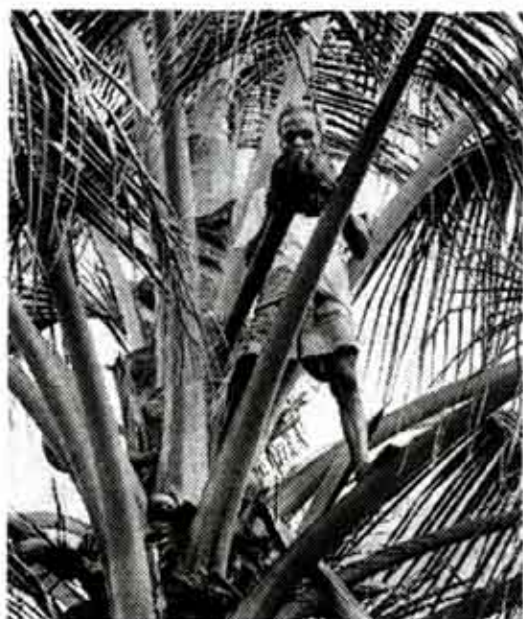


Coconut Board nod for Neera



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The nutritious beverage is obtained by slicing the inflorescence and collecting the sap before it gets fermented. Neera can easily be converted into value-added processed products such as jaggery, candy, ice cream and toffee.

Neera being a non-alcoholic drink, the Board intends to promote the product either as a beverage or as value-added products. The product is expected to provide better returns to the coconut farmer, apart from offering avenues for rural employment in projects for producing value-added products.

KOCHI: The Project Approval Committee meeting of the Technology Mission on Coconut held at Coconut Development Board, Kochi, has cleared a project for setting up a Neera demonstration unit in Karnataka. The project is to be set up at Horticulture Farm, Thumbi. The project to manufacture and preserve Neera, the sap extracted from inflorescence of coconut palm, involves an investment of Rs.1.15 crore. The share of the Coconut Development Board (CDB) for the project is Rs.28.75 lakh.

The project was submitted by the Department of Horticulture, Karnataka Government, under the Technology Mission. The technology developed by the Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI) and Defence Food Research Laboratory, Mysore, are available for preservation of the natural drink for periods ranging from three days to two months, CDB officials said.

It is estimated that 2-3 litres can be tapped from a tree daily. About 150-180 litres of Neera can be extracted over a tapping period of six months. The return works out to be Rs.30,000 per acre with about 30 functional coconut palms, according to the Board.

Though the preservation technology had been made available a few years ago, the Board's efforts for promotion of Neera were affected by the excise policies prevalent in various States. Neera becomes toddy when fermented. Sale of toddy involves revenue to the States.