Berlin start-up helps Indian farmers

Companies and entrepreneurs from Germany seek their luck all over the world. Sometimes not even the possible profit is in the center, but the drive to help. For example, six young Berliners with knowledge of tropical agriculture and development aid have joined forces to found PEAT, which aims to help Indian smallholders grow harvests. Christina-Maria Purkert reports from the ARD studio in Delhi.

Dr. Srikanth Rupavatharam researches at the Institute ICRISAT on crops in the semi-arid tropics. For two years, the Indian expert for the improvement of harvests through digital technology has been working with the young Berlin company PEAT (Progressive Environmental & Agricultural Technologies) on the further development of the smartphone App Plantix.

The app with the green thumb

The app provides automatic diagnoses of plant damage. With success, because farmers accept the app. It's free and easy to use, as farmer Saandeep Shinde says for an explanatory video in his native language, Marathi: "Simply photograph the diseased plant using the app, then the image is automatically uploaded and analyzed, and the diagnosis comes immediately." Saandeep Shinde, like many other low land farmers, can only use this app because it is available in the local language. There are now Plantix in three Indian languages, eight at the end of the year. In addition to working with the agricultural research institute ICRISAT in Hyderabad, PEAT has opened its own Indian office in Pune. Agricultural scientist Ravindra Botve works there with two colleagues. He goes to the fields and helps farmers get into work on the smartphone. He also asks the farmers for feedback and they improve the app accordingly.

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