

PepsiCo in talks with HML for pineapple farming

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BEVERAGES major PepsiCo is talking to Harrisons Malayalam Ltd (HML) for cultivating pineapple as intercrop in HML's rubber estates in Kerala.

The move is aimed at making HML a key supplier of the fruit for juice extraction for PepsiCo's Tropicana brand of pineapple juice from within the country, sources said.

Talks with HML comes after PepsiCo tried, without much success, to introduce contract farming of pineapples by engaging farmers in Palakkad, Kerala recently. HML has over 9,000 hectares of rubber growing area, most of which is located in Kerala.

When contacted, Mr Abhiram Seth, Executive Director (Exports & External Affairs), PepsiCo India, confirmed having talks with Harrisons Malayalam. But, he refused to give details. "Talks are at a preliminary stage," Mr Seth told PTI.

PepsiCo India was looking at Kerala for pineapple sourcing for juice extraction as the climate in many areas in the State was suitable for pineapple cultivation, sources said.

While the 'Mauritius' variety is more popular in Kerala, PepsiCo was looking at the sourcing of 'KEW' or the 'Sugarloaf' variety. "We cannot change the taste of the Tropicana pineapple juice as our customers are used to a particular taste," a PepsiCo official said.