

Heliponix tackles food insecurity in Lesotho and rural southern Indiana

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An agricultural startup founded by Purdue University alumni is addressing international food insecurity in the Kingdom of Lesotho and rural southern Indiana, to expand domestically and internationally.

Heliponix LLC, doing business as anu, commercialises fully automated, in-home smart gardens that grow daily servings of produce using aeroponics. Aeroponics is a form of hydroponics, the technique of growing plants without soil.

The anu smart gardens consume less energy and more than 98 per cent less water than conventional field farming. Produce includes most leafy green vegetables, culinary herbs, and fruiting and flowering plants, which anu manufactures in seedpods.

Purdue Polytechnic Institute alumni Scott Massey and Ivan Ball founded anu, inspired by working on NASA-funded hydroponic research at Purdue led by Cary Mitchell, professor of horticulture in the College of Agriculture. Purdue Innovates has invested in anu, and the Indiana Economic Development Corp. awarded the company an Indiana Manufacturing Readiness Grant in 2023.

According to the World Food Programme, Lesotho has a population of 2 million. More than 24 per cent of the population lives in extreme poverty, and around 580,000 people face food insecurity.