

First crops harvested at school's aquaponic garden



The first crops of their uniquely grown vegetables were recently picked at the farm of HTS Carel de Wet and sold to staff and learners of the school.

HTS Carel de Wet, now also a school offering agricultural subjects, was the only school chosen countrywide to start aquaponic gardening.

This project, launched eight months ago with the help of Air Products and Inmed, exists of an innovative system of food production which combines aquaculture (fish

culture) and hydroponics (soilless crop production).

A hot house was build on the farm, situated on the border of Flora Gardens, and different vegetable seeds were sown in gravel. Water from adjacent fish ponds are sprinkled over the seeds/plants every hour for 15 minutes.

The water filters through the gravel and is collected again and pumped back into the fish ponds.

In our water scarce country and where soil is an issue, this is a sustainable farming technique which looks to the future while taking care of the environment. About 85% to 90% less water is used than usual and no chemicals are used at all.

Agricultural teacher, Mr Phillip Oelofse says pests are driven away by using crushed garlic or chilli and also canola oil for lice. "The plants grow much faster as they get constant nutrition and it even tastes better."

Air Products and Inmed, an international philanthropic organisation, became involved as they both have children and education as focus of their CSI strategy.

Picture:
HTS Carel de Wet's Agricultural teacher, Mr Phillip Oelofse and some of the learners in the aquaponics hot house. From left are Gladys Thungela, Happy Maseko, Busiswe Manciya and Thabile Ngalo.