



# Urban Farm Doetinchem

An urban agriculture project promoting social inclusion.

## EAFRD-funded projects

**Location:** Doetinchem, the Netherlands  
**Programming period:** 2014-2020  
**Priority:** P6 - Social inclusion and local development  
**Focus Area:** Local development  
**Measures:** M19 - LEADER CLLD

<b>Funding:</b>	Total budget	180 000 (EUR)
	EAFRD	120 000 (EUR)
	National/Regional	50 000 (EUR)
	Private/Own funds	10 000 (EUR)

**Timeframe:** 2020 to 2023  
**Project promoter:** Stadsboerin Doetinchem  
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## Summary

The Stadsboerin project aimed to connect people from different backgrounds with food and nature in their own city. An empty lot of three acres of land with a boarded-up barn was converted into a lively green meeting place and urban agriculture was created where people can participate daily in informal events, buy food and eat in the catering area. This creates community spirit and social inclusion.

The target groups include the elderly, young people, residents, migrants and refugees, who participate in the kitchen, garden and social activities. This enables people to find peace, space and understanding and to engage in activities.

Key activities include selling food in the on-farm store, organising packages of vegetable for families, city hospitality, catering and meals. In addition, a variety of workshops and classes are organised for city residents and schools to share the experience of converting a barren meadow into an oasis of life from which to grow food.

## Project results

### Quantitative benefits include:

- > 50 volunteers involved.
- > 20 migrant youth internships organised.
- > 10 reintegration places for Dutch nationals created.
- > 20 people successfully included.
- > 3.5 FTE jobs created.
- > 218 children receiving breakfast every day.
- > 1 green education programme.

### Qualitative benefits include:

- > Increased knowledge in terms of growing organic food.
- > Fostering the social inclusion of migrants, young and vulnerable people, reducing loneliness through gardening, cooking, learning and socialising.
- > Facilitating multiple pathways to paid employment and active participation in the community.



- Networking and knowledge transfer with reintegration services, psychological assistance services, a neighbourhood tutor, primary schools, local government, LEADER (Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale) projects and individuals and community centres.
- Innovative approach, combining a place for social gatherings with regenerative agriculture that is open to all.
- Participants gained skills in gardening, cooking and languages as well as social skills that improve their chances of finding employment. Women were involved in all activities.

## Key lessons and recommendations

- Formulate the mission of the project clearly and share this widely with the public. Listen to stakeholders' feedback and incorporate adjustments. However, it is important to stick to the mission.
- The tremendous support from the local community was very encouraging and demonstrated that the project was clearly needed.
- A challenge for us was to be in touch with all the people with different backgrounds and needs and to identify the best way to work together. We found our way by being very clear in saying what Stadsboerin is, what people can expect and what we expect.

## Context

The Stadsboerin project was initiated by Ellen Willems, a journalist and horticulturist, with the aim of connecting people with nature and the origin of food whilst bringing together different groups within society in order to foster social inclusion.

In the local area of the project, Doetinchem (the Netherlands), some schools have students with social problems. Stadsboerin is closely connected to a primary school in the neighbourhood, where around 60% of the families have to deal with poverty because unemployment rates are high. Stadsboerin makes breakfast (fruit, pancakes, sandwiches) for 195 children every school day from its harvest from the garden so that the children do not have to go hungry at school.

At the same time, several local schools expressed an interest in 'green education programmes', which were not available. Stadsboerin provides an education programme for six days for each class for children to learn how food is grown and how they can cook a healthy lunch for themselves. They learn how to take care of plants and animals and how to harvest for their own meal.

## Objectives

The vision was to create a green living room where people find peace, space and understanding and very often a meaningful daytime activity.

### The objectives were to:

- Create a 'green living room' for the town of Doetinchem.
- Increase biodiversity on the land.
- Grow healthy food.
- Educate school children and city residents about healthy food and nature.
- Offer hospitality and catering with local food.
- Connect migrants with locals.
- Offer jobs and internships in gardening and cooking with a priority on the inclusion of migrants.
- Provide a meeting place for isolated people (living room, shared meals).
- Specifically create a meeting place for women with a refugee background.
- Build an inclusive place for people with mental health issues (former addicts/former homeless people).

## Activities

From three acres of bare grassland and a boarded-up barn, a vibrant green meeting place and urban agriculture has been built with a lot of community spirit, where people can, on a daily basis, take part in informal activities, buy food from their own city and eat in a dedicated catering area.

Three acres of land are cultivated for the purposes of the project. The food is sold in an on-farm store and used to put together packages of vegetables, for city hospitality, catering and meals. The experience is shared through workshops and classes given to schools ('From Soil to Plate') at multiple levels.

Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) funding enabled the purchase of essential equipment to implement income-generating activities, such as sustainable catering for companies, schools and individuals. This included an electric bus and cold storage facilities.

The acquisition of the necessary equipment and tools enabled the project to develop further and expand the growth of vegetables and fruit on the land as a community activity.





The cold storage was also essential for selling local farming produce in the on-farm shop.

Other project activities included the design and implementation of a system to provide affordable joint meals on a weekly basis and daily breakfasts for local primary schools.

The meeting place is open six days per week. In addition, free workshops on 'healthy and affordable cooking' were organised at the Food Bank and migrants were offered internships.

Furthermore, a teaching programme for schools was developed and implemented. Stadsboerin provides an education programme for six days for each class so that children can learn how food is grown and how they can cook a healthy lunch for themselves. They learn how to take care of plants and animals and how to harvest for their own meal.

A broad range of important stakeholders, including local/regional authorities, social and welfare organisations (including migrant groups, vulnerable people, the elderly), local schools, agricultural colleges, volunteer organisations, farmers and food producers, food banks, landscape organisations and the residents of Doetinchem collaborated and networked during the period of the project.



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## Main results

The project employed 3.5 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) paid individuals and involved 50 volunteers. Internships were organised for 20 young migrants and ten Dutch nationals accessed opportunities for social inclusion through work.

By working together on the land and in the kitchen, spending time together informally and sharing meals, people have become less lonely, more resilient, learned Dutch and thus have more chances to be socially included. The project reaches the elderly, young people, residents, migrants and refugees and is particularly beneficial for vulnerable people.

A green education programme for primary schools about the origins of food and how to cook healthy meals was developed. Every day, a total of 218 children receive breakfast at school from Stadsboerin.

Networking directly with local/regional authorities, social and welfare organisations, local schools, agricultural colleges, volunteer organisations, farmers and food producers, food banks, landscape organisations and the residents of Doetinchem, including other LEADER (Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale) projects, provided many benefits.

Knowledge transfer is provided through inspirational presentations and visits to other initiatives that were inspired by the project.

The project is innovative as it combines a place for social gatherings with regenerative agriculture that is open to all.

Women are involved in all activities.

Particular attention is paid to the social inclusion of migrants and the project is an official place of inclusion for newcomers. Dedicated activities are organised for young refugees every week and these offer a safe and welcoming space for interaction.

Everyone who joins the project receives practical lessons in gardening and cooking via workshops (e.g. in low budget cooking).

## Key lessons and recommendations

Formulating and articulating the mission of the project is recommended. This and the project plan should be shared as widely as possible with the local community. Responses from stakeholders should be listened to and adjustments should be incorporated as long as this is in line with the mission of the project. Collaboration with reintegration services, psychological assistance services, a neighbourhood tutor, primary schools and local government are very important elements in helping to ensure that the initiative is supported as much as possible. However, it is important to stick to the mission.

The tremendous support from the community was very encouraging and demonstrated that the project was clearly needed in this region. From the beginning, dozens of people supported the initiative and helped actively. Local government, regional government and welfare organisations supported the project and showed their commitment.

## Additional information:

*"I come to the Stadsboerin on a daily basis. It's my second home. Or rather, it's my first home. I'm not lonely any more and they help me with structure."*

Wesley Willemsen (29)

*"I have gained a new family and am less lonely."*

Wilma de Bruijn (29)

*"Working in the kitchen has broadened my horizons. I understand the language and culture better. I see opportunities in the Netherlands."*

Delkhoaz Ali, Lebanon

*"I had never held a chicken before. I'm going to bring my mother here too."*

Aisha, aged 8

Stadsboerin Doetinchem website: [www.stadsboerindoetinchem.nl](http://www.stadsboerindoetinchem.nl)

