Empowering schools to educate, train and sustain

Meyerton. - Air Products South Africa’s investment in a 224m² aquaponics system at the Randvaal Primary School in Daleside proves to be a successful model for schools to teach children the skills of producing their own vegetables and for the school to become self-sustainable.

Teachers and learners at the Randvaal Primary School in Daleside, Midvaal, who are extremely motivated by their successful cucumber crop of more than 75kg in last December, attended a training session and planted vegetable seeds last week.

Air Products, in partnership with INMED, committed to the project at the school early last year, which is aimed at educating learners on health and nutrition as well as providing a platform to teach them to grow their own vegetables. The basis of the programme at Randvaal Primary is an aquaponics system, but they are also exposing the children to growing vegetables in tyres and herbs in wall gardens. Aquaponics teaches children to grow their own fresh vegetables in a way that is quick, energy efficient, chemical free and environmentally friendly.

Randvaal Primary makes use of the vegetables to supplement the school’s feeding scheme and is hoping that the programme will eventually become a platform for job creation and sustainability for the greater community.

Mr Piet du Toit, principal at Randvaal comments: “We receive support for the school’s feeding scheme from various parties, but the aquaponics system provides us with a sustainable solution for the future.
Our learners are also fortunate to be exposed to the skills of growing their own vegetables. The school is in the vicinity of a number of informal settlements and many of our learners live in homes where parents are unemployed. By teaching the learners how to grow their own vegetables, they can transfer their skills to family members at home.
Not only is this a way to ensure that there is food on the table, but the family can eventually sell their produce and earn an income.
A key focus area of our corporate social investment projects is the country’s youth and our partnership with INMED has provided us with the opportunity to educate, empower and add value to the lives of our children. This skill can also be transferred to friends, family and community members who are in need of finding ways to become self-sustainable,” says Arthi Govender, market research and strategy manager at Air Products.

According to Janet Ogilvie, operations manager at INMED, Air Products also invested in an aquaponics system at the Carel de Wet Technical High School in Vanderbilpark four years ago and the results have been extremely rewarding. “We are confident about our model of the aquaponics system and are excited to see more positive outcomes at Randvaal Primary in future.”

Attending the training and planting of seeds at the Randvaal Primary School, from left to right, Arthi Govender from Air Products, learner Fortunate van der Merwe, Midvaal Local Municipality Executive Mayor, Councillor Bonani Baloyi, Principal of Randvaal Primary Piet du Toit, INMED’s Petrus Tsotetsi, educator Ms Flora Hatla and Khumbudzo Manyaga and Janet Ogilvie from INMED. There was also interest from female learners Mpho Kgapola, Precious van der Merwe and Ntokozo Zwane in the front row.