

# Teach a man to fish.....

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Hi there

Please let me say this upfront: I don't want your money - I'm donating, so please take a minute to read this if you can spare the time.

I've approached you or your organization because you're involved in community development and / or education, and I've got something I think can make a big difference in that arena. Even if you're not directly involved, please take a few minutes to read through this anyway, maybe you can pass it on to someone in the right position.

In short I'm donating a fair amount of equipment towards facilitating education or community development (both if possible!!), along with a concept which I consider to be the next big thing in food production. I offer these goods free of charge on a few small conditions - mainly that, without detriment to the beneficiaries, I'd like stay involved in order to see how the project runs and improve the concept in order to take the it to a broader audience.

## Something fishy

In tradition tunnel farming plants are planted in a medium which in itself does not provide any nutrition, but only acts as a support for the plant's root structure. Nutrition is provided by adding nutrients to the water, thus feeding it to the plant. Excess water runs off and is usually not used again. Due to the nutrients being artificially added, it will never be considered organic.

The aquaponics system takes the tunnel system one step further. Nutrients are obtained from fish living in the dams and delivered to the plants by cycling the water through the growth medium. The plants act as a filter and the excess water is pumped back into the dam. Advanced systems are possible where chickens are incorporated in to the cycle.

Tilapia is the fish of choice for starting out as it's a hardy and edible fish. There are of course many options, with the only limitations being increased complexity in maintaining the water quality when keeping meat eating fish, or when the choice of species require that the water temperature be controlled.

The choice of crop is almost limitless, popular choices for tunnel farming being tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers.

## So what's the big deal?

- I believe that aquaponics, if practiced properly, may be classified as organic farming, which as you may know is all the rage these days. The single biggest highlight of this philosophy is the **independence** from corporate seed producers pushing genetically modified seeds and pesticides, which at best has been proven harmful, if not carcinogenic.
- It's an intensive farming method, requiring a small surface area for large yields – no large tracts of land needs to be acquired. Once the concept has been proven it may even be scaled down to a back yard sized version.
- Following the initial set up costs, it's relatively low maintenance.
- Due to the small surface area requirements, these farming hubs can be set up very close to the communities. It may even be possible to integrate it into future housing developments.

## Up for grabs

- 2 Portable dams, +- 25 000 liter each.
- 2 Brand new pumps
- Some piping & fittings
- New gutters for planting vegetables
- A considerable amount of steel: angle iron and Y-standards , for making stands etc.
- 250L drum
- Float switches x 2
- ...some other odds and ends

## What's still needed?

- Location with access to water and electricity.
- Labour – setting everything up:
  - Stands for gutters. Can be on the ground for starters?
  - Setting up the dams and pumps.
- Materials
  - A farming tunnel, or poles to build a shade net structure. It's important to control the environment.
  - Shade net / plastic to cover the structure
- Crops & livestock
  - Fish
  - Duck weed (fish food)
  - Vegetable seeds
  - Growing medium

## Where to from here?

If you interested, send me a mail or contact me so that we can try to work out something!! Feel free to send any questions you might have, I'll answer as best I can.

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## About me



My name is Emile Pretorius. I'm interested in start-up companies, that green thing and all sorts of things in between. I program to make people pay me. The equipment I bought was for a pet project (aquaponics) that I'm very passionate about. As things worked out I'll no longer be able to pursue it single handedly as I'm selling my property where I wanted to set this up. I do however still have a burning desire to see the concept work and ultimately see the mindset and landscape of farming change in South Africa.

And I'm a very serious person.