

## Mr Price Foundation empowers a sustainable future through hydroponic technology

The Mr Price Foundation's Handpicked Programme is empowering a new generation of sustainable agripreneurs and homegrowers through the use of hydroponic technology and vertical farming, leading the way to a more sustainable future.



Source: Supplied

Hydroponics is a method of growing plants without soil, using a nutrient-rich water solution. Vertical farming is a method of growing plants in vertically stacked layers, which allows for more efficient use of space.

"Through the HandPicked Programme, growers learn essential life skills, crop growth production, farming and agriculture management, economics, and agribusiness. This knowledge empowers the youth and communities to become self-sufficient while equipping them with the skills to start and manage their own agricultural businesses," says Karen Wells, head of the Mr Price Foundation.

"We have partnered with The African Grower System and Freshlife Produce to create a programme that promotes sustainable and environmentally friendly farming methods. This method of farming involves planting crops in vertical towers using coconut coir as the growing medium. The system is highly efficient and eco-conscious, using less water and space than traditional farming methods, and maximising scarce resources in urban and rural environments," adds David Churchman, head of finance and HandPicked at the Mr Price Foundation.

### Sustainable methods in small spaces

The positive impact of the programme can already be seen in communities and schools across the country. Only three years since its inception, the programme has already trained 27 home growers, facilitated 10 tertiary students in its 12-month internship programme and established three agribusinesses. Six commun

farming hubs have emerged and a feather in its cap is the first retail rooftop farm in the Western Cape at the Kenilworth Mall.



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Cairey Baxter-Bruce, Show Director of the East Coast Radio House + Garden Show says: "This eco-friendly method of agriculture has the potential to transform how we see our home gardens. It enables us to grow our own herbs, plants and flowers using sustainable methods in small spaces. One of the key pillars within this year's show theme 'My Home, My Way' is around 'My Sustainable Living'.

"We believe that by promoting environmentally conscious practices like Mr Price Foundation's HandPicked initiative has the ability to transform traditional gardening methods and encourage the enhancement of green spaces in our homes. By using their methods of farming, we re-envision what is possible in our homes and gardens and how it can contribute to a more sustainable future."

Churchman further adds: "A platform that is perfect to showcase the HandPicked initiative and to raise awareness around sustainable agriculture is the East Coast Radio House + Garden Show. Our agripreneur will be at the show to inspire more people to adopt sustainable farming practices and to support local food production. The team will demonstrate just how easy it is to get started in your own home growing journey"

You can support HandPicked at this year's East Coast Radio House + Garden Show from 1 – 9 July 2023

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