


Neera's a Health Fad, Coconut Industry Keen to Tap into It

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Kochi: The coconut industry is looking to boost the production of neera, the non-alcoholic drink tapped from the toddy palm trees just before dawn, as the product that's projected as a health drink suitable even for diabetics has evoked buying interest both from India and abroad. Neera production is limited mostly to Kerala and the other southern states, which together account for 90% of the coconut production in the country. There are 37 coconut producer companies registered under the Coconut Development Board (CDB) in Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, some of which are already

engaged in the production of neera and other coconut products while others are planning to take it up soon. Farmers, numbering 40-100, form producer societies. Ten to 14 of the societies come together to start a company. In effect, each company has thousands of coconut palms it can tap.


Kerala accounts for 90% of Neera production

"Neera production in Kerala alone now comes to 1.2 lakh litres a month. Our target is to produce 1 lakh litres a day, which will be possible once all the companies become active," said TK Jose, CDB chairman.

Companies in Kerala distribute neera through various outlets. For instance, the Palakkad Coconut Producers' Company has 28 kiosks

selling neera in Palakkad, Thrissur and Ernakulam districts.

"We now produce 1,400 litres a day and we are setting up seven parlours in and around Kollam," said Shahjahan Kanjiravilayil, chairman of the Kaipuzha Coconut Producers' Company Ltd in Kollam. Kerala's current production is just enough to meet demand in the state.

Local businessman George Loyal has ambitious plans to go further afield. He wants to distribute neera in 200 ml bottles in New Delhi and its neighbourhood.

"I plan to source 50,000 bottles a week. This is expected to go up several times by summer next year," he said. Three coconut producer companies - Kaipuzha, Karappuram in Alappuzha and Thirukochi in Ernakulam — will supply the neera.