

*Neera, a natural and non-alcoholic beverage also called Sweet Toddy or Palm Nectar is a sap extracted from Inflorescence of various species of Toddy palms. High in nutritional value and an instant thirst quencher, it rich in protein, vitamin C, phosphorous, calcium and iron with carbohydrates mainly sucrose. Neera has the tendency to bring down body temperature by dissipating heat and is an ideal coolant for during the scorching summers. It has a nearly neutral pH. Considered to be health drink, Neera, also helps to improve digestion & cure digestive troubles and is good for general health. The drink acts like a tonic for asthmatic, anaemic & leprosy patients. Last but not the least, Neera is also a good appetizer.*

## *Tomorrow's health drink*

**K**erala is known as the land of coconut and the word Kera itself means coconut tree. Coconut production plays an important role in the state economy and culture of Kerala. According to Kerala State Planning Board figures, the area under coconut cultivation fell from 8,98,000 hectares in 2005-06 to 7,70,000 hectares in 2010-2011. Production too dipped from 6,326 to 5,287 million nuts, and productivity from 7,046 to 6,862 nuts per hectare during the same period. Today Kerala produces roughly 45 per cent of India's coconuts. Coconut farming has become a loss-making venture due to low price and root wilt disease and hike in labour price.

A palm can be tapped for six months at a stretch in a year and allowed for the next six months for normal tender nut or coconut production as a health restoration measure for the palm. Hence usually 50 per cent of the palms in farmers' garden can be used for tapping at a time. This will help the farmers in getting higher income from their coconut gardens by








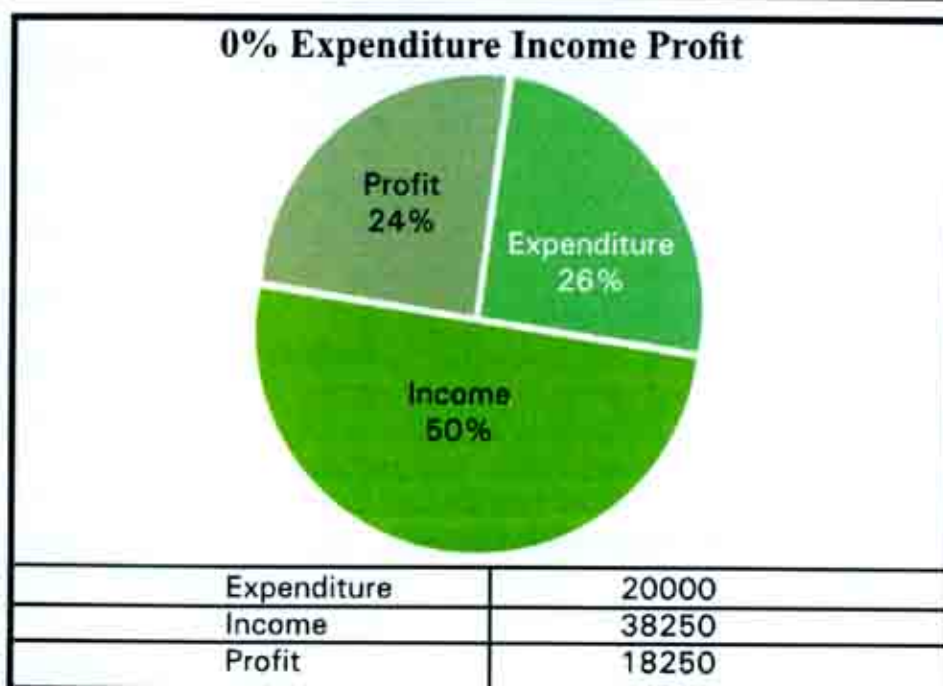
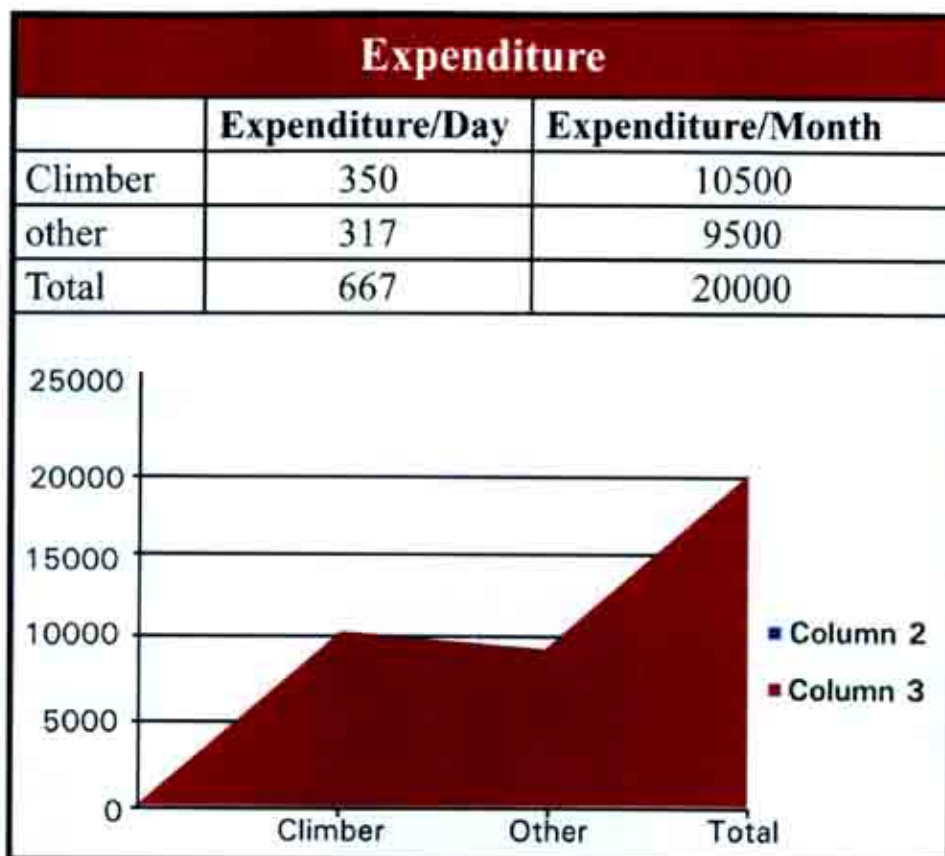
utilizing their palms for value added products like Neera, Jaggery, Tender nut and Traditional Coconut, Copra and Oil Production.

If a tapper can tap 12 palms daily and each palm yields on an average 1.5 litres of sap per palm per day, the total inflorescence sap would be 18 litres per day. On processing 9 litres, a final product will be obtained. This can be made into 51 bottles of 175 ml each. Being a health drink, a bottle could be sold at Rs. 25. The total income per day will be Rs. 1275 and it adds upto Rs. 38,250 per month. The total cost of production per month would be Rs. 20,000, considering the labour wages and expenditure for tapping as Rs. 10,500/- per month for 12 palms ( @ Rs.350/- per day ). Monthly income from 12 palms is Rs. 18,250( ie., Rs. 1521/- per palm/month ) after deducting the tapping and processing cost. It is much more than produced from any cash crop of the state.

Neera is highly susceptible to natural fermentation at ambient temperature, even within a few hours of extraction from palms. The real challenge is to arrest fermentation by organic methods. But the scientists from Kerala Agriculture University (KAU) have successfully developed a method to check fermentation. The health drink extracted using the method can be preserved for more than three months (alcohol-free product) under refrigerated condition, says Kerala Agriculture Secretary K.R. Jyothilal. The health drink, Neera, was developed by a team of KAU scientists headed by Dr. Jayaprakash Naik, Associate Director, Regional Agricultural Research Station, Pilicode.

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	<b>Final Product</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 lt/day after processing.</li> <li>• Made into 51 bottles of 175 ml each</li> </ul>



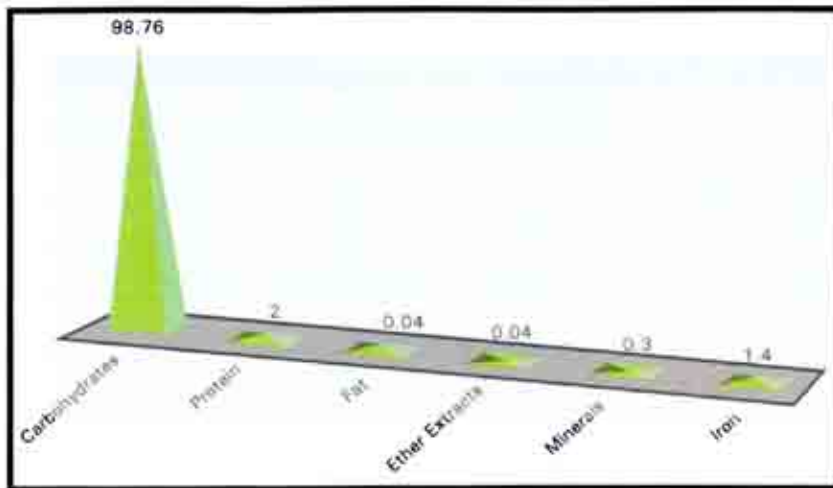


**Nutritional Value**

Neera is low in fat, with a low calorific value (396 for 100 gm.) and high nutritive value.

<b>Product -Nutritional Value</b>	
Product	Mg
Carbohydrates	98.76
Protein	2
Fat	0.04
Ether extracts	0.04
Minerals	0.3
Iron	1.4
Calcium	58.7
Phosphorus	5.4
Riboflavin	8.2





**Mr. Oommen Chandy**  
*Kerala Chief Minister*



The relevance of Neera in improving the socio economic conditions of coconut farmers has also been recognized at the government level. "Coconut is a key agricultural produce in Kerala and our government is committed to take every step to ensure good price for coconut farmers. The government has taken many new initiatives such as distributing record number of fresh saplings to farmers, the results of which would be seen in a few years' time; planning to start four coconut bio-parks and converting fallow lands for agriculture purpose. The falling trend in rice production has been reversed. A high level committee has been formed under the Excise Minister, K Babu to promote Neera where members from trade union, government officials and end farmers discuss about the a non-alcoholic health drink and submit the report. Once I receive the report, we are also planning to promote value-added products such as gur, syrup, sugar, candy, confectionery and ice creams made from Neera", said Shri Oommen Chandy, Chief Minister of Kerala, to Agriculture Today

**Mr. K P Mohanan**  
*Kerala Agriculture Minister*



The state government is actively pursuing the options to popularize it. Agriculture Minister of Kerala, Shri K P Mohanan says, "To popularise Neera as a health drink and promote its valued-added products and reenergize coconut farming in the State, the government has given in principle approval for the production of Neera (a beverage made from coconut flower clusters) by farmers. He said that in next few months, coconut farmers will produce Neera within their farms which will restore the pride of the coconut framers. The Coconut Development Board too plans to help farmers by setting up 5,000 tender coconut parlours across the country. Tender coco-nuts will be directly supplied to the parlours by Coconut Producers' Society comprising of 40-100 coconut farmers from each area. It will also open thousands of new job opportunities, directly or indirectly"

**K. Krishnankutty**  
*Ex-MLA, Chittur*



K. Krishnankutty, former MLA of Chittur and a farmer says, "Kerala is the main coconut growing state with an area of 10.20 lakh hectares and production of 5911 million nuts. The coconut palm exerts a profound influence on the rural economy of the Kerala and once it was the driving force for millions. If a farmer can plant an average of 65 coconut trees in one acre of land; 40 can be used for tapping Neera. The farmer would get an average income of Rs.7 lakh per year which is much more than any other cash crop. It doesn't any way affect the toddy workers and toddy shops because Neera is only used as health drink and sold at stores and retail outlets. It only affects the multinational companies who are using 100,000 liters of Indian water every day. If the product is properly marketed, consumers will switch to healthier beverage, Neera. This is the only way to overcome the crisis caused by the crash in the prices of coconut and coconut oil".