African farmers inspire new range of urban gardening products

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In 2009, the number of people living in urban cities surpassed those living in rural areas. This change heralds far reaching implications for how we live and feed ourselves. However, it has also led to a burgeoning trend in urban gardening across city landscapes - as people try to reconnect with nature.

Cafédirect Producers' Foundation (CPF) have launched 'SmallFolders' on the crowdfunding platform Indiegogo. SmallFolders are a range of tried and tested urban gardening products inspired by smallholders, and their hacks to growing and gardening in small spaces.

“We work with small scale farmers across Africa and Latin America, and they are consistently demonstrating the value and power of their knowledge in finding innovative solutions to the challenges they face," said Claire Rhodes, CPF General Manager, “we asked ourselves how an increasingly urbanised population could learn from our farming network and utilise their expertise in a changing world."

Driven by a simple idea of bringing smallholders' knowledge to Western audiences, CPF developed a range of urban gardening products inspired by the innovations from amongst their network of 280,000 smallholder farmers. They shared these ideas with London-based product designers, Those, who adapted, tested and developed products for city living.

“We now have a great range of amazing products that people will be able to purchase through our Indiegogo campaign." said Alex Sowter, CPF's Creative Enterprise Manager, “They can purchase our vertical garden, for example, and use it to keep fresh herbs at their fingertips. Like basil ready for a stir-fry, or mint for a delicious mojito!"

SmallFolders have a simple and streamlined design that are quick and easy for anyone to set up, separating them from the myriad of urban gardening products available. CPF is taking their SmallFolders one step further; seeking to do more than release an incredible product onto the market. This campaign is just the beginning of the journey for SmallFolders.

“SmallFolders are not just products, they form part of a bigger idea." says Alex, “With SmallFolders, we want to create a sustainable model where farmers' knowledge and experiences can also benefit urban environments."

SmallFolders will be sent to campaign backers in packs containing information and tips direct from farmers - the experts. This, according to CPF, provides a great opportunity to make relevant the vast expertise of the farmers within their network.

“What we're working toward is a Full Circle model," said Katie Messick, CPF Business Development Manager, “where we can generate sustainable income for our programmes on the ground in Africa and Latin America, which in turn, will feed back into the development of additional products that can be brought to the urban gardening market - and like that we restart the circle."

CPF's campaign launched on Indiegogo on 18th November, and will run for 40 days: igg.me/at/smallfolders

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For further information, please contact Claire Dunn at sam@producersfoundation.org or telephone +44 (0)20 7033 6010

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Cafédirect Producers' Foundation

T. +44 (0)20 7033 6010
E. sam@producersfoundation.org
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