

Coconut finds new horizons

Food companies in the West are tapping the potential of coconut products.

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KOCHI: While coconut growers are trying hard to make ends meet owing to an unfavourable agriculture and marketing scenario, forcing many to move away from the field, a host of companies in the West are thriving on products made from coconut. These include packaged tender coconut water, coconut milk ice-cream, and coconut milk yoghurt.

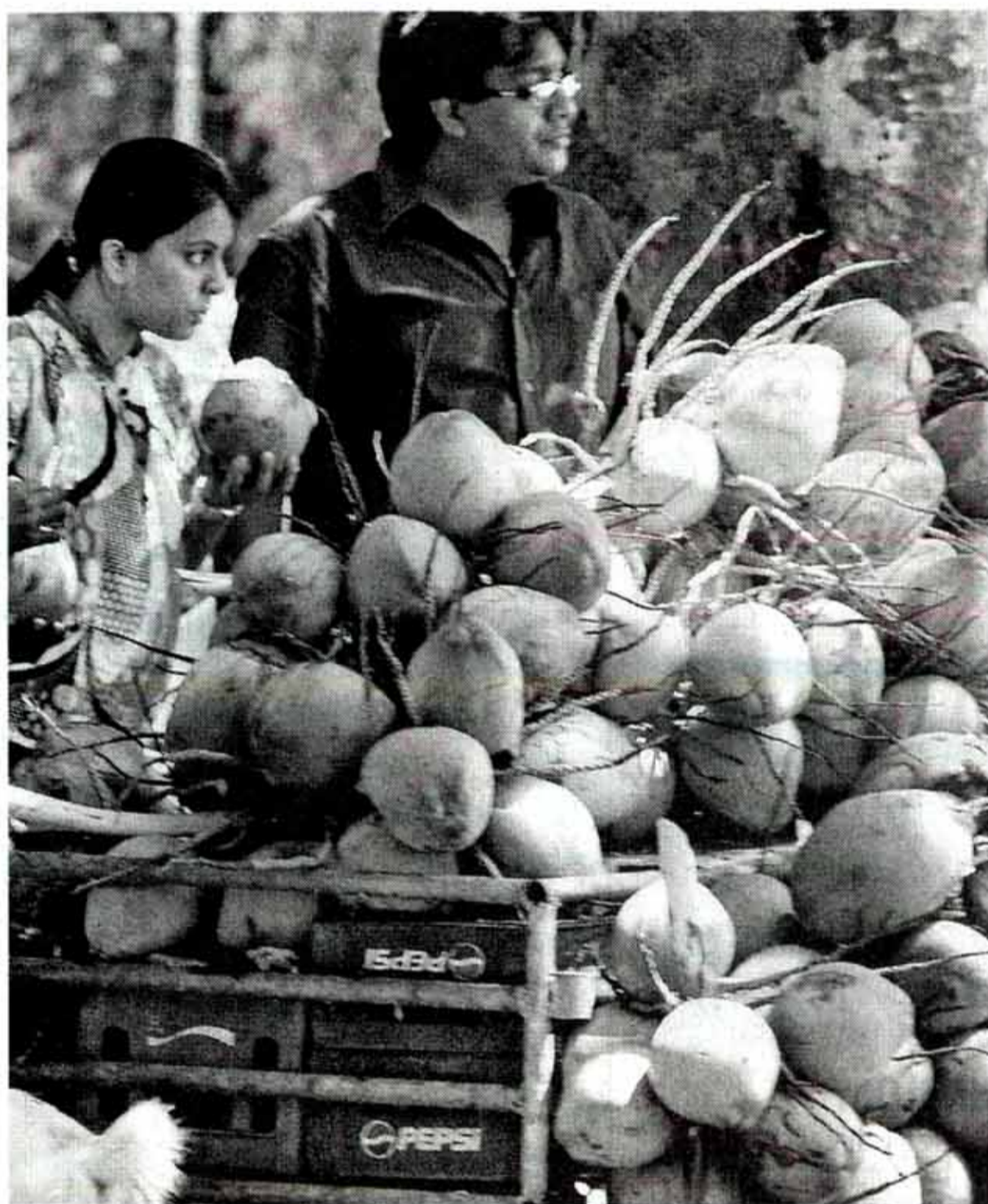
Co Yo, an Australian company, markets ice-cream made from coconut. The product is promoted with the tagline, 'Heaven in a mouthful.' The product is 'dairy-free, sugar-free, gluten-free, lactose-free, and soy-free,' says its online advertisement. The coconut milk yoghurt is smooth, creamy and natural, the company proclaims in its promotional ad.

A California-based company, Zico, markets tender coconut water. The company makes a detailed presentation about the merits of coconut and its products on its marketing website. It points out that for more than 4,000 years, coconut water has been revered as a natural source of nutrition, wellness, beauty and hydration. During famine and war, coconut water is widely used as an intravenous fluid to save lives. It also proclaims that coconut water is the only natural substance that can be safely injected into the human blood stream. Modern science has validated its effectiveness, especially as a natural sports drink, it adds.

The natural product contains the five essential electrolytes — sodium, magnesium, calcium, potassium, phosphorus — that give human body everything it needs to stay hydrated. It contains more potassium, 15 times more than most sports drinks, helpful in preventing cramping, the promotional literature says. Coconut water can become an important alternative agricultural product for the developing world, according to the company.

Vita Coco, another U.S. company, markets packaged tender coconut water as a functional drink.

Since the launch of the product a few years ago, the product has carved a new market in the non-carbonated



GOING PLACES: Many foreign companies are successfully marketing coconut-based products and tender coconut water when coconut growers in the State are struggling to make ends meet.

— PHOTO: VIPIN CHANDRAN

beverage business and redefined the alternative sports beverage category, the company's website says. The product is one of the fastest growing lifestyle beverages in North America, according to the company.

ONE, another company based in the U.S., which markets tender coconut water, is keen on educating people about replacing sugary, artificial beverages. Launched in 2006, the company grew rapidly within a year, and its sales network crossed 4,000 points in the U.S. and Canada. Distribution swelled in 2011, with nearly half of grocery stores, convenience stores, drug stores selling the product, apart from having an online retailer distribution channel.

Throughout history, coconut water has been used to prevent and treat

dehydration; and it has been shown to be more effective than plain water for hydrating, the company's website says. The website also gives link to an article published in *Time* magazine. Accordingly, a bartender recommended tender coconut water as a morning-after remedy and the writer experienced its effectiveness. The report said a few years ago, when the U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) was granted a patent for bottling coconut water, an FAO official noted that the drink contains the same five electrolytes found in human blood. He called coconut water 'the fluid of life', it says. In medical emergencies, coconut water is used intravenously when conventional hydration fluids are not available, according to the report.