</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup> earn for rubber plantation in Bandarban hill tract (Table 1).

**Yearly DBH and Biomass Increment:** The analysis showed that the DBH and Biomass growth was followed the zigzag (natural) manner in the Bandarban hill tract. The average DBH and Biomass growth of 30-year rubber plantation was 1.01 cm ha<sup>-1</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup> and 23.71 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup> respectively. The DBH gradually increase upto the 3<sup>rd</sup> year and certainly decrease in the 5<sup>th</sup> year (Fig 1). The highest DBH (2.6 cm yr<sup>-1</sup>) growth was found between 7-year to 8-year. The biomass growth sharply increased up to the 6<sup>th</sup> year from the beginning and suddenly decreased in the 7<sup>th</sup> year (Fig 2). After the 10<sup>th</sup> year, the biomass growth touches the pick and the value was 53.29 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup>. The growth of biomass in 5-year, 6-year and 7-year plantations were 15.27 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup>, 16.67 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup> and 1.35 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup> respectively. After the 7<sup>th</sup> year both DBH and biomass were increased slowly but decreased in the 10<sup>th</sup> year (Fig 1, Fig 2). The growth of biomass in 8-year, 9-year and 10-year plantations were 40.49 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup>, 51.50 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup> and 22.87 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup> respectively. The highest biomass (53.29 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup>) growth were found between 10 to 15 years (Fig 2). From 15 to 20 years of plantation, the biomass growth was 36.06 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup> and from 20 to 30 years, the biomass growth was 9.2 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup> (Fig 2).

### Diameter at Breast Height (DBH) based carbon measurement

**Equations:** Three types of models were developed for carbon assessment from the plot level mean DBH (Eqs. (1) to (3)). A strong mean R<sup>2</sup> value (Power = 0.99; Polynomial = 0.98 and Linear =

0.90) and significant ( $P < 0.05$ ) relationship were found between mean biomass carbon and mean DBH for rubber plantations (Fig. 3).

$$\text{Biomass Carbon (C)} = 0.0562 (\text{DBH})^{2.5471} \quad (1)$$

$$\text{Biomass Carbon (C)} = y = 0.557x^2 - 6.4241x + 24.567 \quad (2)$$

$$\text{Biomass Carbon (C)} = 13.718 (\text{DBH}) - 109.44 \quad (3)$$

## DISCUSSION

The average DBH and Biomass growth of 30-year rubber plantation at Bandarban was 1.01 cm ha<sup>-1</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup> and 23.71 MgC ha<sup>-1</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup> respectively. The highest biomass (53.29 MgC ha<sup>-1</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup>) growth was found between 10 to 15 years of plantation and the highest DBH (2.6 cm yr<sup>-1</sup>) growth was found between 7-year to 8-year of plantation (Fig 2). The rubber plantations in Brazil and Asia also accumulated a large range of carbon ranges from 1.4 to 6.7 MgC ha<sup>-1</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup> (Cunha *et al.*, 2000; Cotta *et al.*, 2006; Wauters *et al.*, 2008; Dey, 2005; Yang *et al.*, 2005).

**Table 1. Plantation age, DBH, above ground biomass, below ground biomass, total biomass, carbon storage, carbon di-oxide equivalence and price of carbon di-oxide of rubber plantation**

Plantation Age	Avg. DBH (cm)	Avg. AGB (Mg/ha)	Avg. BGB (Mg/ha)	Avg. Total Biomass (Mg/ha)	Avg. Carbon (Mg/ha)	Avg. CO <sub>2</sub> e (Mg/ha)	Tk/ha/yr
1 Year	4.15	0.94	4.15	2.07	7.62	258.68	
2 Years	5.31	1.67	7.82	3.91	14.36	487.36	
3 Years	6.74	3.23	15.97	7.98	29.31	994.60	
4 Years	8.75	5.39	28.55	14.27	52.39	1777.53	
5 Years	10.14	7.88	43.82	21.91	80.41	2728.30	
6 Years	12.04	10.57	60.50	30.25	111.03	3767.07	
7 Years	12.13	10.78	61.85	30.92	113.50	3851.07	
8 Years	14.73	16.97	102.35	51.17	187.81	6372.04	
9 Years	17.14	24.47	153.85	76.92	282.31	9578.44	
10 Years	17.94	27.64	176.73	88.36	324.29	11002.65	
15 Years	26.47	62.80	443.21	221.60	813.29	27593.38	
20 Years	29.21	86.08	623.52	311.75	1144.15	38818.98	
30 Years	30.38	98.01	715.69	357.84	1313.30	45557.82	
Average	15.15	27.41	187.54	93.77	344.14	11663.42	

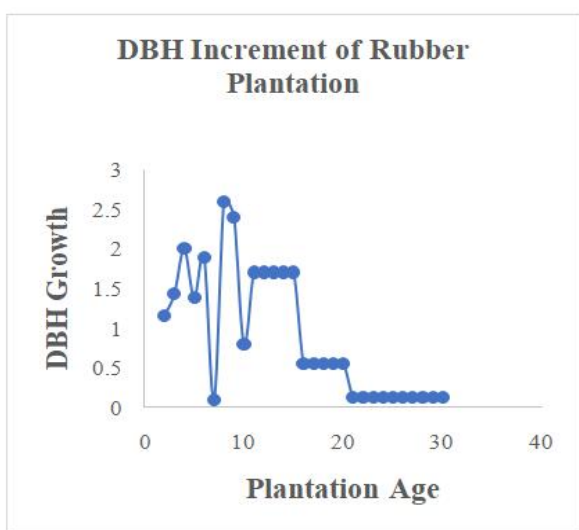


Figure 1. Yearly DBH Increment

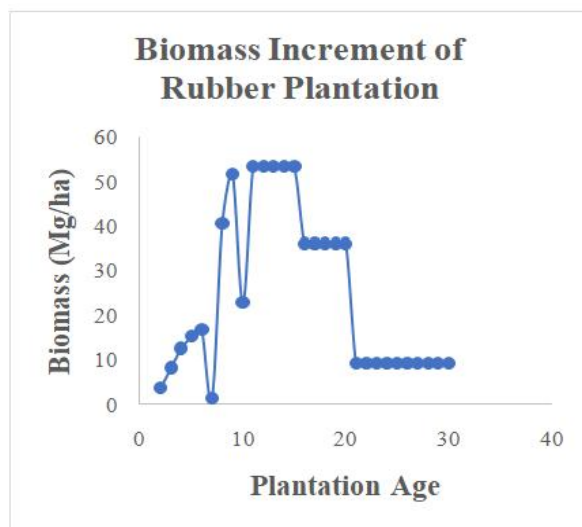


Figure 2. Yearly Biomass Increment

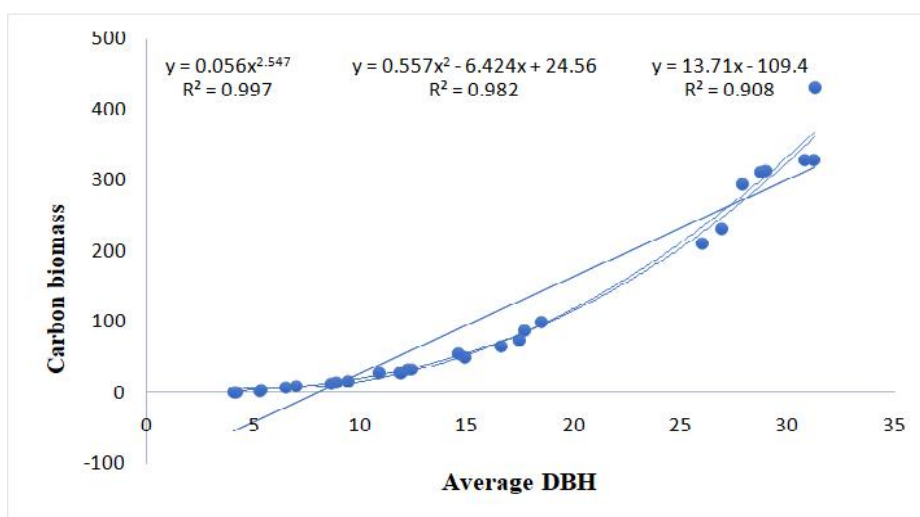


Figure 3. DBH based Carbon measurement model

The established three DBH-based allometric models can be suitable for carbon calculation from the plot level mean DBH as three models exhibited strong relationships in the GLRM analysis ( $R^2= 0.99, 0.98, 0.90$ ) (Fig 4). It was found that the highest DBH tree has the highest biomass. It indicated that the older the plantation, the higher its DBH and biomass. The finding supports the study on the carbon budget of rubber plantations in ArakanCotabatothe (Corpuz 2014; Corpuzet.al. 2011).

It showed that average above-ground biomass ( $49.93 \text{ Mg ha}^{-1}$ ), below-ground biomass ( $10.57 \text{ Mg ha}^{-1}$ ) and total biomass ( $60.50 \text{ Mg ha}^{-1}$ ) for 6-years rubber plantation (Table 1) in Bangladesh were higher than Brazil, India, Philippines and China (Corpuz *et al.* 2014; Cunha *et al.* 2000; Dey 2005; Maggiotto *et al.* 2014; Yang *et al.* 2005). Rubber plantations in Antipas with ages 10 and 20 years have total biomass of  $110.91 \text{ Mg ha}^{-1}$  ( $46.76 \text{ Mg ha}^{-1}\text{C}$ ) and  $573.21 \text{ Mg ha}^{-1}$  ( $257.95 \text{ Mg ha}^{-1}\text{C}$ ) (Corpuz *et al.* 2014) which also lower than this study  $176.73 \text{ Mg}$

ha<sup>-1</sup>(88.36 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> C) and 623.52 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> (311.75 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> C) respectively. Naik *et al.* (2019) also reported total carbon stock in a 10-year-old mango orchard was 3.87Mg ha<sup>-1</sup>. The rubber plantation of the Bandarban hill tract, Bangladesh showed higher above-ground biomass (AGB) (160.12 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup>), below-ground biomass (BGB) (27.41 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup>) and carbon (93.77 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup>) storage (Table 1) than many other plantations throughout the world. Chandana *et al.* 2020 stated that mean AGB (51 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup>) and mean BGB (13.3 tha<sup>-1</sup>) in *Melia dubia* where similar result founded by Saravanan *et al.* (2014) in *M. dubia*. The above-ground biomass and below-ground biomass of *Mangifera indica* were 82.83 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> and 21.54 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> respectively (Uthappa and Devakumar, 2021). The above-ground biomass ranged from 31.8 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> to 20.7 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> in tropical deciduous forests of Central India, (Salunkhe *et al.* 2016) and an average carbon stock of 31.72 Mg C ha<sup>-1</sup> estimated in Indian forests (Lal and Singh, 2000). In tropical dry forests of northern India, the above-ground biomass ranged from 38.6- 239.8 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> (Singh and Singh, 1991). The average carbon stock in Mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) plantation at Jhenaidah, Bangladesh was estimated to 143.93 ± 11.32 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> ranging between 26.24 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> and 412.22 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> (Pitol *et al.* 2019). It also assumed that the rubber plantation received huge amount of CO<sub>2</sub> and stored it as the form of carbon in its body parts. The rubber plantation of Bandarban hill tract at the age of 15, 20 and 30 years sunk 813.29, 1144.15 and 1313.30 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> (Table 1). According to the current carbon trading mechanism, that can earn 27593.38, 38818.98 and 45557.82 Tk ha<sup>-1</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup> just for keeping the tree in the field respectively (Table 1). An average 344.14 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> absorbed by rubber plantation can earn an average of 11663.42 Tk ha<sup>-1</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup> at Bandarban hill tract, Bangladesh (Table 1). The biomass carbon stock in the rubber plantation of Bandarban at the age of 3, 7, 9 years were 7.98, 30.92, and 76.92 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> that were much higher than the plantation of Xishuangbanna 2.79, 23.25, 38.65 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> (Sun, 2013; Song and Zhang, 2010) respectively but both showed the rapid growth of the rubber tree carbon accumulation at early ages. The mean biomass carbon of rubber plantations (93.97 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup>) in this study was higher than the reported carbon stock 83.72 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> (Bonan, 2008) and USA national average urban forest carbon storage (22. 83 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup>) but lower than 110.94 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> (Wang *et al.* 2011).

## Conclusion

The rubber tree is a crucial tree species that sequesters potential carbon associated with natural latex production. It stored carbon-dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and acts as a carbon sink. Rubber plantation can mitigate the risk to ecologies such as the loss of biodiversity and soil fertility follow the greener rural development. The rubber plantations can minimize the hazardous effect of shifting cultivation by diminishing the practice. Rubber trees have the potential for food, wood, energy and ecological security would be attained that may slow down poverty and economic crisis in the country. Moreover, based on the result of the study, the Government of Bangladesh pays more care and more value to the high-demanding rubber trees that help extenuating CO<sub>2</sub> oscillates in the atmosphere.

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