

Greening urban gardens with local vegetable varieties

Problems

In urban areas most people have no access to low cost, high quality, and diverse food. Precious local vegetable varieties are facing extinction and amateurs are discouraged to grow them in small gardens and produce their own food. Furthermore, in lack of seed of selected local varieties, organic gardeners use expensive hybrid seed, which increases the production cost.



Figure 1. Greek pepper diversity
(Photo: Greek Genebank)

Solutions

Organic seed from local vegetable varieties

Growers and consumers in urban areas need to be encouraged to use local vegetable varieties, which are more adaptable to organic and local conditions. To this end, high quality organic seed of locally selected varieties with special taste and nutritional value is needed. Incentives could be introduced to support the use of proper seed, produced at lower cost.

Practical recommendations

- Farmers with support from researchers should create community seed banks, community gardens and school gardens in urban areas.
- Farmers and gardeners can be trained to join participatory organic breeding to select the best varieties and produce seed.
- Using seeds of local varieties could be strengthened by Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) schemes and cooperatives between producers and consumers
- Researchers with farmers should organise open field days and community events to help bringing local varieties back to urban gardens, to local markets and tables of citizens.



Figure 2: Salad from traditional vegetable varieties (Photo: Aegilops)

Key message: Let agrobiodiversity green and feed cities

Further information

1. Video on how you preserve local Greek vegetable varieties:
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lgq5RHj_O4s)
2. Information about products from Greek vegetable landraces:
(<https://www.aegilopslocalfood.gr/katigories/itemlist/category/6-laxanika>)

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LIVESEED: Boosting organic seed and plant breeding across Europe. LIVESEED is based on the concept that cultivars adapted to organic systems are key for realising the full potential of organic agriculture in Europe. Research project 2017-2021.

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