Use of Seasoning Mixtures for Enhancing Flow of Sap of Kitul (*Caryota urens* L.) in Sri Lanka

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Kitul sap is obtained by seasoning the inflorescence before it is open. Objectives of seasoning are to tenderize the flower for easy slicing, delay in maturity and promote sap flow. Using tempering mixtures is a widespread method of seasoning of the flower. The objective of the study was to identify seasoning mixtures currently in use in major Kitul growing areas. A questionnaire survey was conducted in 12 Kitul growing districts. A multistage stratified sampling scheme was adopted for data collection. Three hundred and four tapper were included in the sample. Eight seasoning mixtures were identified based on the main ingredients used. They were pepper-based mixture (28.0%), non-specified mixture without identifiable main ingredients (21.7%), ash-based mixture (21.1%), slaked limebased mixture (20.7%), spice-based mixture (11.8%), medicinal leaves mixture (dalupas wargaya) (11.5%), artificial mixture (8.9%) and citrus mixture (paspangiri) (6.3%). Seasoning mixtures could be categorized as natural and artificial. There were significant relationships among the type of mixture and independent variables; level of engagement in the tapping profession, means of acquiring tapping skills, type of family and region. A high proportion of full-time tappers preferred artificial mixtures. Majority of tappers using artificial mixtures were families engaged in tapping over generations. Natural seasoning mixtures with more ingredients could be suggested as the most suitable in tempering Kitul inflorescence.

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