

## TAA VISIT REPORT TO APONIC

On February 23<sup>rd</sup> **APONIC** ([www.aponic.co.uk](http://www.aponic.co.uk)) hosted a visit by sixteen TAA members, spouses and friends at its base in the Eastern Agri-Tech Innovation Hub near Soham, Cambs ([www.innovationhubuk.co.uk](http://www.innovationhubuk.co.uk)).

Managed by NIAB, the hub has a particular focus on fresh produce and field vegetables, carrying out applied research “to reduce or re-use all forms of waste in the food supply chain and improve resource use efficiency in its production”.

Consistent with that mandate and under the strap line “The Future is Growing Up”, **APONIC** is developing vertical soil-less growing systems with a focus on high value, low volume crops.

The company’s head, Jason Hawkins-Row, explained to the TAA group that its system uses 90% less water than traditional agriculture, runs on rain water and solar power, does not emit harmful run-off into the environment and massively reduces the need for fossil fuels in food production.

The system eliminates the need for herbicides, and, because of the nutrient targeting requires much less fertilizer. The controlled environment and the ease of crop inspection, minimizes losses from pathogens.

The modules, which are the result of six years R&D, are manufactured in UK under a patent. Key to the continuing development of the system is a remote-controlled support and monitoring network to gather and analyze data from the various trial and commercial sites. This feedback loop was, for example, informing the management of the production of the herb Basil.

Medicinal cannabis and pyrethrum are products with the potential to extend the current focus on herbs, fruit, vegetables and salad crops, examples of which were seen in the company’s demonstration units.

During his excellent presentation and in the Q&A session, Jason highlighted the opportunities for investments in the tropics with on-going links to India, UEA and Zambia. The challenges of marketing of the produce were discussed and it was emphasized that consistency of product quality was key, an important advantage of the **APONIC** system.

All-in-all an enlightening and entertaining visit for which Jason received a well-deserved vote of thanks from Keith Virgo, the TAA Chairman.

Bill Thorpe.



Garden Peas



Basil trials