

# MOVE TO SIPHON OFF ₹15 CR UNDER THE COVER OF NEERA

K.J. JACOB | DC  
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The neera story becomes curiouser and curiouser. The Agriculture department, which has ignored requests from 12 coconut producer companies (CPCs) for grants to start neera production, has now called for project details from 15 other organizations, most of which have not even applied.

The 12 CPCs, affiliated to the Coconut Development Board, had submitted detailed project reports (DPRs) seven months ago, awaiting the Agriculture department grants for neera units from Rs 15 crore earmarked in the budget.

Now, the 15 organisations have been told, bizarre as it may sound, that "their previous applications were found wanting". DC finds that



11 of these companies never submitted an application, nor received any communication from the government.

The CPCs allege it is a ploy by the Agriculture department to siphon off Rs 15 crore through paper companies.

In its controversial letter dated January 20, 2015, the department asked 11 coconut producer federations, two producer companies, one district panchayat council and the Kerala State Coconut Development Corporation to submit details of their neera processing units.

■ **Federations plead ignorance, Page 7**