

Article: Farmers and families together during the crisis to lay foundations for a sustainable future



The project Nutrire Trento (Feeding Trento) has not stopped during the COVID-19 emergency, continuing its aims to identify ideas and solutions to these problems that might improve the quality of the food for the city, providing healthy food that adequately remunerates all actors in the food supply chain.

Changes in purchase methods which were almost a necessity under pandemic lockdown conditions could in the future turn into an opportunity to enhance Trento's food system and economy. This is the premise of the initiative proposed by Nutrire Trento to local farms and a group of families interested in testing a new way of managing their shopping, with the aim to create a network that unites consumers and producers and that allows families to have local agricultural products delivered weekly at home. The companies were recruited with the aim of offering the widest possible basket of local products (fruit and vegetables, processed food, baked products, dairy products, eggs, etc.).

This experimentation, due to begin by mid-May, will last about two months and include the completion of short questionnaires to monitor the progress of the project. 35 interested families (or housemates) are taking part in this first phase of the project, but the organisers are open to expanding the service or extending it in the summer based on interest in the initiative.

Promoted by the Municipality of Trento and the University of Trento and involving producers, various sectors of the economy, schools and associations, Nutrire Trento (Feeding Trento) has recently become a pilot case of the EIT Climate KIC-funded project Saturn, coordinated by Fondazione Edmund Mach, who are also the hosts of the Food Lab Trentino under FIT4FOOD2030. Visit www.nutritrento.it to find out more.

Further information about Nutrire Trento (Feeding Trento)

In recent years food has once again become a central topic in political and public debate. Food scandals have caused people to pay more attention to the healthiness of what is on their plates, and there is a greater awareness of issues linked to the agri-food supply chain. The way in which foods are produced, distributed and consumed has significant consequences for the environment, affecting the fertility of the soil, the quality of the water and air, the state of the climate, and the loss of biodiversity, as well as impoverishment of the food culture and of the landscape.

Many people have pointed out that food production has three great paradoxes that future food policies need to resolve. The first paradox has to do with food waste. An estimated 1.3 billion tons of edible food, equivalent to a third of global food production, is wasted each year. The second paradox is that despite the widespread hunger and malnutrition in the world, a large percentage of what is grown is used for animal feed or biofuels. The third paradox is that for every person suffering from malnutrition there are two who are obese or overweight.

The idea for the Nutrire Trento (Feeding Trento) project grew out of this discussion, with the aim of identifying ideas and solutions to these problems that might improve the quality of the food for the city, providing healthy food that adequately remunerates all actors in the food supply chain. At the same time, the project aims to develop and restore a local economy based on new relationships between city and country and between farmers and consumers.

The project formally began as one of the activities under the Unicità memorandum of understanding between the Trento City Council and the University of Trento in June 2017 and was preceded by a series of open meetings involving people already working in this area, such as producers, citizen groups and associations (including cooperative purchasing groups), researchers and administrators.

The project's first objective was to set up a working group to look at the challenges of sustainability in agriculture, in the belief that possible solutions can only be found by involving all the actors in the food system (producers, consumers, retailers, experts, associations etc.).

Inspired by the experiences of cities in North America and Europe in recent years, the working group's task is to share initiatives and continue to identify new objectives with the various actors in the food system.

Operationally, the contribution of the University was fundamental in facilitating the early stages of the project. The University of Trento is active in the area of sustainability and was able to bring not only knowledge, but also national and international connections that provided useful support to the project. It is also important not to underestimate the University's role as an important actor due to its cultural stature and its capacity for mobilization and for dialogue with so many people.

To coordinate and highlight the visibility of initiatives already under way in the region, the working group has designed a digital platform that allows people to simultaneously visualize the actors and the places in the Trento short supply chain: producers, markets, shops, cooperative purchasing groups and urban or community vegetable gardens. Trento is an active and proactive city and

there are already many initiatives around food; what was missing was a coordination that could pull them together and create links among people who are interested in these issues.

The platform, online at www.nutriretrento.it, has been designed to allow anyone who is interested to sign up or to consult the site. Actors in the local food supply chain can indicate directly on the site that they would like to join the platform, and this is followed by a check that they meet the membership criteria.

The working group currently involves producers, businesses, researchers, professionals, schools, and citizen associations and groups, and hopes to expand to include others who are interested. In addition to the website, the group has produced informational material and press releases regarding the project. The logo of the project is the result of a competition for students.

Nutrire Trento aims to help relaunch urban and peri-urban sustainable agriculture by facilitating contact between producers and consumers, through short food supply chains and direct sales. The project also aims to become a tool for information and awareness-raising on natural foods and healthy lifestyles, on protecting the health of producers and consumers, and on the use of quality local products in schools and in the tourism sector. Other objectives include the use of currently unfarmed land to create new employment opportunities and to develop an agriculture that values social inclusion, the promotion of community gardens, and educational visits to farms and programmes for schools so that students can learn about the role of the farmer as a producer of economic value and as a custodian of the landscape.