Urban farming in Rotterdam

Urban farming is a multifaceted phenomenon in Rotterdam: community kitchen gardens on derelict land and green zones, the largest urban farm in the Netherlands (Uit je Eigen Stad) located in a port area, mushroom farming in a former swimming pool, a vegetable garden thriving atop an office block (DakAkker) and a popular locally sourced farmer’s market. More and more businesses in Rotterdam supply distinctive local products and the result is a new, sustainable production industry. The diversity of activities involving urban and regional food production, processing and trade is still on the rise.

Urban farming makes the city greener and more attractive for residents, it provides new job opportunities, and it’s good for the city’s image. A strong regional agricultural sector contributes to the management and conservation of farmland and peat meadow ecosystems surrounding the city to keep them excellent areas for cycling and hiking.

The City of Rotterdam wants this development to continue and is committed, according to the ‘Food & the City’ policy document, to facilitating it. The most pressing challenge is making sustainably produced food of high quality available to such a large and diverse population.

The most important objectives in stimulating urban farming are improving the health of citizens, supporting sustainable economic development and improving spatial quality. Urban farming can also contribute to enhancing social cohesion, getting people with a disadvantage back on the labour market, and decreasing food miles.

The municipality’s primary role is to facilitate initiatives from residents and businesses. This is being accomplished by making space in the city available, bringing people together, initiating research or participating in studies conducted by other parties, and building a network.
Urban farming in Rotterdam

Food council

An important part of this network is the regional Food Council. The Council has a wide variety of participants such as researchers, small and large businesses located in the city, the agricultural sector, regional municipal authorities, educational institutions, etc. Meetings of the Food Council are dedicated to exchanging ideas, discovering useful connections among various parties, and formulating recommendations for the municipal administration. Small businesses can also pitch at these meetings. The Food Council focuses mainly on promoting regional food chains, health/education, and a circular economy.

It also establishes a link with the City of Rotterdam’s economic programme in which the food sector occupies a prominent position. Rotterdam and its region, including the Westland’s horticulture in greenhouses and vegetables and Europe’s largest port, accommodates major players in the production, processing, trade and distribution of food. Although urban farming still plays a fairly small economic role in this, its innovative and sustainable qualities enhance the development of a ‘Next Economy’ in Rotterdam.

More information about urban farming in Rotterdam is available at www.rotterdam.nl/urbanfarming.

Although urban farming still plays a fairly small economic role in this, its innovative and sustainable qualities enhance the development of a ‘Next Economy’ in Rotterdam.