

SUPURBFOOD is a research project funded by the European Commission's 7th Framework Program. It aims to contribute to the development of sustainable modes of urban and peri-urban food provisioning.

About the project

Until recent, short food supply chains and multifunctional agriculture were considered to be part of the rural development realm. However, this project looks at these topics from the perspective of urban rather than rural development. Short food supply chains have been advocated as a means to reduce the environmental impact of the agro-food system. However, to improve the ecological performance of the agro-food system other flows (e.g. nutrient, water, and urban waste) need to be considered as well. In the current context these aspects are usually treated separately. This project will treat them in an integrated manner.

Approach

Research will be carried out in seven European city-regions (Rotterdam (NL), Rome (IT), Ghent (BE), Vigo (ES), Bristol (UK), Zürich (CH) and Riga (LV)) in collaboration with a diverse group of SMEs to further innovate in urban and peri-urban food provisioning, nutrient, water and waste management, and multifunctional use of urban and peri-urban space. Finally the project will also establish links with researchers, policymakers and SMEs in these domains in developing countries. This will be organised through a process of dialogue, sharing of experiences, exchanging of best practices and joint learning.

More information

www.supurbfood.eu



Shortening food supply chains in the metropolitan area of Vigo

Apart from buying food in the few hypermarkets and many small-scaled supermarkets many the citizens in Vigo (largest city north western Spain) have still access to fresh vegetables produced in kitchen gardens. Those without garden or relatives with a garden either buy vegetables in a box scheme like the scheme of Cesta Fresca, a small initiative of two young people who enjoy making a living in Vigo's peri-urban area. Fresh food produce mostly is sold in the own circuit. In case of a surplus production vegetables are sold via consumer initiatives (like Arbore) or via organic shops (like ABCBio) in the city-centre, or via small shops outside Vigo like for example Tabertenda in Salceda de Caselas. The latter combines selling healthy and fresh quality food products (much of the fresh produce is from the own gardens) with a bar. Cesta Fresca's aim is to have an activity to earn a living: horticulture in combination with the box scheme makes the young couple lives and raises its children in an environmentally sound way. Perhaps surprisingly different from other European regions, Cesta Fresca has competition from the informal exchange of fresh produce in networks of family and friends. In the context of the economic crisis an increasing number of these informal networks evolve into small, formal business initiatives like Fresca Cesta. A dynamic example is Huerta Agrelo and its participants in Bueu.

Who is involved?

Antía Puentes and Martin Palek are the farmers and owners of Cesta Fresca. Most of the vegetable production and delivery of the products is organised and carried out by the young initiators. Only occasionally, and mostly in the productive season, they can count with volunteers that they invite via the WOOFF network (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms network). Further they have help from friends and colleagues if necessary.

Which activities are carried out?

As a small-scaled horticulture farm with a box scheme the 20,000 square metres are in use for organic vegetable production. This 'main' activity is accompanied with the packaging and delivery of the boxes, each week. When short in own produce, the farmers fill the boxes with produce from other farmers, some at short and others at longer distances. Being in touch with producers in the neighbourhood therefore is important as well. Varieties are derived from France, from colleague farmers and from Martin's home country Czech Republic. These varieties fit to the farm soils



and climate in the area. On-farm reproduction of varieties makes these in a way 'local'. The seeds are exchanged in informal seed exchange networks in Galicia. Since the farm is still under construction the creation of ideas and

'building' the farm physically are part of the activities. Low cost investments are preferred over the use of subsidies and loans available in the governmental schemes (these are labelled to the investment in new and expensive buildings and machinery).

Where is Cesta Fresca located?

Vigo has a lot of informal exchange of food products, especially of fresh vegetables. Vegetable exchange in terms of commodities (exchanged in terms of monetary price mechanisms) like organised by Cesta Fresca does not happen a lot. Thereby most of the fresh produce is obtained from outside the city centre. Since in Vigo one can find – apart from some of the allotment gardens initiated by the municipality – hundreds of small private vegetable gardens mostly located in the outskirts of the city but sometimes even in the city-centre itself the location of Cesta Fresca, at 30 kilometre from Vigo (and another, bigger one, Daiquí in Ourense, even at about 100 kilometre) is remarkable. That is because the land that the entrepreneurs use belongs to the family of Antía, and the only way to get started has been to start at otherwise abandoned plots of the family in this remote village. Water at the farm for example is derived from communally owned and managed water streams, of which Cesta Fresca is the only user in the parish.



Lessons from Cesta Fresca for SUPURBFOOD

- ✓ Young people are looking for opportunities
- ✓ In Vigo: availability fresh food produce in informal networks
- ✓ Small-scaled initiatives have difficulties in finding space for production in the city-centre
- ✓ Availability of land at distance from the city-centre in family networks
- ✓ Young people moving into the more remote areas results in the revalorisation of the often otherwise 'abandoned' land

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