

Tiff Between CDB, KSCDC Casts Uncertainty over Neera

by Shibu B S

Kochi: A war of words has erupted between the Coconut Development Board (CDB) and the Kerala State Coconut Development Corporation (KSCDC) over the latter's plan to set up Neera societies.

The CDB alleged that the entry of the KSCDC, which was liquidated seven years ago, into Neera production would lead to the diversification of the ₹15 crore allotted for the Neera sector in the Budget. It would also delay the issuance of licence to the 150-odd Coconut Producer Federations (CPF), which

will be a setback to the CDB's efforts to promote Neera.

"At present, the farmers follow the three-tier system of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) for Neera production - Coconut Producer Societies (CPS) at the grassroots level, Coconut Producer Federations (CPF) at the next level, and the Producer Companies federating the producer organisations. There are a total of 5,057 CPSS, 260 CPFs and 12 producer companies in the State, with a total of around 6 lakh members. If the funds are diverted to the KSCDC, these six lakh coconut growers will suffer as the fund was actu-

ally allocated as seed money to the producer companies," sources said.

Recently, the KSCDC announced that it would form Neera societies in all panchayats in the State soon and launch a Neera processing plant at Elathur, near Kozhikode.

'No Linkages'

Meanwhile, CDB officials alleged that the KSCDC did not have linkages with the farmers at the grassroots level to tap, collect and process Neera, which requires skill and coordination at all levels.

"The announcement of the

Corporation about the so-called revival is with an ulterior motive and vested interest. The CDB is the statutory body established in 1981 by an Act of the Parliament, with the exclusive mandate for looking after the integrated development of coconut culture and industry. Meanwhile, KSCDC had lost its relevance in the State with the formation of the Coconut Board.

"The Corporation's plan to set up Neera societies in all panchayats affiliated to the KSCDC is far from reality as the Corporation itself does not exist, and it is defunct as per the records of Registrar

of Companies," they alleged.

Meanwhile, KSCDC Chairman Sabah Pulppatta brushed aside the allegations, and said that the Corporation had been defunct for many years, but it was revived as per a government order issued earlier this year.

"Our plan is totally different from the three-tier system of the Coconut Board," Pulppatta said. Meanwhile, CDB sources alleged that the Corporation, created on October 10, 1975, incurred a loss to the tune of around ₹1.73 crore and ₹1.32 crore in 1991 and 1992, respec-

tively. In 1992, the last balance-sheet of the company showed a cumulative loss of around ₹9.72 crore.

"Thereafter, the Corporation had not filed even returns to the Registrar of Companies. Its last general body meeting was convened on September 24, 1998, and all the employees have been rehabilitated. The company was liquidated after a long process that spanned seven years," they alleged.

Denying the allegations, Pulppatta said that the Corporation, which has five non-official members at the helm, had set up its registered office at Elathur.