

Production of Neera to take off in district

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Until now, all districts in the state had constituted federations for Neera production - except the capital district. Now, this too is set to change with the Trivandrum Coconut Producers Company (TCPC) charting plans to constitute a federation in Thiruvananthapuram for Neera production here.

"Coconut farmers with at least 10 coconut palms can form the primary group and 40 such members can constitute a society. Eight such societies can constitute a federation and a number of federations can be constituted in a district," said a technical expert of TCPC who works with project district coordinator R Suresh.

The federation will get technical support from Palakkad Coconut Producing Company and Coconut Development Board.

Currently, 187 federations from across the state have obtained licence for Neera production. The most active federations are those in Kollam, Palakkad and Kozhikode. "Neera is the coconut palm nectar extracted before sunrise and its high nutritional value qualifies it as a health drink that contains no alcohol. It can be given to children too," Suresh said.

Neera is kept at freezing point or at -1 degrees centigrade as it ferments to toddy (4% alcohol) when kept at room temperature for over two hours. That is why it requires licence from the excise department, said an official at CDB.

Coconut farm owners in Palakkad prefer Neera extraction over Toddy as they get a yield of Rs 1000 per month for each coconut palm from Neera extractors as against Rs 100 per month for each coconut palm from extractors for toddy. "Now, the toddy group is worried over the growth of Neera production as they are anxious that their business will be in limbo

. So vested interests from among them are lobbying with the UDF government and trying to sideline Neera production," said an official in the industry.