

Fruitcafé de Helpende Hand: initiatives from local residents

By: Inge Fakkert, Gebiedscoöperatie Westerkwartier

Fruitcafé de Helpende Hand (the Helping Hand) started up as neighborhood social enterprise selling affordable fruit and vegetables. After a few years they changed their business model. It is now transformed into the “living room” of the neighbourhood. New initiatives really come from the local residents, thus supported by the neighbourhood. Effective, sustainable and future proof!

Activities and services

Fruitcafé developed quite some new activities and services. A nice example is the meal service. People can register to eat at the Fruitcafé or to take it home. Only a small compensation is asked for it. The best results of this service are probably the friendships that arise, preventing loneliness and stimulating togetherness. Other services are Cakes & Cookies and a handyman service. Cakes & Cookies is an initiative from a local resident, people can order delicious cakes, cookies & chocolates for an affordable price. Her hobby thus became her job.

Besides the services, some activities that are organised on a regular basis get more and more interest from the local residents as well. The absolute favourite activity: granny's soup! This means cooking together, young and old, learning from each other and enjoying it. Most of these activities support the development of a sustainable regional food chain.



Meeting place

People with distance to the labor market and volunteers from the neighbourhood are being deployed in the Fruitcafé. The store is connected to the neighbourhood, where people of all ages find a low-threshold meeting place, can chat and help each other. The neighbourhood store is also a learning and workplace for students and residents of the neighbourhood. Students from the Noorderpoort, Terra and Hanze university of applied sciences do their internship and/or carry out study assignments there.

Learning curve

We started with a really nice initiative of selling local vegetables and fruit – and the activities resulting from that. The support from the neighbourhood was sadly not good enough, and it proved to be hard to transport, organize and sell the local food. To be successful on the long term that is what you need. Now it has changed to a cooperative meeting place where activities and services are organised for the locals, by the locals!

Next steps – dreams?

Fruitcafé's dream is to be able to make it a resident's business. Which means upscaling! This makes it easier to support the different target audiences in the neighbourhood. The neighbourhood is really diverse, which means that there are many different wishes.

Working towards a lively and future-proof neighbourhood together. Helping, supporting and inspiring each other is the future!

Do you want to learn more?

Please contact:

Inge Fakkert

Gebiedscoöperatie Westerkwartier

E-mail: i.fakkert@gcwk.nl