

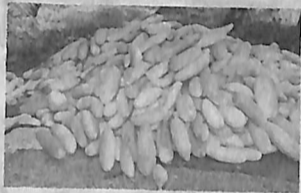
Snap melon on queue for Geographical Indication tag

Efforts being made by KAU, Agriculture Department to safeguard farmers' interests

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The Agriculture Department and Kerala Agricultural University are making efforts to acquire GI (Geographical Indication) tag for snap melon or 'Pottu Vellari,' a cucurbitaceous fruit mainly cultivated in Ernakulam and Thrissur districts.

It is believed that snap melon, botanically called *Cucumis melo momordica*, was



Pottu Vellari is mainly cultivated in Ernakulam and Thrissur districts.

first grown at Kodungalloor in Thrissur. It is called Pottu (which in Malayalam means

cracks) Vellari because of the cracks that appear on its skin. The fruit is cultivated after the second crop of paddy in roughly 500 acres in the two districts.

Juice, a hot favourite

Hundreds of stalls selling snap melon juice can be seen alongside National Highway 17 from Chavakkad to Ernakulam during summer. Such is the demand for the fruit

that farmers have started sowing its seeds every two weeks to ensure its uninterrupted supply. The plant yields fruit within 45 days. The GI tag will enhance the fruit's popularity and demand.

On Saturday, a workshop on GI tag for Pottu Vellari was inaugurated by V.S. Sunil Kumar, Minister for Agriculture, at Kodungalloor. The Minister said an intensive ef-

fort to protect indigenous crop varieties and agricultural products would be initiated. "The KAU and the Agriculture Department are striving to safeguard farmers' interests. The seed bank established at the KAU to preserve conventional crop varieties is a vital step in this direction. Special drive to obtain GI status for native crops of Kerala is another step," he said.