

Farmers demand release of subsidy for neera federations

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Palakkad: The consortium of coconut producer companies have demanded the state government to release the promised subsidy of Rs 1.5 crore to each federation formed to produce neera in 10 districts and amend the abkari rule and give license for tapping neera as it was not an intoxicant drink. The farmers under the Consortium organized a dharna in front of Palakkad collectorate on Monday with these demands.

Neera, the health drink from coconut inflorescence sap, being produced by farmers co-operatives could help the coconut farmers to get Rs 1,500 per tree per month and bring the much needed economic stability to the state, said the consor-

Farmers allege that the excise department is delaying sanction to tap neera to federations who have invested in setting up bottling plants and other facilities

tium.

Inaugurating the dharna district panchayat president T N Kandamuthan said that if 10% of the total coconut trees in the state was tapped, it would produce neera worth Rs 55,000 crore a year. The government could also get a tax revenue of Rs 4,050 crore and provide employment to 10 lakh people as the financial experts had stated, he added.

He alleged that the excise department was delaying the sanction to the federations that had started operations by putting up bottling plants and other modern facilities to market Neera.

General secretary of Desheeya Karshaka Samajam Muthalamthode Mani said that in the state budget the government had allotted Rs 15 crore as subsidy to neera producing federations in 10 districts.

But it was not released putting the federation in financial crisis as they had spent a lot of money to put up bottling plants and other facilities. He said Neera production could help 42 lakh coconut farmers of the state, who face financial problems due to the low price for coconut, pest attack and low productivity.