

Sugar from coconut can fetch ₹ 10000 cr.

DC CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI, JAN. 11

Production of high-value sugar from coconut neera (sweet toddy) can have a business opportunity of ₹10,000 crore a year in Kerala alone, the coconut development board chairman T.K. Jose has said.

"Kerala is having 18 crore coconut palms and if 10 per cent of these palms are tapped for neera, it would generate a business of ₹10,000 crore," he told DC on the sidelines of an entrepreneur meet on coconut processing here on Friday. The



T.K. Jose, IAS

technology is already available here, he said. The sugar derived from coconut neera was priced at ₹ 1,100 per kg in the US (over 10

times the price of normal sugar), he said, and added that Indonesia led the production of the commodity, accounting for nearly 36 lakh tonne of such sugar per year. "Palm sugar is free of the harmful effects of conventional sugar that is mainly based on sugar cane," Jose said.

The sugar produced from coconut neera is having sodium, iron and Vitamin B Complex in it, he said, and added that it could be safely used by patients suffering from diabetes. But, to make that a reality, the state government should grant per-

mission for coconut farmers to tap toddy - which is now exclusively vested with government-auctioned toddy shops.

According to the Abkari Rules in the state, only registered toddy-tappers have the right to tap toddy from coconut palms. The government would have to take a policy decision in this regard, he said. Jose also said the board wanted to end the over dependence of coconut farmers on coconut oil for them to get a far price for coconut. Value-addition of coconut-based products would bring down the

dependence on oil, he said.

Coconut farmers in the state are in dire-straits due to the sharp fall in coconut price for the past one year. On average, a coconut farmer is getting less than 5 rupee per raw coconut nowadays, compared to nearly ₹ 7 - ₹ 8 a year ago.

The board will also provide technical assistance and advice to the Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation. It has also decided to set up an industrial park for coconut-based products at Kuttiyadi on over 115 acres of land.