

Vanuatu Virgin Coconut Oil Export Guide



Green exports to foster sustainable development

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MSG Secretariat
Secretariat du GFLM
Melanesian Spearhead Group | Le Groupe Fer de Lance Mélanésien

Note

The term “dollars” (\$) refers to United States dollars unless otherwise specified.

The term “VUV” refers to Vanuatu vatu unless otherwise specified.

Abbreviations and acronyms

CAGR	Compound Annual Growth Rate
CNO	Crude Coconut Oil
IFOAM	International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements
PoetCom	Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community
PGS	Participatory Guarantee System
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
VAT	Value Added Tax
VCO	Virgin Coconut Oil
VSS	Voluntary Sustainability Standards
VUV	Vanuatu Vatu

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Introduction

Why preparing this Export Guide?

The purpose of this Export Guide is to provide producers and exporters of virgin coconut oil (VCO) in Vanuatu with information on the requirements and procedures to be followed to meet the regulations of main importing countries. Additionally, it seeks to open increased opportunities for exporting VCO to sustainability-oriented markets. The ultimate goal is to raise producers' awareness of potential market prospects available to them.

What are the expected benefits for you and the country?

In addition to the above, the rationale for this report is the following:

- a) Increasing awareness among existent and potential coconut oil exporters regarding minimum requirements expected.
- b) Strengthening and improving internal logistical and supply network for facilitating virgin coconut oil production, transportation and export.
- c) Revitalizing the country's coconut industry through increased export of quality virgin coconut oil.

Green trade as a central element of sustainable development

In 2016, a national team of experts, supported by the Department of Industry, Vanuatu, and UNCTAD, introduced the idea of developing sustainable coconut production as a tool to expand green trade (UNCTAD, 2016). Building on the learnings from this study, the concept of Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) was introduced in 2020 to producers in Vanuatu to be used as a vehicle for sustainable development (UNCTAD, 2020). Moreover, green trade is inclusive and provides opportunities for rural communities, including women and youth, to benefit from sustainable economic development and participate in trade activities.

VSS to improve the quality of exportations

Although still new for policymakers, producers and exporters of VCO in Vanuatu, VSS markets are increasingly being tapped into, namely the organic (Australia) and fairtrade (European Union) markets. Interviews conducted for this Export Guide show at least two different producers producing and exporting certified VCO to these two markets.

Structure of this Export Guide

The Export Guide is structured so that the reader and potential exporter of VCO can acquire knowledge on:

- Where to search for potential VCO markets.
- The various steps necessary for accessing VCO markets, including the expected quality the market may demand of the products to be exported.
- The various documents that will be required in order to export.



1

Before exporting

1.1 Research your market

To export VCO from Vanuatu, sellers need to first identify a market and find a buyer for their product. This coconut oil Export Guide will focus on Australia and the European Union, which interviewed coconut exporters have flagged as attractive export markets for the coconut oil industry. In addition to these markets, the guide will also provide insights into exporting to Japan and the United States, as both countries present attractive options for Ni-Vanuatu exporters.

The global VCO market is experiencing significant growth, adding to the industry's appeal. Fortune Business Insights (2021) reported that, the Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) for the VCO market will stand at 7.53 per cent annually over the next 10 years. This will double the size of the market from a total of \$2.11 billion in 2020 to approximately \$4.34 billion by 2030.¹ The International Coconut Community is somewhat less bullish for VCO and expects a CAGR of 2.4 per cent in the next five years (ICC, 2022). Nevertheless, coconut, and in particular VCO, benefits from an underlying trend towards "healthier" vegetable oils. It has potential in markets where consumers are receptive to nutritional arguments (CBI, 2016).

Table 1 shows that the main market for VCO is the United States of America, followed by the European Union and then China. Even if Japan and Australia are smaller markets, their proximity makes them appealing for Vanuatu's exports. The table shows a sharp increase in the value of world imports between 2020 and 2021. However, it should be noted that this is partly due to the sharp increase in international coconut oil prices between 2020 and 2021 and that the increase in volume is more moderate. By September 2022, prices had returned to their end-2020 level (FAO, n.d.). Crude coconut oil² (CNO) data are also provided for comparison.

Table 1. Major markets for crude and virgin coconut oil

	2021 - Quantity of imports (tons)		2021 - Value of imports (millions of United States dollars)		2020/2021		
	Crude	Virgin	Crude	Virgin	Percentage change Crude value	Percentage change Virgin value	Percentage change in Virgin volume
United States	176 325	291 586	289.7	564.1	49	56	12
European Union	630 399	262 014	969.2	468.3	73	51	8
China	3 646	170 413	8.2	275.8	-4	84	7
Japan	273	41 490	1.9	74.2	19	79	12
Australia	591	12 636	1.3	28.6	292	59	14

Source: Own calculations based on UN Comtrade and ITC Trade Map.

¹ \$ 1 = VUV 109.45 at 2021 average (IMF, n.d.). \$ 4.34 billion = VUV 475.013 billion.

² CNO is derived from dried coconut meat (copra) whereas VCO is extracted from fresh coconut meat.

The most promising markets for coconut oil, specifically VCO, are Australia and the European Union. Australia is the largest market in the Pacific, with the demand for certified products growing rapidly (FiBL, 2022). Furthermore, Australia was the top destination for Vanuatu's VCO exports in both 2020 and 2021 (UN Comtrade, n.d.). Within the European Union, Germany (23 per cent), Belgium (18 per cent), France (11 per cent), Poland (9 per cent), and Italy (9 per cent) are the top importers of VCO. The European Union ranks as a major market for certified products, being the second largest organic market after the United States (FiBL, 2022). While Vanuatu may not currently export to the United States or Japan, both nations present interesting prospects for certified products and, hitherto, certified VCO.

Current domestic VCO market and prices

It is important to consider the attractiveness of the local market before embarking on exporting. Selling in the local market can offer a good return if one takes into account all the costs and paperwork involved in exporting products. It is also important to consider that for exporting, maintaining product quality can represent more work.

The VCO in Vanuatu finds outlets on the local market but is also attractive for tourists, in particular the transformation into cosmetics or essential oils. When reselling to local intermediaries, other non-financial benefits should also be considered, such as coverage of transportation costs to Port Vila.

Prices per litre reported for purchase in the local market based on data collected from research and interviews (conducted in 2022) are:

- VUV 700 for the Volcanic Earth cosmetics company;
- VUV 700 for the Alternative Community Trade Initiative Volunteer (ACTIV) which exports to New Zealand;
- VUV 3,500 as a resale price to tourists as reported in a previous study (UNCTAD, 2020). Packaging, sales and certification costs must be included in this price.

Another solution reported is to establish direct connections with importing companies in the targeted markets. By doing so, producers can then sell their products directly to the local offices of these companies based in Vanuatu or directly to the importing company.

VSS as an opportunity

The VCO VSS market promises a comparatively higher return on investment than copra production as highlighted in the *assessment of organic certification coconut oil value chain in Vanuatu* (UNCTAD, 2020). There is no clear data regarding the share of certified products in VCO consumption in the selected markets. Nevertheless, a large proportion of the VCO found on the websites of European and Australian supermarket chains or online retailers are certified products (organic or Fairtrade). This means that certified products have a significant share of direct sales to consumers and might represent an interesting opportunity (see Annex 2). Additionally, when comparing the local market prices of Certified and Non-certified VCO, the Organic certified VCO products such as VCO on the Volcanic Earth cosmetics company's online shop are sold at **VUV 1,500/330ml** compared to non-certified VCO that sell for only **VUV 350/250ml** giving a price margin of about **VUV 775 for approximately 250ml of VCO**.

1.2 Estimating costs

Once a market of interest has been identified, it is necessary to estimate the economic cost of exporting and the viability of such an operation. Table 2 below gives rough estimation of the cost of exporting 1 tonne of VCO (without labour costs, taxes, etc.).

Table 2. **Cost/benefit estimate for 1 tonne/ 1000 litres of VCO for export based on interviews**

Cost of raw materials ³	+	VUV	700 000
Cost of freight to Port Vila	+	VUV	4 000
Cost of additional filtering	+	VUV	5 000
Cost of packaging	+	VUV	10 000
Cost of export related activities	+	VUV	100 000
Cost of export freight	+	VUV	70 000
Total estimated cost	=	VUV	889 000
Sales at export market price of *VUV 1500/l ⁴	=	VUV	1 500 000
Total sales revenue of 1 000 litre of VCO	=	VUV	1 500 000
Total estimated cost of input	-	VUV	889 000
Indicative benefit (not accounting for cost of labour)	=	VUV	611 000

Source: Based on interviews with Vanuatu based VCO exporters (2022).

Estimating costs and finding information

1.2.1 Tariffs (similar for certified and regular VCO)

The harmonized system (HS) code of VCO is 1513.19

- **Australia:** The national tariff line of VCO is 1513.19.00. VCO products are exempted from duties (0 per cent).
- **European Union:** The integrated tariff is 1513.19.11 (in immediate packings of a net content not exceeding 1 kg) and 1513.19.19 (Other). VCO products are exempted from duty (0 per cent) under the "Special Arrangement for the least-developed countries".
- **Japan:** VCO is exempted from duty (0 per cent) under the Preferential tariff for Generalized System of Preferences countries.
- **United States:** Similarly, VCO is exempted from duty under the Most Favoured Nation rate.

1.2.2 Various taxes/fees

Additionally, VCO producers and exporters need to comply with quality and certification measures that require payment of fees. The specific fees and minimum requirements can be found in the table 3 below:

³ The quality of the purchased VCO can be variable and losses are likely.

⁴ Price based on the "Vanuatu Farmer Market" website.

Table 3. Specific fees and requirements to export virgin coconut oil (in 2022)

Documentation	Cost	Contact
1. Business name registration	VUV 13 000 for new registration VUV 5 000 for renewal	Vanuatu Financial Services Commission Useful link: https://www.vfsc.vu/business-names-form/
2. Business license	VUV 10 000 for renewal (for a new business total fee will be calculated against the number of months left in that year)	Customs and Inland Revenue (see contact in Annex 1)
3. Industry permit	VUV 2 500	Department of Industry
4. Certificate of origin	NO COST (FREE)	Customs and Inland Revenue (see contact in Annex 1)
5. Customs handling fee	VUV 1 000	Customs and Inland Revenue (see contact in Annex 1)
6. Inspection of empty container	VUV 1 000	Department of Biosecurity Useful link to see additional fees: https://biosecurity.gov.vu/index.php/fees-charges/biosecurity-fees

Source: See contact details column.

1.2.3 Shipping/logistics

Information regarding the estimations of costs relating to shipping or logistics can be found in Table 4 (note that all contact details can be found in Annex 1).

Table 4. Cost of shipping from Vanuatu (in 2022)

Logistics	Estimated costs	Contact
Inter-Island sea freight to Port Vila	- VUV 700 to VUV 1 000 for a full 20 litres or 25 litres container (depending on the ship used) - VUV 3 000 to VUV 4 000 for a full 200 litres drum	- Vanuatu ferry - MV Valerie - LC Herpoli - LC Tiwi-trader
	Freight prices for 20ft containers: - VUV 288 000 – Port Vila-Santo - VUV 192 000 – Port Vila-Malekula - VUV 303 000 – Port Vila-Tanna - VUV 132 000 – Santo-Malekula Cubic prices for Less than Container Load (standard price for all routes: - For cartons or containers up to 20 litre in size, the cost is VUV 10 125 per cubic metre or per wrapped Pallet - For anything larger than 20 litre in size, the cost is VUV 13 500 per cubic metre - VUV 4 200 per 200 litre plastic container/cylindrical drum	- South Sea shipping

/...

Logistics	Estimated costs	Contact
Sea Freight Port Vila- Overseas port:	- VUV 134 000 – 140 000 per cubic metre for shipping to Sydney - VUV 140 000 – 150 000 per cubic metre for shipping to Rotterdam, Netherlands (European Union) [baseline estimate for both cost ranges was obtained from Fr8 logistics quotation]	- Vanuatu agencies - Fr8 logistics Ltd
	*To obtain a quote for Full Container Load rates, contact the companies in “contact”: - 20-foot - 40-foot	- Tropical agency Ltd - Transam
Air freight Port Vila – Overseas port	DHL express air freight rate for your shipment based on 10kg: 1: Air freight from Port Vila to Rotterdam, Netherlands: VUV 97 680 2: Air freight from Port Vila to Sydney, Australia: VUV 48 612	- Fr8 logistics Ltd

* Please note that if an exporter is unable to fill a full container with coconut oil, an alternate method is to export via Less than Container Load. If the VCO exporter does not have enough supply to meet market demand, they can contact the Department of Industry to obtain contacts of other VCO manufacturers who may be able to assist in meeting the demand.

Source: See contact details column.

1.2.4 Customs brokers

Customs brokers can help you export your products by assisting with the completion of all necessary paperwork and payments. They can also provide advice on the next steps of the process.

Contracting a customs broker: There is a registry on the customs and inland revenue website that provides the details of all the customs brokers. To check the registry, click the following link: <https://customsinlandrevenue.gov.vu/index.php/customs/vanuatu-customs-brokers>

Fr8 logistics Ltd and DHL offer services for exporting products overseas using a cubic metre of space in one of their containers. According to a baseline quote from Fr8 logistics, the cost of shipping one cubic metre of VCO to Sydney is approximately **VUV 134,075**, which includes two parts of the cost: local charges in Vila (**VUV 57,620**) and sea freight charges (**VUV 76,455**). The cost of shipping to Europe (to Rotterdam port) is about **VUV 143,762**, which includes origin local charges (**VUV 57,620**) and sea freight charges (**VUV 86,142**).

It is important to note that these prices are indicative, and each company may have different fees.

1.2.5 Testing laboratories and facilities

There are two laboratories on Efate that can conduct testing on VCO (see contacts in Annex 1):

- The **Vanuatu Bureau of Standards laboratory** can carry out both microbiological analysis (hygiene test) and chemical analysis (quality test). The total cost for a chemical analysis of VCO samples provided to the VBS laboratory is approximately **VUV 3,700**, which includes tests for moisture content

(**VUV600**), oil content (**VUV 1,000**), free fatty acid content (**VUV 1,500**), and refractive index (**VUV 600**). The cost of microbiological analysis ranges from **VUV 600** to **VUV 1,800**, depending on the type of test required. Additionally, a certificate of analysis (results of testing) costs **VUV 600**.

- **GeoLabXP:** Contact them for more information about the testing costs (see contact details in Annex 1).

1.2.6 Certification costs

The cost of certification for VCO will depend on the chosen certification system. Please refer to section 2.3 for the certification procedure. There are funds available for producers to access, which are indicated in section 1.3 below.

1.3 Getting local support

There are several local public offices and private businesses that can provide support to help you export your VCO to international markets (further details in Annex 1):

Export assistance:

- To obtain assistance with exporting your product, finding information, and accessing online procedures, you can use the Department of Customs and Inland Revenue's Single Window Portal. You can access the portal via this link: <https://singlewindow.gov.vu/>

Technical assistance to assist in meeting market certification requirements for production facilities:

- Contact the Vanuatu Bureau of Standards, the Department of Biosecurity, and Quality Solutions Pacific for technical assistance to help meet market certification requirements for production facilities. This includes obtaining a Certificate of Analysis, Phytosanitary Certificate, and Standards Certification.

Marketing assistance:

- Contact the Department of External Trade, Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Marketing office of the Department of Industry.

Financial support to assist in exporting your product:

- Seek assistance by contacting the Department of Industry and also the Office of the Registrar of Cooperatives and Business Development Services for more information on these following funds:
 - Industry Development Fund
 - Cooperative Development fund

1.4 Finding a buyer overseas

One of the easiest ways to export VCO is to find a partner directly in the export markets who can offer support in the administrative process. Contacts for these agencies and organizations can be found in Annex 1.

Here is a list of potential institutions that may help in finding buyers of VCO in Australia, the European Union, Japan or the United States:

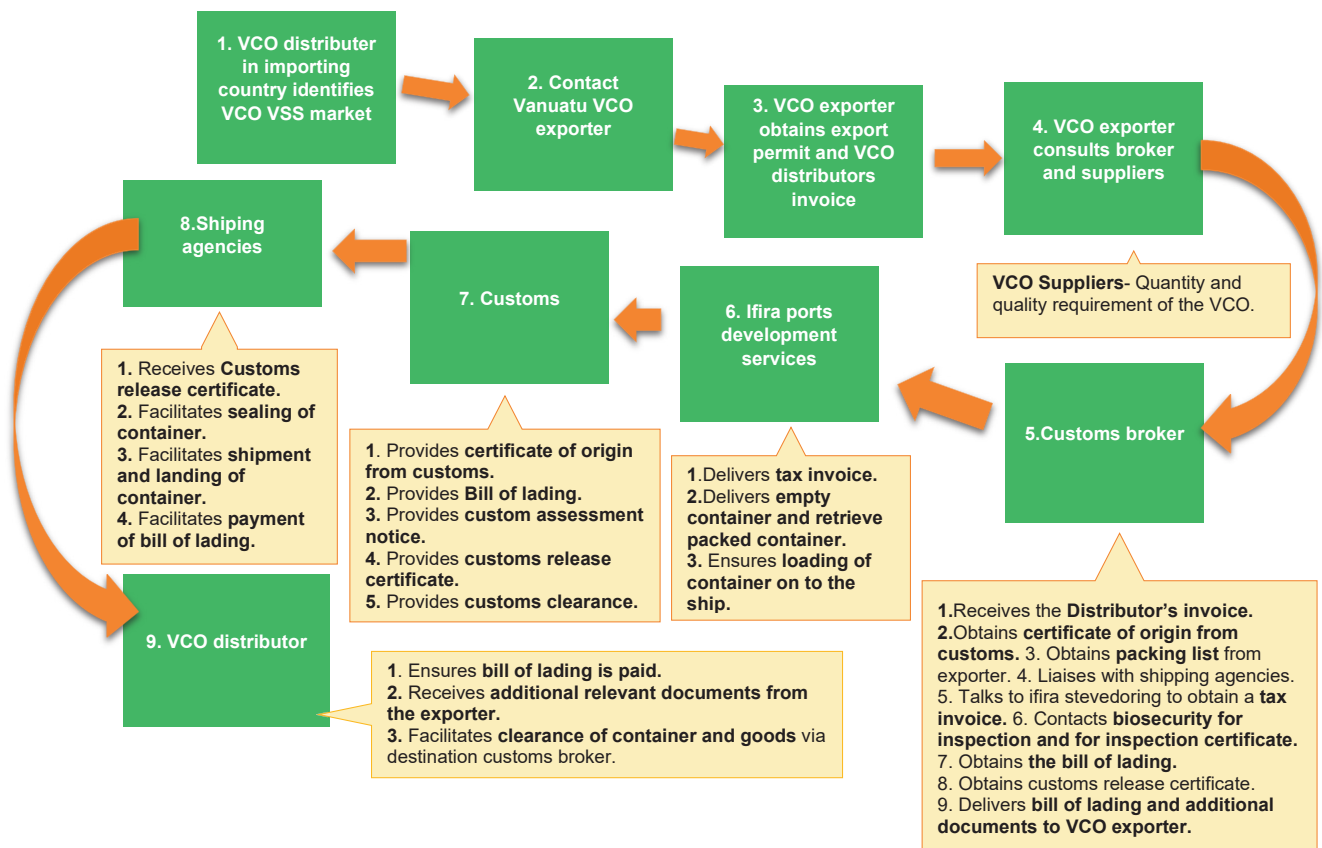
- The Department of Industry
- Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Pacific Trade Investment

- Vanuatu High Commission in Canberra
- Permanent Mission of the Republic of Vanuatu to the United Nations in Geneva

Once all the previous elements have been properly assessed, the exporter can determine whether they are ready to export and if there is potential in the export markets. Before delving into the next chapter, which explains how to prepare for exporting, Figure 1 on the following page provides a flow chart detailing the different steps an exporter needs to take in order to export.

1.5 Flowchart of VCO export value chain

Figure 1. Flowchart of VCO export value chain



Source: Own creation based on interviews.



2

Getting ready to export

2.1 Register as an exporter

Here are the steps to become an exporter of VCO:

Step 1: Register your business name at the Vanuatu Financial Service Commission.

Step 2: Obtain a business license from customs and inland revenue.

Step 3: Obtain an industry permit from the Department of Industry.

Step 4: Identify market requirements and start exporting VCO (see 2.2 Summary by exporting destination).

Step 5: Apply for Value Added Tax (VAT) number if the business is making an overall income exceeding VUV 4 million.

How to apply for VAT number:

- Check the eligibility of your business (use this guide: https://vanuatucustoms.gov.vu/images/VAT/ENG_Do_you_need_to_register.pdf)
- Contact the Office of Customs and Inland revenue for more information.

2.2 Summary by exporting destination

The following conditions apply only to the export of VCO. Exporters in Vanuatu are advised to consult their VCO distributor or buyer in Australia, the European Union, Japan, or the United States to understand the specific market regulations they need to adhere to. First-time exporters are recommended to seek assistance to ensure the VCO complies with all destination country regulations. The requirements for certification (organic or else) are described in section 2.3. below.

2.2.1 Australia⁵

a. Hygienic and quality requirements

- Requirement to be clean and free of contaminant seed, soil, animal and plant debris and other biosecurity risk materials
- Extraneous residue limit (DDT⁶), 1 mg per kg, for edible vegetable oil
- Maximum level of natural toxicants (Erucic acid), 20,000 mg per kg (2 per cent), for edible oil

⁵ Sources: UNCTAD TRAINS Online trainsonline.unctad.org and Australia government websites.

⁶ Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane.

- Requirement to use permitted processing aids and food additives

b. Testing

- Microbiological Analysis
- Chemical analysis

c. Packaging

- Each consignment of goods to be packed in clean and new packaging

d. Inspection

e. Certification

- Phytosanitary certificate, recognized quality assurance certificate, or food control certificate of Australia

f. Labelling

- In English language
- Food identification (name of food, lot identification, name and address of supplier in Australia)
- List of ingredients; specific source name of oil
- “Use-by date” or “best-before date”
- Direction for storage and use (optional)
- Nutrition, health and related claims (optional)
 - Maximum claim for vitamin (Vitamin E), 3.0 mg (30 per cent) per 10g, for edible oil
- Nutrition information (see Annex 3)
- If the oil has undergone a process that has altered its fatty acid composition, a statement that describes the nature of that process
- Country of origin (If the food was packaged using food from more than one country: (a) Identify where the food was packaged; (b) Indicate that the food is of multiple origin)

g. Price control measures including additional taxes and charges

2.2.2 European Union⁷

(1) Virgin coconut oil as food

a. Hygienic and quality requirements

- Maximum level of contaminants⁸
 - Metal, 0.10mg per kg wet weight for oils
 - Sum of dioxins (WHO-PCDD/F-TEQ), 0.75 picogramme (pg) per g fat, for vegetable oils and fats⁹

⁷ Source: UNCTAD TRAINS Online trainsonline.unctad.org and European Union websites.

⁸ See <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02006R1881-20230326> Section 5, 6 and 8.

⁹ WHO-PCDD/F-TEQ is the sum of the toxic equivalencies of the 17 most toxicologically significant dioxins and furans. For more information, see https://www.bfr.bund.de/en/frequently_asked_questions_about_dioxins_and_pcbs_in_food-69876.html#:~:text=WHO%2DPCDD%2F%2DTEQ%20is%20the%20sum%20of%20the,of%20the%2012%20dl%2DPCBs.

- Sum of dioxins and dioxin-like polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBS)(WHOPCDD/F-PCBTEQ), 1.25 pg per g fat, for vegetable oils and fats¹⁰
- Sum of PCB28, PCB52, PCB101, PCB138, PCB153 and PCB180 (ICES – 6), 40 nanogramme (ng) per g fat, for vegetable oils and fats¹¹
- Benzo(a)pyrene 2.0µg per kg, for coconut oil intended for direct human consumption or use as an ingredient in food
- Sum of benzo(a)pyrene, benz(a)anthracene, benzo(b)fluoranthene and chrysene 20.0 microgramme (µg) per kg, for Coconut oil intended for direct human consumption or use as an ingredient in food
- Erucic acid, 50g per kg, for vegetable oils and fats
- Requirement to be colourless, sediment-free
- No additional refinement, bleaching or deodorizing is required
- Taste and smell like coconut oil
- Moisture content will not exceed 0.5 per cent

b. Packaging**c. Inspection****d. Certification**

- Phytosanitary certificate
- **For organic certified VCO**, Operators such as producers, processors, and distributors must inform the relevant authorities about their activities so that the authorities can certify that they comply with the organic production and labelling rules. The small farmers can also choose to go for group certification

e. Labelling (see example in Annex 3)

- Product name: **Virgin Coconut Oil**; Batch code; Name and address of exporter
- List of ingredients; net quantity
- “Best-before date”
- Recommended storage condition; usage instruction
- Nutritional Declaration; declaration of allergenic substance
- Country of origin

f. Traceability

- Country of origin

¹⁰ WHO-PCDD/F-PCB-TEQ is the sum of the toxic equivalencies of the 17 most toxicologically significant dioxins and furan and the 12 dioxin like PCBS. For more information, see https://www.bfr.bund.de/en/frequently_asked_questions_about_dioxins_and_pcbs_in_food-69876.html#:~:text=WHO%2DPCDD%2FF%2DTEQ%20is%20the%20sum%20of%20the,of%20the%2012%20dl%2DPCBs.

¹¹ The regulation specifies the sum of PCB28, PCB52, PCB101, PCB138, PCB153 and PCB180 as ICES – 6.

(2) Virgin coconut oil as a non-animal origin feed material, feed compound, or feed additive

a. Hygienic and quality requirements

- Maximum content of the undesirable substance limit relative to a feed with a moisture content of 12 per cent in Dioxins is 0.75 ng (WHO-PCDD/F-TEQ/kg (ppt) and 1.5 ng (WHO-PCDD/F-PCB-TEQ/kg (ppt)¹²

b. Labelling

- Type of feed: Feed material/feed compound/feed additive/medicated feed
- Name and address of the business
- Establishment approval number
- Net quantity
- List of feed additives preceded by the heading 'additives'
- Moisture content

c. Packaging

- When selling feed additives, it is required to use sealed packages or containers. However, if the product is sold in bulk or unsealed packages or containers, a document with all necessary labelling information is required

d. Authorization

- If for the sale of feed additives. Producers have to submit their applications for authorization to the European Commission

To learn more about exporting more to the European Union market click this link: <https://www.cbi.eu/node/764/pdf>

2.2.3 Japan¹³

a. Notification

- Import notification to quarantine station right after the arrival of a cargo or 7 days before planned arrival through an Advance Notification System. The import notification form in English is available at <https://www.mhlw.go.jp/content/11130500/000788796.pdf>
- Together with the import notification form,
 - (If VCO is exported as a processed food) an ingredient list and a food production flow chart
 - (If VCO is exported as an additive), an explanatory leaflet by which the compounding ration and usage, etc. can be confirmed
- If VCO is to be used in the production of edible fat and oil, the import notification is not needed. Instead, a confirmation certificate should be obtained from quarantine station and submitted to customs. Upon application, quarantine station confirms that the concerned oil does not need the import notification and seals one application copy

¹² See the footnotes 6 and 7.

¹³ Source: UNCTAD TRAINS Online trainsonline.unctad.org, translated Japanese laws and Japanese Government websites.

b. Hygienic and quality requirements

- Cesium (referring to cesium-134 and cesium-137 among radioactive substances) not exceeding 100Bq/kg
- Zero tolerance of following pesticides
 - 2,4,5-Trichlorophenoxyacetic acid; Ipronidazole; Oraquindox; Kaptahor; Calvadox; Coumaphos; Chloramphenicol; Krolluslon; Chlorpromazine; Gentian Violet; Diethylstilbestrol; Dimetridazole; Daminozid; Nitalson; Nitrofurazone; Nitrofurantoin; Sodium nifurstyrate; Furazolidone; Furaltadon; Profam; Malachite green; Metronidazole; Loxarson; Lonidazole
- Processing, storage, transport and packaging in a clean and sanitary manner.
- Importers must verify food safety and maintain import records for potential checks. Violations require immediate reporting

c. Labelling¹⁴

- Item name (virgin coconut oil - バージンココナッツオイル)
- Net content
- Expiration Date of the Product (Y/M/D)¹⁵
- Name and Location of Production Facility
- Allergen (mandatory if contains shrimp, crab, walnut, wheat, buckwheat, egg, milk, peanut)
- Nutritional labelling of food (calories, protein, fat, carbohydrates, sodium must be indicated – see annex 3)
- (If VCO is exported as an additive) List of Additive Information:
 - 1) Name
 - 2) Preserving method
 - 3) Expiration or Freshness date
 - 4) Ingredients and percentage by weight
 - 5) The letters “food additives (食品添加物)”

d. Inspection

- At the quarantine station, the necessity of inspection will be decided. If inspection is required, it can be
 - Documentary examination: raw materials, additives, production criteria
 - On-the-spot inspection: appearance, foreign substances, storage conditions, and documentation
 - Testing: assessments of agricultural chemicals, microorganisms, and genetically modified foods.

e. Price control measures including additional taxes and charges

¹⁴ https://www.caa.go.jp/en/policy/food_labeling/.

¹⁵ For VCO, the reference is the “best-before date”.

2.2.4 United States of America¹⁶

a. Notification

- Prior notice for Food and Drug Administration (FDA) review is required for shipments, with specific time frames based on the mode of transportation: 2 hours for land (road), 4 hours for land (rail) or air, and 8 hours for water arrivals¹⁷

b. Authorization

- Facilities must register before manufacturing, processing, packing, or holding food for consumption in the United States. Registration by an authorized individual is allowed¹⁸

c. Hygienic and Quality requirements

- The exporter and its counterpart (local importer) confirm supplier adherence to the United States safety standards, identifying potential risks in imported foods (biological, chemical, physical) through regular audits, tests, or record reviews¹⁹
- Restricted use of adjuvants, production aids and sanitizers during the production process
- Maximum tolerance limit for Polychlorinated Biphenyls PCB content: 0.2 ppm in animal feed and 10 ppm in human food packaging

d. Certification

- The importer or the FDA might ask for proof that the VCO meets its rules before allowing it into the United States. This proof can be a special certificate for each shipment, or a list of approved places where the VCO is made²⁰
- It is recommended that consultation with the United States importer be undertaken to ensure that all certification requirements are met. It may be necessary to seek third-party certification²¹

e. Inspection

- Production facilities may be subject to inspection based on assessed risk by the American authorities²²

f. Testing

- Testing for restricted food additives²³

g. Packaging

- Restrictions on the materials to be used for packaging, coating of food. It should be food-grade and safe for contact with food

¹⁶ Source: UNCTAD TRAINS Online trainsonline.unctad.org and Food and Drug Administration websites.

¹⁷ Please see the guide to Prior Notice System Interface at: <https://www.fda.gov/food/importing-food-products-united-states/filing-prior-notice-imported-foods>

¹⁸ <https://www.fda.gov/food/guidance-regulation-food-and-dietary-supplements/registration-food-facilities-and-other-submissions>.

¹⁹ Foreign Supplier Verification Programs (FSVP) for Importers of Food for Humans and Animals.

²⁰ See Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) at: <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-modernization-act-fsma/full-text-food-safety-modernization-act-fsma>

²¹ Certifications can qualify for Voluntary Qualified Importer Program, enabling faster food review and entry.

²² See footnote 16.

²³ The FDA food additive status list can be found here: <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-additives-petitions/food-additive-status-list>

h. Labelling²⁴

- Food name (Virgin Coconut Oil)
- Food ingredients (Virgin Coconut Oil)
- Net quantity of content
- Name and place of business of manufacturer, packer, or distributor.
- Food Allergen Labeling
- Labeling Claims²⁵
- FDA Registration (along with facility identifier)
- Nutritional labelling of food (see annex 3)
- If applicable, detectable amount of Sulfiting agent of 10 parts per million or more must be declared on label.

2.3 Obtaining the necessary certification for exporting organic/Fairtrade VCO

With the rising demand for sustainable and ethically sourced products, obtaining a certification for organic or fair trade VCO can open doors to high-value markets. However, understanding the types of certifications and their benefits is crucial to make informed decisions. As such, thorough market research is essential, and securing contracts with customers can help justify the costs of certification. The most common certifications are presented below:

2.3.1 Pacific Organic Standard – Participatory Guarantee System (PGS)

The PGS is a localized certification system, primarily targeting local and regional markets, including Australia and New Zealand. Unlike third-party certifications, which rely on external agencies, PGS relies on peer reviews and internal monitoring. Smallholder farmers form groups, working collectively to uphold and strengthen organic standards, production methods, and even marketing strategies. By doing so, these groups facilitate understanding and documentation processes necessary for obtaining certification.

Get in touch with Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (PoetCom) to learn about the certification process. You can contact POETCom here: <https://www.organicpasifika.com/poetcom/ask-us/>



Assessment: Under the Pacific Organic Guarantee System (POGS), each PGS group has its own certification criteria tailored for local needs. By joining a PGS group, members can engage in peer reviews and farm visits, fostering knowledge exchange and overall skill development.

For more information on the PGS system, and getting to join one, check:

- PGS FAQs: <https://www.ifoam.bio/our-work/how/standards-certification/participatory-guarantee-systems/pgs-faqs>;
- International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements' (IFOAM) PGS overview: <https://www.ifoam.bio/our-work/how/standards-certification/participatory-guarantee-systems>

²⁴ See Food Labeling Guide at: <https://www.fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents/guidance-industry-food-labeling-guide>

²⁵ Any claims made on the label, such as “organic,” or “natural,” must comply with specific regulatory definitions given by the FDA under the Food Labeling Guide (See Footnote 19).

2.3.2 For broader international markets beyond regional boundaries

Third-party certifications are essential. These certifications are recognized and mandated by most international markets. Unlike PGS, which is localized, third-party certifications often require external inspections, stringent checks, and traceability from the farm to the end consumer. The most common third-party certifications are:

Organic Certification: Organic products must adhere to specific standards, encompassing environmental, soil, water, and human-related aspects throughout the value chain. Organic certification assures customers of the product's traceability, its separation from non-organic products, and compliance with international organic standards. It is worth noting that labelling a product as "Organic" without certification is illegal in most markets. As third-party certification represents an investment, costing between \$5,000 to \$15,000 (as per POETcom), it is essential to have customers ready to buy the certified product. Nonetheless, obtaining certifications for various markets through one auditor is possible, typically for an added charge of \$300-600 per certification.

The steps to obtain organic certifications are the following:

1. **Identify Target Market:** Decide on the specific export market(s) you are aiming for. Each has its distinct organic certification.
2. **Contact Certification Body:** Reach out to the organization that provides organic certification for your target market.
3. **Apply for Certification:** Complete the application form to check if you meet the certification standards. Note: To export to multiple markets, separate certifications are needed.
4. **Undergo Inspection:** An auditor visits your farm to assess compliance with organic standards.
5. **Address Shortcomings (if any):** If your farm does not meet certain criteria, the auditor will recommend corrective measures. After implementing these, a re-inspection can occur.
6. **Receive Certification:** Upon meeting all requirements, you'll be granted certification. This often includes permission to use a specific label, aiding in marketing your organic product.
7. **Renew Certification:** Organic certifications are not indefinite. Ensure you renew as specified by the certifying body to maintain your certified status.

Organic Certification Agencies (more details in Annex 1):



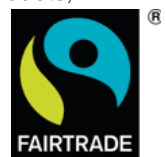
- Australia: NASAA Organic - <https://nasaorganic.org.au/>
- European Union: EU Organic - https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/farming/organic-farming/organi-glance_en
- Japan: JAS - https://www.maff.go.jp/e/policies/standard/specific/organic_JAS.html
- United States: NOP(USDA) - <https://www.ams.usda.gov>



Fairtrade Certification: Aimed at ensuring farmers receive fair prices for their produce, Fairtrade certifications bring transparency to the pricing process. While Fairtrade certification can be beneficial for some products, a cost-benefit analysis should be made as the price mark-up is not always high.

Steps for Fairtrade Certification:

- Click this video and follow the 3 steps to apply: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yF_LCTy2GdU
- Follow this link - <https://text.flocert.net/start-trading-fair-today/> to begin the certification process. Cost of certification is 3500 EUR as an exporter (VUV 454,503). For more information, visit their website <https://www.fairtrade.net/act/get-certified>.



3

Exporting virgin coconut oil

3.1 Shipping

Currently the most economical method of transporting coconut oil products to export is via international ships that visit Port Vila and Luganville wharfs every 15 days (contacts below). The process of getting a consignment of VCO by ship can be as follow:

- 1) Obtain an overseas VCO distributor's invoice.
- 2) Secure the assistance of a customs broker.
- 3) Obtain a certificate of origin from the Department of Customs.
- 4) Obtain a bill of lading from the Department of Customs.
- 5) Provide a packing list to the Department of Customs.
- 6) Obtain a tax invoice from wharf authorities.
- 7) Obtain a certificate from Biosecurity for inspection of the container.
- 8) Obtain a customs assessment notice.
- 9) Obtain a customs release certificate.
- 10) Obtain customs clearance.
- 11) Ensure sealing of the container by vessel authorities.
- 12) Provide copies of the bill of lading and other necessary documents obtained from the customs broker and send them to the overseas distributor.

*For more detailed information contact these government agencies and private shipping companies (see contact details in Annex 1):

- Government Agencies:

- Department of Customs and Inland Revenue and Department of Biosecurity.

- Shipping companies:

- Vanuatu agencies, Fr8 logistics Ltd, Tropical agency Ltd & Transam.

3.2 Arrival in country

Upon the arrival of goods at the destined port of entry, the buyer is responsible for ensuring that the goods are cleared by Customs and Biosecurity based on the documents sent to them by the exporter. This is why, before the goods are dispatched to the destined market, it is essential to ensure that all necessary steps and measures are followed and strictly adhered to.

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Annex 1

Key contacts

Table 5. **Contacts for government agencies**

<i>Government agencies/ Consulates</i>	<i>Telephone number</i>	<i>Email address</i>	<i>Website</i>
Customs and Inland Revenue	+67833091 VoIP:2316	customsrevenue@vanuatu. gov.vu	https:// customsinlandrevenue.gov. vu/index.php
Department of Industry	+67833415		https://doi.gov.vu/
Office of the Registrar of Cooperatives and Business Development Services	+67833390		http://www.cooperative. gov.vu
Single Window Vanuatu			https://singlewindow.gov.vu/
Vanuatu Bureau of Standards	+678 25978/+678 5258278(ADMIN), +678 5258283(LAB) and +678 5258282 (Product development)	vbs@vanuatu.gov.vu	
Vanuatu Financial Service Commission	+678 22247	info@vfsc.vu	https://www.vfsc.vu/ business-names-form/
Vanuatu High Commission in Canberra	+61 2 6282 9931	vanuatucanberramission@ gmail.com	
Vanuatu Mission in Geneva	+41 22 730 17 60	info@vanuatumission.ch	

Table 6. **Contacts for shipping agencies**

<i>Shipping companies</i>	<i>Telephone number (+678)</i>	<i>Email address</i>	<i>Website</i>
LC Tiwi-trader	5368267		
MV Valerie	7395117		
Vanuatu ferry	26999 / 25538 7762064 / 7113919		
Fr8 logistics	27744 or 5507744	exports@fr8.vu	https://www.fr8.vu/
LC Herpoli	5132098		
South sea cargo	24682	admin@southseacargo.com	www.southseacargo.com
Transam	23991	dir@transam.vu	https://transam.com.au/
Tropical agency Ltd.	22205	cargoVLI@tal.vu	https://tal.vu/
Vanuatu agencies			seafreight@ vanuatuagencies.com

Table 7. **Contacts for laboratories**

<i>Laboratories</i>	<i>Telephone number (+678)</i>	<i>Email address</i>	<i>Website</i>
GeolabXP	542 6290	tboyer@geolabxp.com	

Table 8. **Contacts for banks**

<i>Laboratories</i>	<i>Telephone numbe (+678)</i>	<i>Email address</i>	<i>Website</i>
Vanuatu Rural Development Bank	23140 (Port Vila) 37256 (Luganville)	reception@ruralbank.vu	https://www.ruralbank.vu/

Table 9. **Contacts for international and local organizations**

<i>Laboratories</i>	<i>Telephone number (+678)</i>	<i>Email address</i>	<i>Website</i>
Pacific Trade Invest (PTI),	(09) 529 5165		https://www.pacifictradeinvest.co.nz/
Pacific quality Solutions	22325	info@qualitysolutionspacific.com	

Table 10. **Contacts for international certification agencies**

<i>Country/Entity</i>	<i>Label</i>	<i>Contact Details</i>	<i>Website</i>
Australia	NASAA Certified Organic	PO Box 768 Stirling SA 5152, Australia Tel: +61 8 7231 7700 info@ncocertifiedorganic.com.au	https://www.pacifictradeinvest.co.nz/
Australia	ACO Certification Limited	Level 21, 12 Creek Street, Brisbane, Queensland 4000 Australia (+61) 07 3350 5706	https://aco.net.au/Pages/ABoutUs/about.aspx
European Union	EU Organic		https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/farming/organic-farming/organics-glance_en
Japan	JAS	Japanese Agricultural Standards Standards and Conformity Assessment Policy Office, Food Manufacture Affairs Division Tel: +81-3-6744-2098 jas_soudan@maff.go.jp	https://www.maff.go.jp/e/policies/standard/specific/organic_JAS.html
United States	NOP(USDA)		https://www.ams.usda.gov
IFOAM	IFOAM Grower group		https://www.ifoam.bio/our-work/how/standards-certification/internal-control

Annex 2

Table 11. End market for virgin coconut oil in Australia

(websites consulted in December 2022)

Store	Brand	Category	Retail price in AUD	Price in vatu (AUD\$ 1 = VUV 81)
Hello Pure	Hello Pure – Organic Virgin 1 litre	Cold press	1l/ AUD\$ 17.0	VUV 1 376
Niulife	Extra Virgin Coconut Oil – 720ml	Director Micro Expeller DME Cold pressed	1l/ AUD\$ 29.1	VUV 2 356
Amazon Australia	Absolute organic Extra Virgin Coconut Oil	Cold pressed (organic)	1l/ AUD\$ 15.84	VUV 1 282
Amazon Australia	Niulife Organic Extra Virgin Coconut Oil	Cold pressed (organic)	1l/ AUD\$ 51.4	VUV 4 161
Amazon Australia	Global Organics Raw Cold Pressed Coconut oil	Cold Pressed (organic)	1kg/ AUD\$ 21.4	VUV 1 734
Woolworths	Macro Organic Virgin Coconut oil	Cold pressed (organic)	1kg/ AUD\$ 14.5	VUV 1 175
Woolworths	Coco Earth Premium liquid Coconut Oil	Expeller Pressed	1l/ AUD\$ 26.0	VUV 2 107
Woolworths	Coco Earth Organic Liquid Coconut Premium	MCT oil	1l/ AUD\$ 38.0	VUV 3 079

Table 12. End market prices for virgin coconut oil in the European Union

(websites consulted in March 2023)

Store	Brand	Retail price per kg/l in EURO	Price in vatu (€1 = VUV 126)
Holland Barrett, Spain	Perfectly pure virgin coconut oil	1kg/ €26.47	VUV 3 331
Olmuhle Solling, Germany	Bio Coconut Oil Virgin	1l/ €17.90	VUV 2 259
De Notenshop, Netherlands	Raw Organic Food Kokosolie Extra Virgin Raw	1kg/ €19.38	VUV 2 446
Bio Planete, Germany	Bio Kokol (Organic)	1l/ €14.98	VUV 1 891
Rossmann, Germany	Ener Bio Coconut Oil	1kg/ €11.72	VUV 1 479
Bio Planete, France	Virgin Coconut oil (bio)	1kg/ €28.9	VUV 3 643
La Tourangelle, France	Huile vierge de noix de coco bio	1l/ €23.22	VUV 2 927
Amazon, France	Jardin bio – Huile vierge de coco	1l/ €18.55	VUV 2 338
Rennee Voltaire, Sweden	Virgin Kokosolja (organic)	1kg/ €17.67	VUV 2 227

Annex 3

Labelling examples for Virgin Coconut Oil

(values are indicative and should be reviewed)

Australia

Nutrition Information				
Servings per package:	100			
Serving size:	10		g	
	Average Quantity per Serving		Average Quantity per 100 g	
Energy	370	kJ	3700	kJ
Protein	0	g	0	g
Fat, total	10	g	100	g
- saturated	8.8	g	88	g
Carbohydrate	0	g	0	g
- sugars	0	g	0	g
Sodium	0	mg	0	mg

Source: Food Standards Australia.

European Union

Nutrition	100ml/100g
Energy	3761 kJ / 899 kcal
Fat	99.9 g
- of which saturates	95.1 g
Carbohydrates	< 0.5 g
- of which sugars	< 0.5 g
Fibre	< 0.5 g
Protein	< 0.5 g
Salt	< 0.01 g

Source: EUR-LEX, ANNEX XV.

Japan

栄養成分 (100gあたり):

熱量:	899 kcal
たんぱく質:	0g
脂質:	100g
-飽和脂肪: *	92g
炭水化物:	0g
-糖質:*	0g
食塩相当量:	0g

アレルギー物質: なし

Japan – informal English translation

(as reference, products need to be labelled in Japanese)

Nutrition information (per 100g)

Energy	899 kcal
Protein	0g
Fat	100g
- Saturated fat *	92g
Carbohydrates	0g
- Of which Sugars *	0g
Salt	0g

Allergens: none

* Optional information

Source: https://www.caa.go.jp/en/policy/food_labeling/assets/food_labeling_210511_0001.pdf.

United States of America

Nutrition Facts	
28 servings per container	
Serving size	1 Tbsp (15ml)
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	120
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 14g	18%
Saturated Fat 13g	65%
<i>Trans</i> Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 0mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 0g	0%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Total Sugars 0g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	0%
Protein 0g	0%
Not a significant source of vitamin D, calcium, iron, and potassium	
*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.	

Source: <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-labeling-nutrition/changes-nutrition-facts-label>.

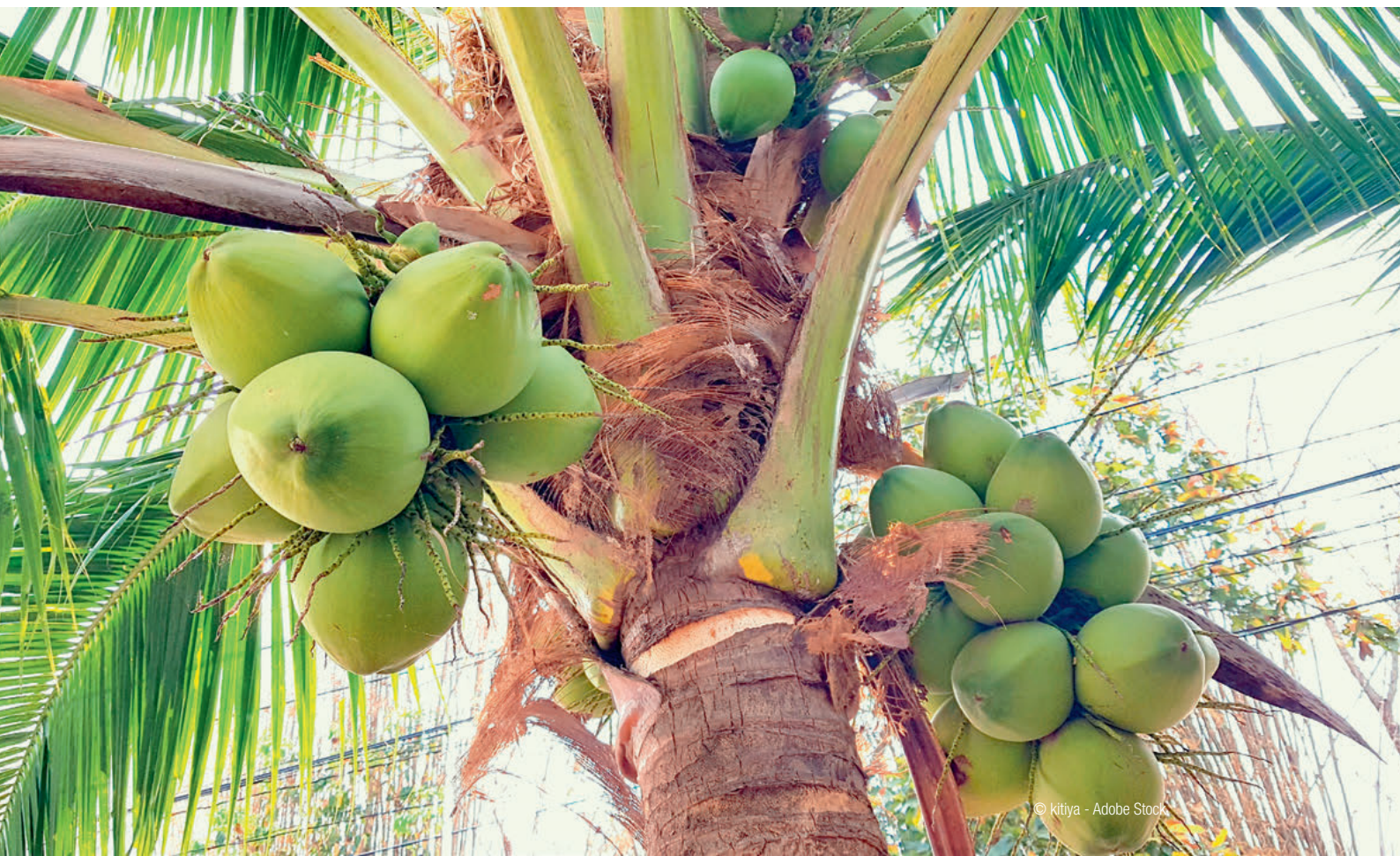




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