

Clearance for KAU projects on Neera

HEALTH
DRINK

Special Correspondent

THRISSUR: The State government has cleared three pilot projects of Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) for demonstration, training, production, and distribution of Neera, a health drink.

A Government Order (GO RT 1386/2013/AD) dated July 20 has authorised the KAU to implement the projects using the technology it has developed.

A sum of Rs.15 crore has been earmarked in the 2012-13 budget for production and popularisation of value-added coconut inflorescence sap.

KAU Vice-Chancellor P. Rajendran said the university had taken steps for imple-

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- Units to be based at Pilicode, Vellanikkara, and Vellayani

menting the Rs.5.4-crore projects.

"A meeting of scientists was convened, and a time-bound action programme chalked out. The units will be based at Pilicode, Vellanikkara, and Vellayani. Jayaprakash Naik, Associate Director in charge of the Coconut Mission, will be the Principal investigator. Co-Principal Investigators P.R. Suresh, K. Aravindakshan, and Babu Mathew will be in charge of the three regional centres. The main aim is to have trained tappers and

skilled assistants for extraction and processing. We have decided to kick-start the training programme on September 2, International Coconut Day," he said.

Nutritious

Coconut inflorescence sap is a sweet juice from the spathe of palms. The juice extracted gets fermented, causing conversion to alcohol. By arresting the fermentation, the natural qualities and flavour of the drink are retained. The unfermented juice is sweet, nutritious, and non-alcoholic.

"The technology developed by KAU for Neera production is the safest. All agencies have borrowed the technology. The KAU brand of Neera will be known as Keramrutham. It has high nutritional content than tender coconut water," Dr. Rajendran said.