

34 KARABEL, ORGANIC FARM

Type: Supply chain, supply, circular economy
Country: Spain/ The Basque Country – Hernani

Why it is a good practice?

Market gardening and organic farming create a sense of well-being. They are creating sustainable practices within the community and providing healthy produce to the locals. Simultaneously, they are assisting with the social integration and inclusion of the mentally ill and help stimulate awareness of their problems.

About

Karabel is a pioneering experimental organic farm. It was created through the joint efforts of Blasenea, a company that produces organic market garden vegetables and plants, Kimubat, that makes products for the home, vegetable garden and flower garden and the Guipúzcoa Association for Sufferers from Mental Illness and their Relatives. Karabel assists sufferers of mental illnesses, to return to the workforce. They employ them to tend the organic vegetable garden. The products from the garden are subsequently sold to and served in local restaurants. They are also available at the eco-shop and can be purchased in baskets which are home delivered to customers. Karabel runs organic agriculture research programmes and attempts to broaden knowledge in the field through projects that promote plant biodiversity and environmentally friendly solutions involving circular economic strategies. One example is a project for turning organic residues into compost for vegetable gardens and another is on different cultivation techniques for plants.

Problem

Often those suffering from mental illness find it difficult to re-establish themselves within the workforce and community.

The idea of the vegetable basket distribution arose with the aim to deal as directly as possible with consumers and streamline sales channels or provide zero-kilometre produce.

Action

The baskets comprise of between eight and ten different locally grown, organic seasonal vegetables. Customers may also order additional organic products such as eggs, olive oil, bread and others. The cultivation of the gardens and the baskets are prepared by sufferers from mental illness. This activity helps to motivate them and give them a sense of achievement due to their usefulness and seeing content customers. The consumer group is constantly growing as is the number of volunteers taking part in the care of the market garden.

Healthy

The project provides baskets of organic vegetables cultivated using completely natural techniques. They are harvested on reaching optimum conditions and delivered to the consumer on the same day. The baskets come in three sizes: small for a single person, medium for two or three people and large for a family of four or five. The mental well-being and recovery is very much considered of those working here.

Sustainable

The vegetables are produced using environmentally friendly methods. The organic farming techniques employed and the limited distribution distances to the consumer greatly reduce their impact on the surrounding environment. The distribution chain is short: produce is sold at the eco-shop and to local restaurants or delivered to a convenient pick-up point where members of the consumer group can collect their baskets. In addition, the project revives the traditional farming methods by recycling the organic residues from one of the restaurants to make compost for the farmhouse vegetable gardens.

Ethical

The project supports several initiatives, to facilitate the recovery and reintegration of the mentally ill and other groups in danger of alienation. It also provides them with independence and assists their personal development. One of the project's aims is to create awareness of the challenges faced by the mentally ill. The project gives courses on organic agriculture and guided tours of the farm. It also makes a constant contribution to the social and economic development of the local area through the eco-shop which sells exclusively locally grown organic products thus providing a showcase for local producers close to the property.

Dietary requirements

These are vegetable bio set products suitable for consumption by Vegans and Vegetarians.