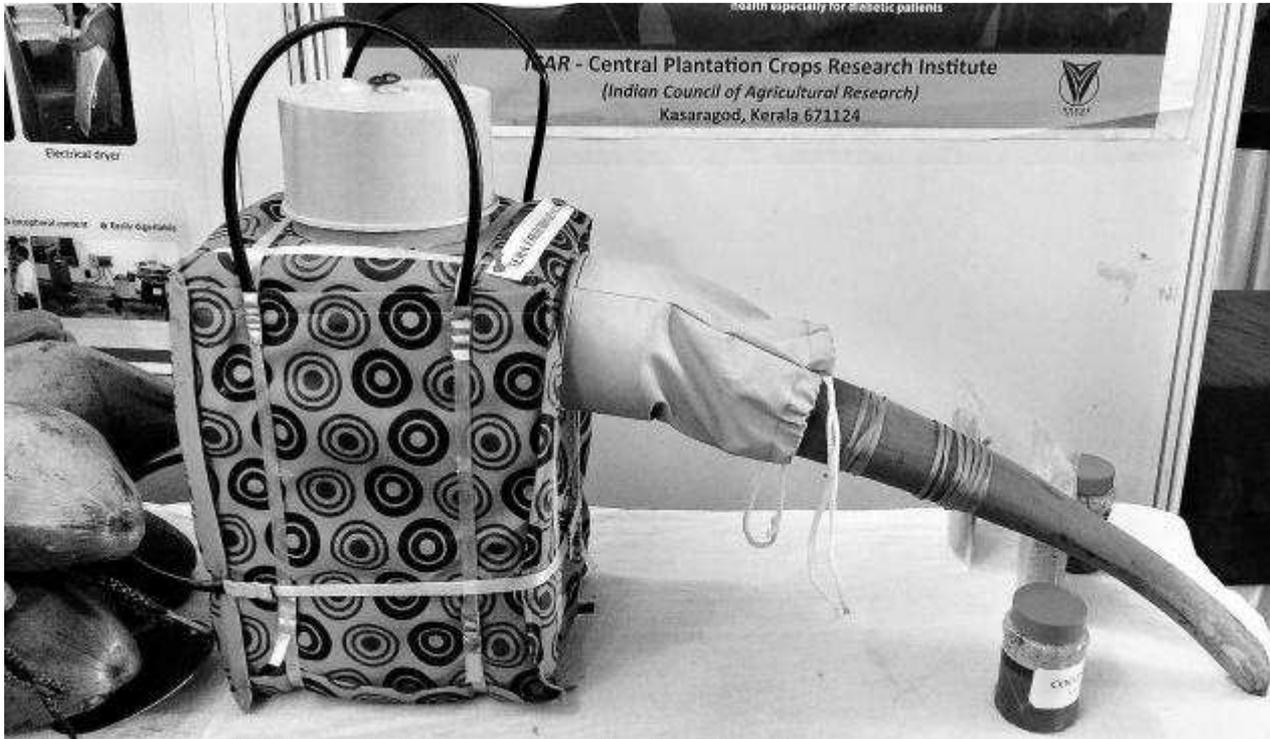


# Coco-sap Chiller to keep neera sweet

B.S. SATISH KUMAR



The device that prevents fermentation of neera and helps maintain hygiene.

Those who cherish the sweet taste of *neera*, can now be sure that the drink is not fermented and is hygienic.

The Kasaragod-based Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI) has developed a gadget that not only prevents fermentation of *neera*, the sap tapped from coconut spathe, but also maintains it hygiene during the long process of tapping.

According to CPCRI's Plant Physiology, Biochemistry and Post-harvest technology Department Head, K.B. Hebbar, who developed the device, most of the *neera* tapped through the traditional method of tying an earthen pot to the tree overnight will be partially fermented even if it is served early morning. This is because the tapping process takes nearly 8 to 10 hours.

The partial fermentation will result in alcoholic content and also spoil the taste and give it a bad smell. The traditional tapping method also results in contamination due to the falling of insects, pollen and dust particles, Dr. Hebbar said.

The new portable device titled 'Coco-sap Chiller' has a container comprising a plastic pouch surrounded by ice cubes for chilling the sap when it starts trickling in. The device, which will be installed atop the tree and connected to the spathe, will ensure that the chilling effect lasts for 10 to 12 hours, he said.

The Coco-sap Chiller is gaining popularity in Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Goa. Twenty companies have signed agreements with the CPCRI for mass production of the device, which costs Rs 1,200, Dr. Hebbar said. According to him, it is possible to earn about Rs. 18,000 per coconut tree by tapping *neera* for six months. However, at present Kerala is the only State that has allowed commercial tapping and selling of *neera*. Though Karnataka has proposed to allow *neera* tapping in the 2015 budget, the excise rules are yet to be amended. Dr. Hebbar can be reached on 9567088753.

- ***Traditional method of collection through open pot partially ferments neera as tapping lasts for several hours***
- ***Scientific device with chilling unit prevents fermentation while tapping***
- ***Traditional method is susceptible to contamination as insects and dust particles fall into pot***
- ***The device has a closed container to protect hygiene during collection***
- ***The device developed by the Kasaragod-based Central Plantation Crops Research Institute costs Rs.1,200***