

Neera producers allege government apathy

Consortium will address future issues

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KOCHI: Neera producing companies have accused the Department of Agriculture of not being supportive enough of the ongoing efforts to tap and sell Neera, the sweet sap from coconut flowers.

Heads of 12 companies, which have been issued licence to produce and sell Neera, alleged that the department stand had created confusion among farmers, who were now gearing up to tap trees on a commercial scale.

A company head said on Tuesday that Minister for Agriculture K.P. Mohanan had, in public statements,

cast aspersions on the quality of the Neera being produced. The companies are of the opinion that these statements only helped create confusion among farmers, who had shares in these companies. The companies, which are in different stages of production, processing and sale of Neera, on Tuesday, announced the formation of a consortium of coconut growers. The consortium would address future issues related to coconut farming and Neera.

The consortium would also exert pressure on the government to introduce a practice by which the State would have an agricultural budget.

The practice was already there in Karnataka, said Shahjahan Kanjiravila, chairman of the newly formed Consortium and the Kaippuzha Coconut Producer Company, Kollam. Mr. Kanjiravila said that the Agriculture Minister was not showing any interest in distributing the Rs.15 crore promised in the current State Budget for Neera companies and that the money would go to the now defunct Kerala State Coconut Development Corporation.

He said that the department was now spreading news that State Coconut Development Corporation would come out with its own Neera in November.