

My semester at the TNAU, Coimbatore in India

My name is Hauke Pfützner and I am a student of Leibniz University Hannover, Germany. I am studying Horticulture in the final year. One semester of that last year I spent in India at the TNAU, Coimbatore. The reason to do a semester abroad was to advance my experience and also my knowledge of subtropical and tropical fruit-, flower-, vegetable-, medicinal-, herbal- and spice plants. Furthermore I wanted to learn more about the Indian economic background from the horticultural point of view. Also the cultivation methods like sowing, harvesting and grafting of plant products, especially in the group of economical powerful horticultural and agricultural products in Tamil Nadu interested me. The TNAU is one of the biggest and most important universities in the horticultural and agricultural field in whole India. They are doing basic research in some major crops and also working close with farmers and the government. I am very glad I could study at this university with such a great reputation. I also got an impress of the university structures and life in India. Unfortunately there is no possibility at my university in Germany to learn more about plants in such tropical climate conditions. So I decided to study in India, the country with the most plant and climate diversities and varieties worldwide.

During my stay at TNAU I got the great opportunity to visit different research stations all over Tamil Nadu and Kerala, which all belong to the TNAU. The university acts as headquarter and dedicated the guidelines for research in commercial important crops. There are 36 stations which are all connected



and do research for the Indian agricultural sector. The research stations perform pioneer work in the agricultural and horticultural field, which is very important for whole India, the Indian population and also for the national and international economy. Half of the Indian gross domestic product depends on the agricultural products. Therefore it is very important to increase the yield of the plants and so the income of the farmers. Additionally the research stations analyse the demand on fertilizer for the plants and advance different methods of growing. Besides they do research in the main diseases of most common plants. One other aspect is the breeding of different varieties which should be best suited for the climatic conditions in India. They also organize “farmer trainings” for the regional growers, where they introduce them the newest cognitions in research. In my opinion that is one of the most important functions of the research stations: the farmers get the possibility to try new techniques and methods and evolve their knowledge in plant grow and care. The research stations

also act as nurseries, where the farmers can purchase different commercial plants and new varieties, which are best suited for the local climatic conditions. The station gives the results of its observation to the official department of horticulture and agriculture. From here, the information is shared with all other farmers in whole India. It is called the farming community. Another important function of the stations is the student training, where agriculture and horticulture students from Madurai or Coimbatore get the possibility to learn more about the practical work of growing, planting, pruning, transplanting and many more. They can stay at the stations for a longer time period and advance their knowledge about different methods and also do some projects, which they do in a practical way on the field.

These Stations belong to the TNAU and their purpose is to record the cognitions in plant growth in different climatic conditions. Most of the stations I have visited are located in the hills and work with crops which need the cooler temperatures of this higher altitude. These crops are coffee, tea, pepper and also some temperate fruits and vegetables like apple, peach, plum, pear, garlic and also flowers like carnation, dianthus and gerbera. The object of research is to find plant varieties which are growing best under the given conditions. Every area should have its own best suited plants for its specific climatic conditions, which give the best yield, grow best and have fewest diseases. In India the hill areas have very different conditions and are a long way away from each, so it is necessary to find the best variety for every area. The TNAU gave me the opportunity to see the different research stations and how they do their work and I also got some information to advance my knowledge.

All in all I got a wide impress of the Indian university work, research and social life. In this short time I got the possibility to see many different areas in Tamil Nadu, also all the different temperate zones and so a wide range in all typical plant productions. I have seen the great Indian nature and the hard work of the farmers and their families.

I am really glad about my decision to study one semester abroad and I am very thankful for the help of my classmates and professors in India. In fact it is a duty to learn and see more about other cultures on our earth, so we get an understanding for the behaviour of other people and we advance our edge of a plate.

India, the land with the biggest hearts.

