

# TN Coconut Climbers to Get Just ₹2.10 per Tree

by D Suresh Kumar

**Coimbatore:** At a time when coconut farmers are increasingly finding it difficult to find tree climbers, the Tamil Nadu Labour and Employment Department has fixed a ridiculously low wage of ₹2.10 for labourers to climb and pluck coconuts from one tree. In case, they are hired for a day, the minimum wages will be only ₹126.

Coconut farmers and agriculture activists are puzzled over these 'impractical' recommendations contained in the Draft Notification relating to the Revision of Minimum Rates of Wages

for Employment in Coconut Peeling under the Minimum Wages Act.

The Draft Notification, which will take effect two months from now, also says

## **WORKERS CAN BE PAID JUST ₹150 FOR DEHUSKING 1,000 COCONUTS OR ₹126 PER DAY AS MINIMUM WAGES**

that workers can be paid just ₹150 for dehusking 1,000 coconuts or ₹126 per day as minimum wages. Besides for grading coconuts, workers need to be paid a minimum

wage of ₹15.75 per 1,000 coconuts or ₹95.50 a day.

Further, workers engaged in loading and unloading of coconuts can be paid ₹150 per 1,000 coconuts, the notification said.

However, farmers say the scene at the ground level is way too different. "We can't hire a single worker for such low wages. Already farmers have to pay ₹12 for climbing and plucking coconuts from a tree that is of 40 feet height. To climb trees above 40 feet height, the climbers demand ₹15 per tree. This is the rate for large farms. For small farms of one acre or so, the climbers demand ₹20 per tree," said U C Palanisamy,

a coconut farmer and coir unit owner in Coimbatore.

Not many tree climbers are available and the youngsters don't want to undertake the job. "For peeling coconuts we have to pay 40 paise per coconut and also serve the workers tea and pay them the auto fare. The per day wages works out to ₹700 or ₹800," he added.

Tamil Nadu Toddy Movement leader S Nallasamy said, "The low and impractical wages fixed by the Labour Department only goes on to prove the vast disconnect between officials and farmers. People who are not aware about farming practices are fixing the rates."