

Message for the end of the year: The allotment gardens, a must

Dear allotment gardeners

Since more than a year we have the word „crisis“ on all our minds and bad news are spread everyday.

Sometimes the gardens and the allotment gardens are mentioned as a means to reduce the consequences of the crisis.

In fact, a study made in Belgium in 1998– the data of which are currently updated – documents that you can save approximately 400 € by cultivating 100 sqms of garden. The importance of this aspect varies from country to country and from period to period.

In addition to this, the allotment gardens do not only stimulate people's health through a light physical exercise but as well by providing healthy food. These vegetables and fruit are cultivated without unnecessary chemical products. They are very tasty, are harvested at the good moment and are not transported over long distances and made ripened artificially.

Studies have shown that you find a much greater biodiversity in the allotment gardens than in parks and public spaces. On average you find 22,4 plants per sqm garden and only 0,5 in a park. The fauna is as well more numerous and diversified.

These gardens – green lungs and reserves of biodiversity in urban areas – are additionally cared for by the gardeners. This allows the authorities to save the costs to care for other green spaces.

The gardens are a place of fellowship and a place to meet, open for all. They favour the contacts between generations.

So, the allotment gardens are good for men, animals, plants and the whole society. But despite all that, their value is not always sufficiently recognized.

In a certain number of towns or countries the authorities plan to build more densely and are therefore considering to close down allotment gardens or not to create new ones. At the occasion of the international seminar in Ghent the Office and the national federations have supported the Swiss federation confronted with this problem.

Or it has to be underlined that towns are not only composed by houses and streets, but by people and their hopes“.

Where can hopes be born more easily, where can people dream more easily and make projects for the future than in a garden, in a space where nature can develop without too many constraints and allow people to gather new strength, allow the population to flee from the monotony of the urban constructions ?

The allotment gardens certainly cannot eliminate the reasons of the crisis, of people having no jobs and of the social problems. However, they can help to reduce the consequences thereof and open new perspectives.

If the worries for the environment do often no more figure amongst people's priorities, the allotment gardeners protect the environment on a daily basis and contribute to a sustainable development.

But this is not enough !

In order to be accepted we have not only to explain the aims and purposes of our activities, but we have as well to adapt our activities and to put new ideas into practice. We have to find out the needs of the society which the gardens continue to serve.

It will be discussed both on a national and European level to find out how to adapt the allotment gardens and to prepare them for the future. We are looking for innovative projects that could have a model character. Projects are launched in order to find ways to motivate young people to join our movement and to volunteer.

In a world in constant movement nothing can be considered for granted. New challenges have to be faced. The opportunities to serve the members and the society have to be seized. Today our movement is more necessary than ever.

We have a certain know-how, qualities, competences and above all we have the will and the enthusiasm to contribute to the construction of a better world with our gardens.

Without being pretentious we have not to forget that the small brooks make the big rivers !

At the break of this New Year let us never forget that the allotment gardens are a tool that serves the whole society. Let us therefore summon up all our strength to safeguard the allotment gardens for tomorrow.

During the whole new year let us act not only according the appeal : « Yes we can » but above all « Yes we will ».

In this optic I wish you and your family a good and a Happy New Year for 2010.



Malou WEIRICH
Secretary general