

# SUSS programme trains budding urban farming entrepreneurs

Using 3D-printed farming components and weaving permaculture elements into vegetable farms are some of the business ideas students came up with at the end of a six-month course that taught them to look at urban farming from an entrepreneurial perspective.

Students from the Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) were trained under the Agri-preneur Incubation Programme (AIP), which started in 2022.

As part of the AIP, a rooftop farm of approximately 700 sq m was set up at an SUSS building in partnership with Nutrious Farms, a firm that aims to further sustainable agriculture and food security.

Nutrious Farms set up the basic elements for a soil-based and hydroponic farm, but left it to the students to give life to the space.

After three batches of AIP students, the rooftop farm is teeming with bok choy, lettuce, basil and cherry tomatoes.

“We want to first expose our students to the sector and then get them to try their hands at (growing produce) and ultimately develop start-up solutions for problems they observe in the agri-tech sector,” said Ms Priscilla Koh, head of SUSS’ Office of Entrepreneurship.

The optional course is open to SUSS students and alumni. At the end of the programme, they are re-

quired to pitch their business ideas and sell their harvested produce or products at a bazaar.

Fourth-year business analytics student Yeh Yu Kang, 26, and his team are planning to sell wraps containing their harvested greens and herbs.

The AIP is among a number of urban farming-related courses that have sprouted in recent years to help build the agritech workforce here.

A few AIP students also entered SUSS’ venture builder programme after their business ideas developed during the course were found to be promising.

Ms Koh cited a student in the

venture builder programme who is looking to develop customisable 3D-printed farm components paired with sensors to help small urban farms save on hardware repair costs and simplify operations.

The AIP got third-year supply chain management student Nur Aqilah Rosli to think about including permaculture principles in commercial farms.

The 23-year-old said: “These principles promote zero waste and mimic natural ecosystems. So instead of using pesticide for aphid (small sap-sucking insects) infestation, we can introduce natural predators such as ladybugs.”

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Students Yeh Yu Kang and Nur Aqilah Rosli at Singapore University of Social Sciences’ rooftop farm. ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG