

Proeftuin Amsterdam/Food systems planning in Amsterdam-The Netherlands

Until recently, linkages between the city of Amsterdam and the surrounding area have been few with respect to the consumption of regional food. But with almost 40% of Amsterdam's ecological footprint stemming from the provision of food (transport excluded), and with unhealthy eating habits and lifestyles causing considerable negative impacts on citizens' physical well-being (such as obesity), there was plenty of reason for the city of Amsterdam to develop a strategy on healthy, sustainable, regional food chains, with special emphasis on urban-rural relationships (Northumbria University, 2008). This strategy called "Proeftuin Amsterdam" (a play on words: test garden, taste garden, or field of experiment) was initiated in 2007. The approach derives from the concept of a "Sustainable Food Chain", covering all steps from production, processing, and distribution of food to selling, preparing, consumption and waste disposal – placing the urban consumer in a central position (Northumbria University, 2008).

The main goals of "Proeftuin Amsterdam" are:

- to create food awareness;
- to change towards better food (i.e. healthier and more sustainable);
- to find a new role for farmers in the peri-urban region.

Practice

The strategy entails launching discussions in the city and the region to find common interests, and building alliances between public and private actors such as schools and institutions, farmer associations, movements for the promotion of traditional and organic foods, and commercial farms. Thus, the initiators invited the mentioned stakeholders from all over the region to respond to the objectives of the Food Strategy/Action plan with concrete targets and projects in May 2007.

Type of Urban Agriculture practiced:

Main themes and projects:

Healthy Food

- Guidelines for healthy food in primary schools and offering fruit & vegetables
- Pilot projects introducing lunches at primary schools
- Instructing secondary schools on how to improve food provisions in canteens
- Kitchen amenities in new schools
- Pilot projects for fresh and organic food in day care centres and hospitals

Sustainable Regional Food Chain

- Public procurement: catering contracts: from 40% (2007-10) to 60% (2011) focuses on offering organic food in municipal canteens as well as promoting local and regional food
- Promoting:
 - organic agriculture from 3,4% (2007) to 7% (2011)
 - production for local markets
 - sustainable transport & logistics (SERI calculations)
 - changing diet and eating habits
 - reduction and re-use of organic waste

Urban-rural relations

- Farm visits & food education at schools
- Organic farms, producing for urban market
- Shops at the farm, farmers' markets
- Urban agriculture in the city-fringes, allotment gardens, school working gardens

Knowledge, jobs, education

- International exchange of knowledge (PURPLE, Interreg IVc, AlimenTerra network)
- Stimulating innovations of SME's and co-operation with vocational training institutes

- Stimulating diversification of farm businesses to cope with urban demands.

Summary of your experience;

The various activities have raised citizens' awareness on the resources, qualities and products of the agricultural areas surrounding Dutch cities. The programme has not only succeeded in building alliances between various actors in the cities, but has also established cooperation with regional, even national authorities – increasingly making Amsterdam and the surrounding rural landscapes an interlinked region for food consumption and production (Northumbria University, 2008).

Some of the challenges encountered include:

- To set clear standards for the production of sustainable food (integrating health, environment and society)
- To create more transparency in the food chain
- To re-establish agriculture on the urban agenda, in order to:
 - re-direct the development of farming towards local urban markets and reducing foodmiles
 - improve food awareness and food literacy

UA and the urban food crisis

- In Amsterdam, consumers are not directly affected by the food crisis. But there is a growing awareness among citizens of the environmental impacts, risks and social inequalities in our current global food system. Educational programmes stimulate this awareness.
- Re-directing the development of farming towards more local urban markets can contribute to less vulnerability for urban consumers in case crises occur
- International co-operation between large urban communities can also help strengthening links between rural supply chains and demands of urban societies.

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References:

Case Study elaborated by ICLEI Europe / Northumbria University, 2008
<http://www.proeftuin.amsterdam.nl/>