

Coco wood is the star of the show at VAIGA

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IF you think the benefits of a coconut tree are confined to nuts, leaves and inflorescence sap juice, think again. Coconut wood can be a viable substitute for expensive timber that we choose for furniture and fixtures.

The theme stall for value addition of coconut at the Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) pavilion of VAIGA 2017 exhibits, among other things, furniture made from coconut wood. They are attractive as well as durable.

The main reason why coco wood is considered a viable option is the increasing scarcity of traditional wood varieties and the resultant prohibitive cost. The necessity to look for alternatives has become imperative and coco wood - under-utilised but ideal enough to be a substitute thanks to its strength, durability and appearance - has emerged as a reliable alternative, said E V Anoop, a professor at KAU's College of Forestry.

The furniture and fixtures displayed at the stall stands a mute but explanatory testimonial to this. The armchair, dean cot and sofa as well as the wall and floor panels made of coco wood have already received

many enquiries. The wood of coconut palms older than 35 years, felled for any purpose or replaced on account of pest infestations, need not go unused; they can find a place in your home as a cosy item of furniture or adorn the wall as panelling.

The international exhibition and workshop on agro-processing and value addition organised at KAU has turned out to be a crowd-puller with people from various walks of life making a beeline to the 300-plus stalls.

During one of the events, R C Misra, former project coordinator, All India Coordinated Research Project on Honey Bees and Pollinators, said adding value to honey by using it along with various medicinal plants, fruits and vegetables will help honey farmers get a higher income.

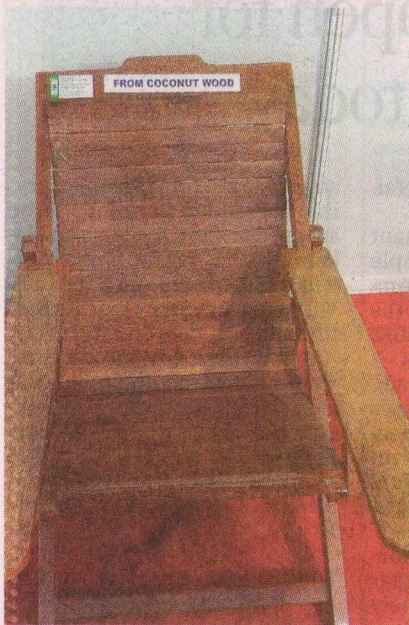
Hortcorp regional manager B Sunil explained the precautions that have to be taken while processing honey. He exhorted farmers to ensure proper hygiene during processing so as to produce export-quality honey.

Vazhachal divisional forest officer N Rajesh talked about the efforts undertaken by the forest department to ensure a fair price for tribals engaged in honey collection.

The session by Oushadhi's Divya Balachandra on the uses of honey in Ayurvedic medicines was an eye-opener.

Entrepreneurs such as Shaji Joseph (Malabar Honey) and M R Sajayakumar (Bharat Honey) shared their experiences, which enlightened farmers with practical insights on beekeeping. The session was chaired by College of Forestry dean K Vidyasagar, and co-chaired by Mani Chellappan, head, Department of Agricultural Entomology, College of Horticulture, Vellanikkara.

The expo will conclude on Sunday and Speaker P Sreeramakrishnan will inaugurate the valedictory session.



Furniture made of coconut wood being displayed at the Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) pavilion of VAIGA 2017 exhibits