



# rubber news

*on tap – angezapft*

## Visit to partners in Thailand: Solidarity in action

**T**hailand is the largest rubber producer in the world. Fair Rubber e.V. has two smaller supplier partners there, followed by a third in the Surat Thani region at the beginning of 2022. In May, for the first time after the withdrawal of the Corona restrictions, a delegation of the Fair Rubber Association traveled to the region to exchange information with rubber tappers and small farmers of the newly founded Surat Thani Sustainable Rubber Association (SRA) about cur-

Rubber Association requires its smallholder supplier partners to submit a development plan describing measures to improve the local situation. The association leaves the content of the plan to its local partners – they know best about the needs and requirements of the producers. The first draft of the plan in Surat Thani provides for a mix: It includes direct payment of the fair trade premium to increase the income of tappers and small farmers, social community projects and the promotion of ecological measures, for example by providing organic fertilizer and seedlings for rubber cultivation in the agroforestry system. In the coming months, the plan will be refined and then adopted. In addition, the SRA continues to expand its administrative and management structures to make the most effective use of the fair trade premium payments that come with high demands.



Rubber cultivation in agroforestry systems (e.g. with bananas, pineapples, chili)

rent developments in the Fair Rubber program. The central event during the visit was the general meeting, which was attended by around 100 people. The agenda included an expansion of the board of directors, decisions on the distribution of Fair Rubber premium payments and the discussion of a Fair Rubber development plan.

The enthusiasm of the smallholders to be able to make independent decisions about their own concerns was evident everywhere. The Fair

The producers united in the SRA supply the rubber to Fair Rubber member Reckitt, which has a high latex demand for the production of condoms. More than 600 small producers are now members of the SRA. In order to sustainably meet demand, the local association is aiming for 1,000 members – making the SRA one of the Fair Rubber association's largest supplier partner.



General Assembly of Surat Thani Sustainable Rubber Association

But smaller supplier partners also play an important role in the Fair Rubber network and are examples of solidarity lived locally. At the annual meeting of the Klong Pom Phatthana 95 Group, another supplier partner in Hat Yai in southern Thailand, the approximately 50 members decided that all tappers and small farmers should receive the same amount of Fair Trade premiums. In this way, producers who produce less rubber – for example, because they have less land or trees – benefit more than those who produce more rubber. Particularly impressive is the decision of the members to forego part of the premium in order to finance medical treatment for a child from the community who suffers from cancer.

With every fair trade rubber product, customers support success stories like the ones described – not through donations, but through conscious purchasing decisions. ■

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## Fair Rubber products on Amazon

Online retailer Amazon has recognized Fair Rubber as a trusted seal for sustainable rubber: Customers can now find products with the Fair Rubber logo more easily through Amazon's Climate Pledge Friendly program on the online marketplace. It is now also possible to search for Fair Rubber items in individual product categories. Alternatively, shoppers can get an overview of all Fair Rubber-labeled products. There are currently around 800 – from rubber gloves and condoms to coconut latex mattresses.

The decision to list Fair Rubber with Amazon's sustainability program was made by the Fair Rubber board with the support of the association's members. The trend toward online shopping – an estimated 90 percent of the population in Germany shops online – is also reflected in the growing range of fair trade products available on the Internet including on Amazon. More than 200,000 items with recognized sustainability certificates are listed there worldwide. With Fair Rubber, a standard for products with fairly traded rubber has been added.

Nevertheless, the Fair Rubber Association of course continues to support the stationary sale of fair trade products. ■

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## New board member of the Fair Rubber Association

At the last General Meeting of the Fair Rubber Association at the end of April 2022, members confirmed Chairman David Löw Beer in office for another two years. Felix Jahn, CSR officer at bicycle tire manufacturer Schwalbe, was also elected as a new member of the board. He has also taken over the position of second chair. The previous second chair Duncan Jepson from the NGO Liberty recently resigned from the board at his own request. David Croft of Reckitt continues to serve on the board by rotation. A successor to Duncan is currently being sought.

What actually is the composition of the board of the Fair Rubber Association? The association's statutes stipulate that the board should be made

up of equal numbers of representatives from members with commercial interests (companies) and non-commercial interests (usually non-governmental organizations). In this way, social and ecological concerns are to be reconciled with economic ones. All members of the Fair Rubber Association and their representatives on the Board of Directors agree that the greatest goal and strength of Fair Rubber remains the improvement of the living conditions of the primary producers of rubber in the countries of origin.

However, one goal in the composition of the board has not yet been achieved: the stronger representation of women! This should change as soon as possible. ■



Somkid Chargen, 68, is a member of the SRA smallholders' association. His son Shalon is also involved in the board of the Fair Rubber partner.





Since 2012, small farmers and tappers have benefited from premium payments

## 1.5 million euros in fair trade premium for farmers and tappers

Companies that join the Fair Rubber Association pay an annual membership fee based on company sales and a fair trade premium per kilogram of rubber purchased.

Since the summer of 2012, approximately 2,960 tons of Dry Rubber Content (DRC) have been traded that meet the criteria for Fair Trade rubber. Over the past 10 years, sales have steadily increased. The increase in the past two years has been particularly high due to the entry of new members with large purchase volumes. As a result, the Fair Rubber Association has been able to provide almost 1.5 million euros in premiums for producer partners since its foundation (as of August 2022).

The Fair Rubber partners in the regions of origin decide on the use of the premium payments. Among other things, the following social and ecological projects have been financed:

- First private supplementary pension insurance for rubber plantation employees in India;
- Provision of clean water for 64 families on a plantation in Sri Lanka;
- Expansion of processing capacity at the smallholder farmers' association in Sri Lanka so that new members could be admitted;
- Construction of a biogas plant for water purification and gas supply at the smallholders' association in Sri Lanka;
- Providing electricity to 21 families of plantation workers in Sri Lanka, enabling their children to do their homework after dark;
- Aid for medical treatment for community members.



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