

# GLOBAL TREND AND TECHNOLOGY OF COCONUT WATER

Lai Kit Mun

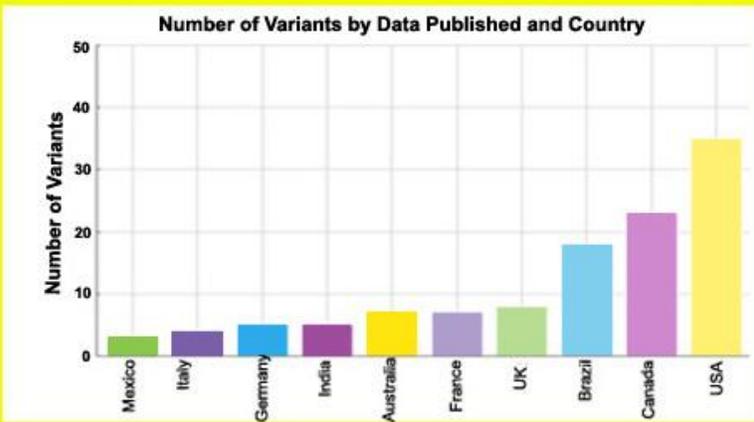
One of the fastest growing beverages, well favoured by the consumers, endorsed by the celebrities for its health and goodness: Coconut water is taking the lead with soaring sales and attention. Globally, the market is estimated to be worth USD600million.

Brazil is by far the largest market for packed coconut water and Kero Coco is the country's leading brand. Aseptically packed coconut water in Tetra Pak packages first appeared in Brazil as far back as 1995 and currently makes up to about 97% of total packed coconut water there.

The next largest market for packed coconut water is the United States of America (USA). Coconut water brands such as Vitacoco, O.N.E., Naked and Zico lead the market. In Europe and Australia, brands of coconut water such as Cocobella is making steady inroads as more people become aware of the health benefits of this nutrient-packed beverage.

In building brand awareness, many of the larger brand owners are tapping on the vast networks provided by social media, such as Facebook, and online sites like Amazon, to reach their consumers and to get their message across – that coconut water is more than just a beverage but a lifestyle choice of the new generation. Other marketing campaigns like celebrity endorsements and collaborations with fashion brands and restaurants further fuel the rush for coconut water as consumer awareness spreads.

## A Global Phenomenon Coconut Water Launches in 2011 - USA Top in Variant



Coconut palms are not indigenous to North America and the drinks companies are looking to major coconut growing regions. Majority of the coconut production lies in South and South East Asia where the Philippines, Indonesia and India – the three largest producers of coconuts globally are. The volume of water available in SSEA is roughly fifteen times that of Brazil and because not all of the

coconut water that can be collected is being collected, there's potential for even more production.

In Tetra Pak, we see a huge potential to grow this category. Aided with expertise in processing and packaging know-how, the Coconut Knowledge Centre (CKC) is another step towards helping its various partners and customers to ensure the quality of coconut

## Coconut Water from Several APCC Member Countries



water. CKC is going back to the basics to understand the characteristics of coconut water. Coconut water is a sensitive product and is easily subjected to microbiological spoilage, browning and pinking of the product and rancidity if it is not handled properly.

In collaboration with the Science University of Malaysia (USM) in Penang, the causes behind browning and pinking of coconut water was examined. It was found that this colouration which made the product look visually less appealing was due

to a few reasons; enzymatic and non-enzymatic oxidation of the polyphenols found naturally in the coconut water to form intermediate compounds (pink) and brown pigments.

This could be overcome with a few methods, of which those proposed by USM were to perform enzyme deactivation at 95°C for a certain amount of time, the addition of antioxidants and at all other times before Ultra High Temperature (UHT) aseptic processing, maintain the temperature of the coconut

water below that of 4°C to retard the reactions' rates. They also observed that the type of UHT process and the temperature of the storage conditions affected the colour and shelf-life of the coconut water.

The next step for CKC is to dive into the nutritional properties of coconut water, particularly in the rehydration sciences. Coconut water is benchmarked against isotonic sports drinks and is commonly positioned as a natural alternative to sports drinks. The emphasis is on its lower caloric value and sugar value and yet has the power to rehydrate the body due to the presence of electrolytes such as potassium and magnesium. Some studies have shown that coconut water has similar or even better rehydrating effects than water and carbohydrate-electrolyte sports drinks but the amount of evidence is still sparse. There is a need for further studies in nutritional sciences as this is an emerging growth category globally.

*Mr. Lai Kit Mun is Director of Coconut and Soya Knowledge Center, Tetra Pak South East Asia, Ltd. Based in Singapore.*

