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## A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION ON INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE OF TRADITIONAL KITHUL (*CARYOTA URENS L.*) INDUSTRY

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### ABSTRACT

Kithul or *Caryota urens L.* (Family Arecaceae) is one of the most beneficial palm tree to Sri Lankans. Jaggery and treacle are the best –known products from the sap of Kithul inflorescence. In Sri Lanka, there is a long history for Kithul as an industry. Therefore Sri Lankan Kithul industry is very rich with indigenous knowledge. The main objective of the proposed study is to investigate the indigenous knowledge of traditional Kithul industry. Ratnapura district was selected as the research area for this study. The research method was based on field observations and discussions with randomly selected sixty traditional Kithul tappers. Also published books and journals were used. According to the findings, traditional Kithul tappers used their indigenous knowledge for various steps of the Kithul industry. As some of examples, they apply this knowledge to seasoning the different types of Kithul inflorescences, to enhance the yield of Kithul sap and its concentration, to prevent the over maturation of inflorescence, to reduce the browning effect of tapping the surface of inflorescence and etc. For that eco-friendly measures such as performing kems, ritual or a religious rite and use of plants or plant extracts were used. This indigenous knowledge usually transmitted from generation to generation through their experiences and demonstrations. But currently, this knowledge is gradually died down due to various reasons. So immediate actions are needed to conserve this indigenous knowledge and this can be applied to develop the sustainable agriculture system in Sri Lanka.

**Keywords:** Indigenous knowledge, Industry, Inflorescences, Kithul, Tappers