

## AGRI BOOST

# Helping farmers in identifying problems and improving produce

**CropIn's app provides climate reports as well as information on diseases, pests and better farm practices**

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BENGALURU

Even India's population increases rapidly, the growth in food production is lagging behind.

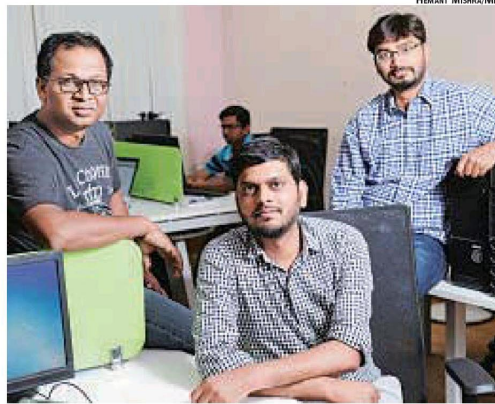
Some entrepreneurs think technology holds the answer: Krishna Kumar, an engineer and an entrepreneur, has co-founded CropIn Technology Solutions along with Kunal Prasad to help increase farm productivity by making every farm and crop traceable and export-worthy.

Established in August 2010, CropIn has developed a cloud-based app that brings together farms and organisations supporting them to enhance productivity.

The company sells the app to food companies and seed production companies such as McCain Foods, Godfrey Philips India Ltd and the Imperial Tobacco which, according to Kumar, has created a "win-win situation" for everybody.

CropIn's aim is to provide climate reports and information on diseases and pests and better farm practices.

"The moment we start getting real-time data from these farms and cloud algorithms run the big-data analytics in real time



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**Tech aid:** Krishna Kumar (centre), founder and chief executive, CropIn Technology Solutions, with Chittaranjan Jena, chief technical officer (left), and Kunal Prasad, co-founder and chief operating officer.

and farmers get all the right math on their fingertips, we will change the scenario in agriculture," Kumar says.

The CropIn app helps farmers identify their problems and enables agricultural experts to advise them on how to improve their productivity.

This is possible at three levels. The first level is the farmers themselves, the second consists of the field officers in charge of them, and the third involves agricultural experts. While field officers assess the produce and the harvest and identify the problems, experts help solve them without having to actually visit the farm.

The app delivers everything that the field officers have gath-

ered, and translates the experts' advice into the required language. This results in the app doing most of the work, reducing the number of middlemen and increasing efficiency.

The initiative won a special mention in the mBillionth 2014 awards for its efforts.

Since August 2011, CropIn has managed to cover 14 states of the country, and around 50 crops worth more than ₹740 crore, and more than 200,000 farmers. Having invested ₹1.04 crore in the venture initially, CropIn earned a revenue of ₹60 lakh during 2013-14 and hopes to break even in 2015-16.

The company is backed by Seeders, which was the first to invest in this venture in 2011,

followed by Ankur Capital in 2013, and Invested Development in 2014. Another round of funding is scheduled to happen in a couple of months, when CropIn expects to raise at least \$4 million.

Phanindra Sama, the founder of redBus, recently became an independent director of CropIn Technology. Vista Foods, global suppliers for McDonalds, is on the CropIn platform as well.

Kumar says reading about the agrarian crisis planted the seed of this idea in his mind. Quitting his job at 27, he set out to build an app to improve farmers' lives. He was joined by Prasad, who is now chief operating officer, and Chittaranjan Jena, chief technical officer. Kumar had a mentor in Vasudev Avadhani from Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, for inspiration and guidance.

CropIn has helped improve productivity by at least 12% in some farms, Kumar claims, and has minimized use of inputs, which has reduced losses by 18% and increased farmer retention by 15%.

"Digitization of agriculture would bring discipline in practices, share best practices and empower us to produce more with less," Jena said. "It's the big playground for big data and big opportunity for all parties in the ecosystem."

Mint has a strategic partnership with Digital Empowerment Foundation, which hosts the mBillionth and Manthan awards.