

Sprightly Seed and Bel Porto School bring food security to Cape Town with community market garden

By [Aa-isha Hassiem](#)

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In celebration of World Soil Day on 5 December, members of the media were invited to Bel Porto School in Cape Town to witness the unveiling of a new community market garden. We had the pleasure of learning about the Sprightly Seed organisation and gained insight into Bel Porto and what they are hoping to achieve for their learners through this project.



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Bel Porto, a special needs school, caters to learners with severe intellectual disabilities. It aims to provide its pupils with a baseline education in the usual subjects (numeracy, literacy and reading) and to also teach them vocational skills so that they can find employment once they graduate.

The school's principal, Ilona Herman, spoke about the importance of vocational education, saying that the number of unemployed youth will only improve once South Africans realise that this type of training is needed for a sustainable economy.

This is especially true for those graduating from Bel Porto, as less than a handful of them will be able to find employment without it. The institution's approach also equips its learners with confidence and makes them feel valued.

To ensure an equal education, each child and their disabilities are considered. For example, pupils who are non-verbal are given other ways to communicate, also known as alternative augmentative communication (AAC), which consists of various methods such as eye-tracking devices, text-to-speech, communication boards, visual grids, etc.

They also have access to class computers so that they can participate in activities.

Herman says regarding the vision of the garden project: "The organic garden initiative at Bel Porto is more than just an educational tool; it's a nurturing ground for empowerment and independence.

"Through this garden, our students with intellectual and physical disabilities receive practical training that equips them with valuable life skills. They are actively involved in the cultivation, processing and sale of produce, which not only fosters a sense of accomplishment but also generates crucial funds for the school.

"This project is a cornerstone in our mission to guide our students towards self-sufficiency, and the confidence to step into the workplace meaningfully prepared. We are planting seeds of opportunity that we believe will flourish into brighter futures for each student involved."



According to recent data, 27% of South African children under the age of five experience malnutrition, making easily accessible nutritious resources all that more important when it comes to achieving food security and balanced diets. Sprightly Seed and Bel Porto School have taken a step in the right direction by providing the surrounding community with a market garden that aims to achieve just that, while also serving them in various other ways.

During the launch of the community garden, the Sprightly Seed, a dedicated public benefit organisation committed to environmental sustainability and social development, highlighted the non-profit's commitment to promoting food security, sustainable practice, and community engagement in South Africa.

"The new garden is more than just a plot of land; it represents a vital step towards enhancing food security and nutrition, especially crucial in South Africa. The PBO aims to be a beacon of hope and a model for sustainable gardening practices in the region," says Jade Orgill, managing director and human development specialist at The Sprightly Seed.

In alignment with its goals, Orgill says that The Sprightly Seed is poised to become the community's preferred destination for all gardening essentials, including a wide selection of seeds, organic plants, fruits, and vegetables.

The organic garden also serves as an educational hub, with training programs designed to empower individuals, schools and the southern Suburbs community of Cape Town. These programs focus on food sustainability, nutrition and

environmental stewardship, fostering a culture of self-sufficiency.



Orgill also unveiled a strategic five-year plan dedicated to fostering a connection between the earth and humankind

"Our roadmap for our organic market garden programme at Bel Porto School is comprehensive, integrating key components such as experiential outdoor education, management of post-harvest processes, beneficiating garden produce into earth and people-friendly products, seamless curriculum integration, and ensuring knowledge access and inclusive skills development.

"This blueprint underscores our pledge to cultivate a self-sustaining environment that serves the broader community. Moving forward, we are eager to deepen our community ties through interactive workshops and collaborative partnerships, aiming to nurture and expand our initiative within Bel Porto School and across the schools in the Cape Metros."

The Bel Porto students' involvement also relates to the school's educational approach, as they adopt skills that can be used in the real world, allowing them to work in other gardens or to come back and work at that specific one for a monthly stipend.

The market garden will open its doors to the public starting on 5 December 2023 and operate during school hours. Proceeds from this project will go back into the school, providing the establishment with much-needed funding.

ABOUT AA-ISHA HASSIEM

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