

KAU to Launch Neera Production

by Saritha S Balan

T'Puram: Finally it is official. Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) will launch the production of Neera, by the end of September. The official launch of the sweet toddy will be followed by the beginning of training for Neera tapping by the University on September 25.

Though the Pilicode (Kasaragod) centre of the University developed the technology for extracting the palm nectar two years ago and had been producing it for the past one year, the production was not officially launched yet.

"By launching the production officially, it is aimed at

making the drink popular at least among a section of people. It is also planned to start the production on a commercial basis, by producing 1,000 litres each in three units. But for this, government sanction is required to tap at least 100 coconut trees coming under each centre.

"We wrote to the Excise Department for the same. At present only 10 coconut trees each are being tapped under three centres of the University. Also the commercialisation would be a success only if the government permits the University to sell the drink," Agricultural University Vice-Chancellor P Rajendran said.



The government had recently sanctioned ₹5.40 crore to the University to upgrade the technology for Neera production and to train 5,000 persons across the state to tap the liquid from

coconut trees. 30 persons would be given training in the first stage and it would gradually cover 500 persons.

The 30 persons, 10 each under the three centres of the University- Vellanikkara in Thrissur, Vellayani here and Pilicode would be given training at the Pilicode centre.

The University authorities expect to use the services of the 30 persons as trainers later and would assign them to give training to others. Two types of training will be given- to extract the sap and to process it.

There were around 7,000 applicants for the training programme, including a few

women, and the selection was done after interview.

Toddy tappers were given preference. But once they are assigned for the task it will be ensured that they produce a certain quantity everyday as there are chances for misuse by some of the traditional tappers.

On Thursday, Chief Minister Oommen Chandy had directed to set up Neera producing units in 14 districts on an experimental basis. "If the Agricultural University gets the sanction for selling Neera, the production could be linked with that of the production units which would be set up as per the CM's directive," Rajendran said.