

# A Heart- to- Heart get together for Coconut oil

International Symposium on 'Quality Coconut Oil for Nutrition and Health' - a report

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*International symposium- the delegates*

Coconut oil, derived from dried coconut kernel and Virgin Coconut oil from fresh coconut milk have got lot of medicinal, cosmeceutical and nutraceutical properties. Despite this there is an apprehension that coconut oil is not good for consumption and it elevates coronary artery diseases. Lack of clinical evidences to prove the beneficial properties of these oils has been a hindrance in popularizing its uses in human diets.

In this background Coconut Development Board initiated activities in 1990s to defend the propaganda against coconut oil. Board conducted a seminar on coconut oil in Kochi, Kerala in 1994 which had the participation of eminent US Scientist Dr. Mary Enig, Dr. Valiathan, the eminent Cardio surgeon etc. Dr. Mary Enig's revelation equating coconut oil to mother's milk caught attention of many within and outside the country. Subsequently Board sponsored studies through the Biochemistry department of Kerala University

and the Cardiology department of Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute of Science and Technology, Trivandrum, Kerala on the goodness of coconut and coconut oil in human consumption. These studies showed that coconut and coconut oil consumption, as followed in the diet of Keralites, does not elevate serum cholesterol; on the contrary it lowers total cholesterol and LDL cholesterol (bad cholesterol) and enhances HDL cholesterol (good cholesterol) in blood lipids. Lack of clinical evidences to take these results to public, however was a bottleneck to disprove the allegation. Later on Board sponsored a clinical study through Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences (AIMS), Kochi, Kerala on the effect of consumption of coconut oil and sunflower oil on cardiac patients which brought out positive results in favor of coconut oil. This paper was presented in the 46<sup>th</sup> COCOTECH Meeting of Asian and Pacific Coconut Community (APCC), an intergovernmental organization with mandate of coconut development of Asian Pacific region where India is one of the founder members. This Session recommended International collaboration on Clinical studies on the health benefits of coconut products in collaboration with medical institutions which was endorsed by the 51<sup>st</sup> APCC Session and supported by the APCC Technical Working Group. With this background, an International Symposium on Quality coconut oil on Nutrition & Health was organized by APCC in association with Coconut Development Board on 28-29 September, 2015 at Shangri - La Eros' Hotel, New Delhi.

The objective of the symposium was to review the past works carried out globally on coconut oil and



*Welcome address - T.K. Jose IAS*

## Working group session

A session on working groups chaired by Mr. Romulo N Arancon was held on the concluding day of the symposium. The group chaired by Dr. M Vijayakumar discussed on coconut oil and cardio vascular disease and the group chaired by Dr. Drupadi HS Dillion discussed on coconut oil and lifestyle disorders including diabetes. Another group chaired by Dr. Asoka Disaanayake discussed on coconut oil and neurological disorders, and the group chaired by Dr. Rosa S Rolle discussed on coconut oil and food and nutrition. Group five chaired



*Romulo N Arancon*



*Dr. Vermen M Verallo Rowell chairing the group*

by Dr. Vermen M Verallo Rowell discussed on coconut oil as nutraceutical and cosmaceutical. The objective of the session was to determine the current status of research with coconut oil in the selected areas, to identify the gaps in areas of research and studies and also to propose the studies in order of priority. The groups also suggested the standard protocol, methodology and objectives of the future research and potential institutions or researchers to conduct the study. The outcome of the group discussion has outlined on the international collaboration to be prioritized on clinical studies.



*Working group chaired by Dr. Asoka Disaanayake*



*Working group chaired by Dr. Rosa S Rolle*



*Working group chaired by Dr. M Vijayakumar*



*Dr. Drupadi HS Dillion chairing the group*

virgin coconut oil and to present the current studies going on in different countries and to explore the future scope on international collaboration / networking with various APCC member countries / institutes. This will lead to formulation of research projects which could be

submitted for funding from international donor agencies like WHO, FAO etc.

The Symposium was arranged in four Technical Sessions with a brief opening and concluding sessions. First and second sessions were set on the keynote

28-29 SEPTEMBER 2015, NEW DELHI



*A toast with Neera, the God's own health drink.*



*Delegates of the Symposium*



*Value added coconut oil based products displayed at the venue*

addresses on the review and status of research work and the clinical studies on coconut oil and virgin coconut oil respectively. The importance and uses of coconut oil in major coconut growing and consuming countries was presented in the third session and the fourth was set apart for working group discussion and presentation of the outcome of group discussion. In the opening session Shri. Sanjeev Chopra IAS, the then Joint Secretary (MIDH), Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India, Shri. T.K. Jose IAS, Chairman, Coconut Development Board and alternate NLO to APCC, Dr. Prem Nair, Medical Director, Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences (AIMS), Kochi, India, Dr Rosa S Rolle, FAO Bangkok, Thailand, Dr. Nagesh Kumar, UNESCAP and Mr. Uron N Salum, Executive Director, APCC addressed the gathering.

A display of coconut oil based nutraceuticals, cosmeceutical and toiletry items were displayed to show case the wide usage of coconut oil and virgin coconut oil in these sectors. This was an eye opener to the participants on the potential of coconut products in the health care segment. The two days' Symposium was concluded with positive notes and listing down a few research studies to be taken up on priority through international collaboration. The concluding Session was attended Dr. P. Shakeel Ahammed, Joint Secretary (MIDH), Government of India. About 60 participants from 10 countries participated in the symposium which included medical doctors, scientists, representatives from research institutions, Embassies, coconut industrialists, manufacturers, exporters, policy makers, and officials from APCC and CDB. ■