



## France, Saint-Valery-en-Caux, Normandy Shared Vegetable Garden

The AIC volunteers from Saint-Valery-en-Caux in France have set up a vegetable garden for people living in poverty. The objectives are clear: provide healthy and seasonal fruits and vegetables and valorise the vegetable garden, the people that work in it and the food that is produced.

The project allows the people involved to gain nourishment and benefit from seasonal, high quality vegetables. For everyone it's a way of recovering everyday skills... and those of the past which have been lost, even in a rural area.

It is an easy activity to implement in terms of resources, but it requires consistency and some humility in the face of the whims of nature, as no two years are ever the same. It is a way of learning to live with the rhythm of the seasons.



### Context & analysis of the current situation

Normandy, especially the Pays de Caux region, is a rural area where poverty is associated with a lack of jobs and with various individual situations (widowhood, small pensions, etc.). This poverty manifests itself especially through inadequate nutrition and the burden of energy costs (water, electricity, gas).

Many people live in apartment blocks without access to a garden. Fruit and vegetables available at local markets or big stores are also often expensive and sometimes poor quality.

The basic skills of gardening have often not been passed on from one generation to the next. Older people remember chores associated with gardening in their childhood, while younger people have never done this.

The AIC group is formed of 8 AIC volunteer team members and 2 other volunteers who provide a warm welcome, food aid and social reintegration through various workshops, including the garden.

## **Beneficiaries**

Men and women, older people and young people, families, etc. They all live in deprived circumstances, and have taken the step of coming to the AIC association, accepting the way it works: they benefit from a useful food parcel (the package is sold at 1.50€, containing goods to the value of 18 to 20€ on average), and they also invest by taking part in one of the workshops (sewing, creative work, cooking or gardening).

## **Aims of the action**

The vegetable garden has a dual objective: to provide healthy, seasonal fruit and vegetables to the people who come, and to give those who have invested in doing the work a reason to be proud of their achievements.

The project therefore allows the people involved to gain nourishment and to benefit from seasonal, high quality vegetables. For everyone it's a way of recovering everyday skills... and those of the past which have been lost, even in a rural area.

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## **Actions taken - Future prospects - Assessment of the impact**

Four people have been committed to this work in the garden for some years: 3 men and 1 woman. During the season, they meet up once or twice a week to work there.

The work is led by one volunteer who is particularly keen on gardening and who has agreed to take on the responsibility of coordinating the garden.

Local products are grown there (potatoes, leeks, carrots, beetroot, salad vegetables, etc.). The beneficiaries can take some of their own output home, and any excess is offered for sale at modest prices during the weekly food distribution session. So there is a direct, material benefit, but they also have the pride of allowing others to benefit from their output.

Some of the production is also sold at the AIC group's June summer sale and exhibition of its various projects.

Naturally, the crops are all organic, meaning that they respect the seasons and that only natural treatments are used. The garden is in Saint-Valéry-en-Caux, so the production cycle is very small.

A local landowner has given the plot to the AIC group free of charge. It is located in the heart of the town, and itself is a good advertisement for the association. This project has already been the subject of articles in the local press, especially when the children from the catechism class visited, and has been featured recently in the parish newsletter.