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By Fred Searle

Tuesday 30th January 2018, 12:07 GMT

## Veg crypto startup vanishes leaving 'penis' behind

Project to bring fruits and vegetables to the blockchain is wiped from internet after raising just \$11 in apparent scam



The Ethereum blockchain platform was launched as an alternative to Bitcoin in 2015 Photo: BTC Keychain

**A** cryptocurrency startup supposedly designed to revolutionise the fruit and vegetable industry appears to have been a scam after it was wiped from the internet, leaving only the word "penis" on its homepage.

Prodeum, a cryptocurrency crowdfunding startup, claimed to be developing a system to "bring fruits and vegetables to the blockchain" and use the technology to track produce from farm to store.

The cryptocurrency in question was Ether and the blockchain platform to be used was Ethereum. They were released as an alternative to the better-known Bitcoin in 2015.

On 28 January the startup captured the attention of investors after trying to sell tokens using a risky fundraising technique, according to Business Insider.

All traces of Prodeum were then deleted from the internet and for a time its homepage contained just one word: 'penis'.

According to Business Insider, the company only appears to have raised a pitiful \$11 of its \$6.5 million target in its initial coin offering (ICO), causing only minimal losses to duped investors.

However, the publication said the incident highlights the risks that cryptocurrencies pose to investors due to a lack of regulation currently governing cryptocurrencies.

Three blockchain experts were listed as team members or advisors on the fundraising page for Prodeum, but the trio told Business Insider they were victims of identity theft and had no links to the company.

Lithuania-based blockchain engineer and advisor Vytautas Kaseta told the website

it looked like the work of scammers based in Russia, but this cannot be confirmed.

This would not have been the first project to use blockchain technology to track products in the fruit and vegetable supply chain. Walmart has been trialling blockchain technology with IBM since 2016.

In December 2017, the two companies announced they would work with online Chinese retailer JD.com and Tsinghua University National Engineering Laboratory for E-Commerce Technologies to launch a Blockchain Food Safety Alliance in China.

The aim is to create a standards-based method of collecting data about the origin, safety and authenticity of food, using blockchain technology, IBM said.

<http://www.fruitnet.com/americafruit/article/1474/parts-of-san-diego-quarantined-as-psyllid-count-mounts>

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