

SKY FARMING IS REVOLUTIONIZED ON ROOFTOPS

VEGETABLES

SKY VEGETABLES, MADISON, WIS., is an urban-agriculture firm that uses a sustainable model to farm produce on grocery-store rooftops. Created by two University of Wisconsin-Madison students, the firm grows vegetables, fruits, herbs and flowers year-round using commercial, aquaponics greenhouses. The converted rooftops harvest rainwater and insulate the buildings, reducing energy and water consumption.

Keith Agoada, a 2008 graduate of UW-Madison and president of Sky Vegetables, says the inspiration came last year during a visit to Chicago. "I loved the concept of community gardens; however, land in urban areas is extremely expensive," he says. "It dawned on me that perhaps rooftops would be a good place to farm." After intense research, Agoada realized rooftop farming could be commercialized and he convinced his former horticulture professor, Brent McCown, to give him credits for generating a business plan. Sky Vegetables was born.

Sky Vegetables' business plan requires a grocery store to sell the fruits, herbs and vegetables grown on its roof. The produce features the Sky Vegetables label, which provides facts about the environmental significance, safety, taste, freshness and nutritional content of the produce, as well as informs the customers when it was brought to market. In addition, shoppers can view a live feed of the rooftop farm.

In 2008, Sky Vegetables won G. Steven Burrill's Business Plan Competition at the Wisconsin



School of Business, Madison, and later took second place in the Wisconsin Governor's Business Plan Contest in the Business Services category; the contest is run through a partnership of the Wisconsin governor's office and Wisconsin Technology Council, Madison. The governor's contest encourages entrepreneurs in the creation, start-up and early-growth stages of high-tech businesses in Wisconsin.

Agoada hopes rooftops of supermarkets around the world eventually will grow fresh fruits and vegetables. He says the sky is the limit for expansion and growth of Sky Vegetables. "If people demand produce that is more nutritious, safer, fresher and grown in a socially and environmentally responsible manner, we are happy to supply them."

To learn more, visit www.skyvegetables.com.