

## Title

**Voedseltuin (The Food Garden)**

## Short description

De Voedseltuin (The Food Garden) is located at an industrial wasteland area in Rotterdam of about 7000 m<sup>2</sup> and produces biological fruit and vegetables for families that use the Rotterdam food bank and for homeless people. In addition, vulnerable populations are given the opportunity to volunteer in the garden to grow crops, empowering them for the job market and increase their social network. Once a month, using fresh vegetables from the Voedseltuin, they cook with and for visitors in homeless shelter. They also deliver vegetables to a restaurant for homeless people and inhabitants of low-income neighbourhood. Educational activities, such as workshops on permaculture, are organized, and local secondary schools can visit the garden in the context of an educational programme.

This project is a promising INHERIT practice because it targets disadvantaged families, who gain access to fruit and vegetables, from a local permaculture food garden. This fits the INHERIT triple win of improving health and sustainability and reducing health inequalities. By increasing access, Opportunity is improved. Workshops and other educational activities can improve Capability and Motivation to eat fruit and vegetables among the volunteers, schoolchildren and company employees.

## Topic

Consuming- Food

Living- Green space

## Characteristics (type, level)

Intervention, Neighbourhood

## Country/Countries of implementation

The Netherlands

## Aims and Objectives

The main aim is producing biological vegetables and fruit for customers of the Dutch Food bank. They aim to expand the project and grow towards more food gardens for more food banks. They strive towards a sustainable urban society, with healthy food for everybody. Without poverty and social exclusion, with people who actively shape their own life and take responsibility for each other and their environment.

## Target Group

Disadvantaged families who receive food packages from the Rotterdam food bank. In addition, the Voedseltuin wants to support vulnerable people to – from their own strengths get work participation opportunities. They offer work through participation spots, to reactivate, with the goal to move to a next phase in a reintegration trajectory or to find a job in the regular work market.

## Status

Ongoing

### Start and Completion dates

2011 - currently

### Lifestyle and Behavior Change

In the past years (since the start in 2011), the Voedseltuyn has provided 100 to 500 families from sustainable grown seasonable vegetables, as part of the food package of the food bank. By increasing fruit and vegetable availability for disadvantaged families, the Voedseltuyn can encourage behaviour change concerning eating healthily. Furthermore, the Voedseltuyn is a learning and practice garden, where people can meet and where people can participate in making the city healthier and more sustainable. In addition, primary schools from the neighbourhood visit the garden for an education programme, company employees visit the garden to learn about the food garden.

### Effects on:

<p><b>Health and Wellbeing</b></p>	<p>Many people feel better when they work in the garden. Especially marginalized people can get their rhythm back in low-stress environment, where social contacts, cooperation, growing of crops they themselves seeded, self-value grows and this enables them to better help themselves. In addition, low-income families are provided with fresh, local vegetables through the food package of the food bank, and eating healthier can have positive health effects.</p>
<p><b>Vulnerable populations</b></p>	<p>The Voedseltuyn offers a place to learn and practice for vulnerable people on the job market and provides fresh, local vegetables for local low-income families. About 3,000 people use the food bank, because they cannot afford sufficient food. Growing food themselves allows skills building that can lead to greater autonomy.</p>
<p><b>Environment</b></p>	<p>Aim is to make the city a more sustainable and healthier place, using permaculture based growing of food, making the garden sustainable and environmentally friendly.</p>

### Initiated and/or implemented by

The Foundation Voedseltuin Rotterdam, initiated by an individual person, Sjaak Sies. Behind the local food bank was a wasteland, creating the idea to grow food there, for the food bank. In that time, there was a shortage regarding fresh and healthy foods in food packages.

### Stakeholders and sectors involved

The Municipality of Rotterdam, who provide financial support and often volunteers.

Rotterdam Cares sends students that work in the garden every Monday.

Welfare organisations NAS and BAVO also contribute by sending in people and homeless people.

In addition, they work closely together and get sponsored by:

- 'Stichting Doen': The DOEN/DO Foundation finances initiatives from people who are not afraid to take risks while putting their pioneering ideas into practice and inspire other).
- 'Gek op Werk' (Crazy about Work): this platform aims to promote work participation of people who have mental or psychiatric problems.
- Oranje Fonds: an endowed foundation and the largest in the area of social welfare in the Kingdom of the Netherlands.
- Koppert Biological Systems: provide integrated systems of specialist knowledge and natural safe solutions that improve crop health, resilience and production.

### Financial support

Funds such as Armoede Fonds/Poverty Fund, Oranje fonds and Job Dura Fond, and the Municipality of Rotterdam. In 2015, 63099 euros came from subsidies, 26400 euros came from funds and 1951 euros came from non-classified benefits.

### Evidence-base

Well-designed and accessible green spaces offer an attractive environment and good opportunities to exercise, play, relax and meet people, offer protection against heat stress and in this way may improve health, in particular for vulnerable populations such as children, older people, pregnant women and lower income groups. A potential solution to create increased awareness of where food originates from in order to reduce food waste and promote purchasing of local healthy foods, is introducing urban farming or community gardens. These types of initiatives can reduce the great physical and perceived distance between food production and consumption and increase availability of healthy sustainable products. This provides people an increased physical opportunity. Farmers' markets and community gardens have the potential to increase access to fruit and vegetables, especially in low-income areas with low access to affordable, healthy foods. However, evidence for health benefits is limited. Interestingly, urban food growing projects can stimulate social cohesion and an interest in food.

### Main activities

The Voedseltuin provides biological fruits and vegetables to complement food packages for clients of the Food Bank Rotterdam. This is done using a permaculture method, with volunteers on 7000 m<sup>2</sup> in an industrial area, which used to be wasteland. During high season, about 500 packages can be filled on a weekly basis, with fresh fruit or vegetables.

In 2015, Project Moe's garden was added to expand the Voedseltuin from garden to neighbourhood. Forty-five vulnerable volunteers grew vegetables and by the structure his offers, and the social network that develops, these volunteers become more empowered.

Once a month, using fresh vegetables from the Voedseltuin, volunteers cook with and for visitors of a homeless organization 'Pluspunt' (with about 15 to 30 participating eaters).

From 2016, the Voedseltuin started delivering vegetables to a restaurant for homeless people and low-income neighbourhood inhabitants. The garden is also meant for learning and practice, and neighbourhood secondary schools can visit the garden in the context of an educational programme. In addition, it is an employment project for people who experience great distance from the job market.

Aim is to expand the project and develop other food gardens for more food banks. Besides that, the Foundation wants to be part of sustainable developments in the region of Rotterdam. The garden will become a green space with a park like character in a city area that is developing, making it a connecting factor between companies, idealistic organisations, inhabitants and nature lovers.

## Evaluation

There has been a societal benefit costs analysis, of which de Voedseltuin was one of the case studies. Interviews with volunteers were conducted. Ambition is to expand the knowledge position in the coming years, Living Lab Food garden will be a multiple year programme, aimed at studying the value of urban agriculture. Taking points include developments in the social sector from a care state towards a participation society and the increasing attention that Rotterdam inhabitants have for the positive aspects of being in contact with nature, green, gardens, parks, flowers, trees and urban agriculture.

## Main results

The cost-benefit analysis showed that the food garden had a 100,000 cash value with a costbenefit ratio of 1.2. This makes the Voedseltuin a societal sustainable project, since the societal benefits are greater than the costs. The greatest benefits come from health benefits originating from healthier lifestyle patterns of volunteers. Other large benefits are livability of the neighbourhood (place making). The reactivation of jobless people gives large job benefits by avoided welfare costs. The financial balance is negative, because the Voedseltuin does not generate financial incomes. The benefits of the fruits and vegetables provided to the food bank Rotterdam were not taken into account because there was no data available at the time of the cost benefit analysis.

Volunteers indicated they moved more, they started eating healthier (more fruit and vegetables and breakfast), their alcohol use became healthier, and smoking decreased. They indicated they were less often nervous, had less depressed feelings and more happy feelings. They valued the social contact a lot and they felt more at home in their neighbourhood (10 out of 18 volunteers) and contact with the neighbourhood improved. A part of volunteers indicated that their chances at work had increased.

## Key success factors and barriers

The high availability of volunteers, the support from the municipality, the location near the Food Bank are all success factors. A barrier may be the fact that the Voedseltuin is based on funds, external sources. However, they aim to cooperate more with the business sector.

There has to be space in a city for development of a food garden, and the connection with local food banks and welfare organisations and municipalities is necessary. They use professional people to guide the volunteers, who need to be paid.

### INHERIT Perspective

This project is a promising INHERIT practice because it targets disadvantaged families, who gain access to fruit and vegetables, from a local permaculture food garden. This fits the INHERIT triple win of improving health and sustainability and reducing health inequalities. By increasing access, Opportunity is improved. Workshops and other educational activities can improve Capability and Motivation to eat fruit and vegetables among the volunteers, schoolchildren and company employees.

### More information

[www.voedseltuin.com](http://www.voedseltuin.com)

<https://www.pifworld.com/nl/nonprofits/ZlXq5HbYaNs/voedseltuin-rotterdam/about>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=REVD4VjEwLY&feature=youtu.be>

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