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Viswanathan (PhD in Economics) has vast experience in research. His doctoral research was an attempt at examining the institutional, technological and socio-economic constraints leading to the poor performance of irrigation systems as well as the virtual absence of correspondence between public investments in the water sector and the resultant agrarian transformation in the context of Kerala in south India.

Dr. Viswanathan had worked at the Rubber Research Institute of India (Government of India) for 10 years (1994-2004) and had undertaken studies broadly confining to the resource use efficiency of rubber smallholders in Kerala; dynamics of the labour market attached to the smallholder as well as the organized rubber plantations in Kerala; Socio-Economic, Political and Ecological Dimensions of Rubber Development programmes in the tribal economies of North East India; etc.

Dr. Viswanathan has been a post-doctoral research fellow at the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Bangkok during January 2005 – January 2006 during which, he had completed a study on the emerging patterns and the livelihood outcomes of rubber smallholder systems in North East India and Thailand in a comparative perspective. He was also a visiting fellow at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (March– April 2006), during which, he had undertaken a study examining the contradictions and challenges confronting China's rubber industry under the free trade regime. He has also been a visiting fellow (Wellcome Trust, UK) at the Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR), Mahidol University, Thailand (May 2006 – May 2007).

Currently, Dr. Viswanathan is engaged in studies such as “Small farmers and Bt cotton: A case study of India” (Oxfam) and “Critical Assessment of the National and State Water Policies in India” (IWMI-ITP). His research interests broadly covers institutional and governance aspects of water resources development in India; collective action and sustainable livelihood outcomes in smallholder agriculture with particular reference to mountainous communities; social capital and the agrarian crisis in India, etc.