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Hydroponics-The Future Farming

Habeeba I[1], Vinothini G[2] and Rajasekar G[3*]
[1,2]UG Scholar, Adhiyamaan College of Agriculture and Research, Athimugam, Krishnagiri, Tamil Nadu, India
[3*]Assistant Professor, Plant Pathology, Adhiyamaan College of Agriculture and Research, Athimugam, Krishnagiri, Tamil Nadu, India

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Introduction

Hydroponics is a method of growing plants without soil, using a nutrient-rich water solution instead. This method of growing plants has gained popularity in recent years due to its efficiency and ability to produce high yields in small spaces. In hydroponics, plants are grown in a controlled environment where the temperature, humidity, and lighting can be carefully regulated. The roots of the plants are placed in a growing medium, such as gravel, perlite, or coconut coir, and are continuously fed with a nutrient solution that contains all the essential minerals and nutrients that the plants need to grow. One of the main benefits of hydroponics is that it allows plants to grow faster and produce higher yields than traditional soil-based methods. It also conserves water and nutrients since the water is re-circulated through the system, and there is no runoff that can harm the environment.

Hydroponics is used to grow a variety of crops, including leafy greens, herbs, tomatoes, cucumbers, and strawberries. It is also used in research and experimentation to study plant growth and development in controlled environments.

Types of Hydroponics

There are several types of hydroponic systems, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. Here are some of the most common types of hydroponics:

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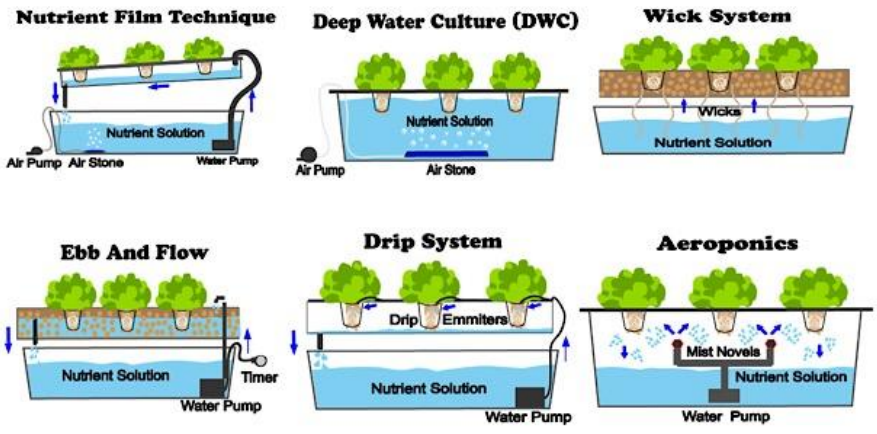
1. **Nutrient Film Technique (NFT):** In this method, a thin film of nutrient solution is constantly flowing over the roots of the plants, which are supported by a sloping channel.
2. **Deep Water Culture (DWC):** In this method, plants are suspended in a nutrient-rich solution, with their roots submerged in the water. An air pump is used to oxygenate the water and promote root growth.
3. **Wick System:** In this method, a wick is used to passively transport the nutrient solution from a reservoir to the growing medium, providing a simple and low-cost solution.
4. **Ebb and Flow:** In this method, plants are placed in trays filled with a growing medium, and the nutrient solution is periodically flooded and drained from the tray.
5. **Drip Irrigation:** In this method, nutrient solution is dripped onto the base of the plants using a drip line or drippers. The excess solution is collected and recycled.
6. **Aeroponics:** In this method, plant roots are suspended in the air and are misted with nutrient-rich water. This allows for more oxygen to reach the roots, promoting faster growth.



Crops grown on soil-less or hydroponics culture

Crop Type	Crops
Cereals	*Oryzasativa* (Rice), *Zea mays* (Maize)
Fruits	*Fragariaananassa* (Strawberry)
Vegetables	*Lycopersicon esculentum* (Tomato), *Capsicum frutescens* (Chilli), *Solanum melongena* (Brinjal), *Phaseolus vulgaris* (Green bean), *Beta*

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	vulgaris (Beet), *Psophocarpustetragonolobus* (Winged bean), *Capsicum annum* (Bell pepper), *Brassica oleracea* var. *capitata* (Cabbage), *Brassica oleracea* var. *botrytis* (Cauliflower), *Cucumis sativus* (Cucumbers), *Cucumis melo* (Melons), *Raphanus sativus* (Radish), *Allium cepa* (Onion)
Leafy vegetables	*Lactucasativa* (Lettuce), *Ipomoea aquatica* (Kang Kong)
Condiments	*Petroselinum crispum* (Parsley), *Menthaspicata* (Mint), *Ocimumbasilicum* (Sweet basil), *Origanum vulgare* (Oregano)
Flower/Ornamental crops	*Tagetespatula* (Marigold), *Rosa berberifolia* (Roses), *Dianthus caryophyllus* (Carnations), *Chrysanthemum indicum* (Chrysanthemum)
Medicinal crops	*Aloe vera* (Indian Aloe), *Solenostemonscutellarioides* (Coleus)
Fodder crops	*Sorghum bicolor* (Sorghum), *Medicagosativa* (Alphalfa), *Hordeumvulgare* (Barley), *Cynodondactylon* (Bermuda grass), *Axonopuscompressus* (Carpet grass)

Mechanism of Hydroponics

The mechanism of hydroponics involves providing the plants with the necessary nutrients in the water, while also ensuring that they have sufficient access to oxygen and support. Plants in a hydroponic system are grown in a nutrient-rich water solution that provides them with the essential minerals and nutrients they need to grow. The nutrient solution is delivered to the plants through a delivery system, which can be a variety of methods depending on the specific hydroponic system. The delivery system typically includes a pump, tubing, and a series of drippers or sprayers that deliver the nutrient solution to the roots of the plants. Because hydroponic systems do not use soil, the plants need some type of root support to keep them in place. This can be achieved through the use of a growing medium, such as perlite, vermiculite, or coconut coir, which provides support for the roots while also allowing for good drainage.

For the plants to thrive, they need access to oxygen. This is typically achieved by oxygenating the nutrient solution using an air pump or by using a growing medium that allows for good air flow around the roots. Hydroponic systems rely on a delicate balance of nutrients, water, and oxygen, it is important to monitor the system regularly to ensure that

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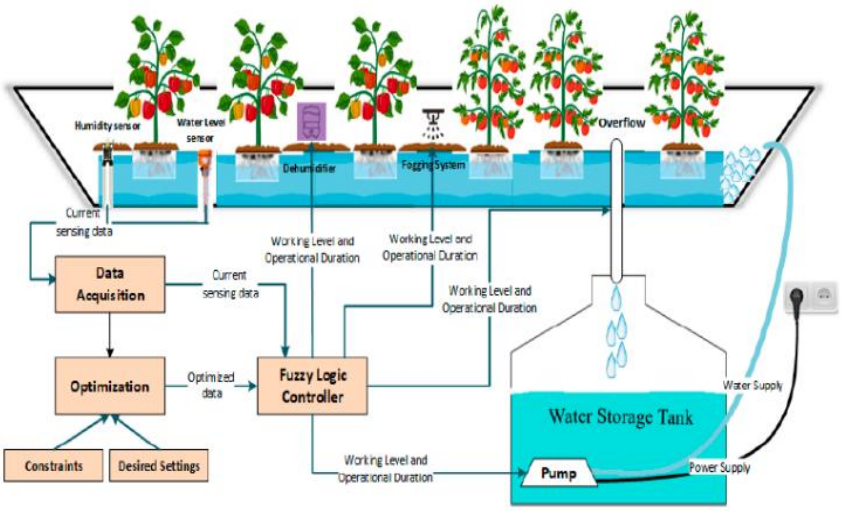
everything is functioning properly. This can include monitoring pH levels, nutrient levels, and the overall health of the plants.



Advantages of Hydroponics

- **Water Conservation:** Hydroponics uses up to 90% less water than traditional soil-based farming, making it an efficient and sustainable method of agriculture.
- **Increased Yield:** Hydroponic plants typically grow faster and produce higher yields than traditional soil-based farming. The controlled environment of hydroponics allows for optimal growing conditions, leading to healthier and more productive plants.
- **Space Efficiency:** Hydroponic systems can be set up vertically, which maximizes space utilization and allows for high-density planting. This makes hydroponics a viable option for urban and indoor agriculture.
- **Reduced Pesticide Use:** Because hydroponics is a closed system, it's easier to control pests and diseases. This reduces the need for harmful pesticides and herbicides.
- **Year-round Growing:** Hydroponic systems can be set up indoors and use artificial lighting, which allows for year-round growing regardless of climate or weather conditions.
- **Consistent Quality:** The controlled environment of hydroponics allows for consistent production of high-quality crops that are free from contaminants and other environmental factors that can affect plant growth.
- **Faster Harvest Time:** Hydroponic plants typically mature faster than soil-grown plants, leading to a shorter time to harvest and a quicker turnover of crops.

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Disadvantages of Hydroponics

- **High Upfront Costs:** Setting up a hydroponic system can be expensive due to the cost of equipment, lighting, and other materials needed for the system. This can be a barrier to entry for smaller farmers or those on a tight budget.
- **Complexity:** Hydroponic systems require a certain level of expertise and knowledge to set up and maintain. Farmers need to understand how to balance the nutrient solution, maintain proper pH levels, and monitor other environmental factors that can affect plant growth.
- **Power Consumption:** Hydroponic systems require artificial lighting and temperature control, which can increase power consumption and lead to higher energy costs.
- **Risk of Equipment Failure:** Like any equipment-based system, hydroponic systems can be vulnerable to equipment failure or malfunctions. If a component of the system fails, it can have a significant impact on crop growth and yield.
- **Waterborne Diseases:** Hydroponic systems use water as a growing medium, which can increase the risk of waterborne diseases if proper sanitation measures are not taken.
- **Limited Crop Variety:** Not all crops are suitable for hydroponic growing. Some crops may require specific soil nutrients that cannot be replicated in a hydroponic system or may simply not thrive in a water-based environment.

Future Scope

Overall, the future of hydroponics looks bright, as the demand for sustainable and efficient agriculture continues to grow, and new technologies and trends emerge to enhance the productivity and sustainability of hydroponic systems.

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