

More than 1,000 children in the capital of Tenerife took part in the 'Pequehuertos' project this past school year.

- **Over the last six years, the initiative has become a key element in promoting sustainable consumption and respect for the environment among young people**
- **Promoting healthy eating among primary school students and their families is another focus of the program**

A total of 1,076 second and third grade students from 27 schools in the capital of Tenerife participated this past school year in 'Pequehuertos', an initiative organized by the Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible with the collaboration of Fundación Cepsa.

This project, which began in 2016, has become an increasingly popular initiative that encourages sustainable consumption, healthy eating, and respect for the environment among the youngest residents of Santa Cruz, serving a total of 6,750 students since its inception and successfully overcoming the barriers imposed by the pandemic in the last two school years.

The head of Fundación Cepsa in the Canary Islands, Belén Machado, points out that this educational program allows schoolchildren to “discover the benefits of a healthy diet based on local products and sustainable consumption while enjoying what, for many, is their first opportunity to grow a plant—an experiential activity where they plant a vegetable or aromatic plant, which they take home to observe its growth while they care for it.”

What's more, she says, it “promotes the importance of recycling with something as simple as reusing a plastic bottle as a flowerpot. It is a small gesture that, together with all the knowledge they acquire in the didactic presentation, solidifies the concepts in the participants, who go to become ambassadors of the program in their own homes by involving their families.”

For her part, the Councilor for the Environment, Evelyn Alonso, highlighted one of the values of this initiative that “has to do with environmental education among young people, who will be the citizens of the future.” Alonso insisted that “from an early age, children need to take stock of the environmental and sustainability values of a place like the Canary Islands, which is extremely fragile and has unique ecosystems not seen anywhere else on Earth.”

The activities have been adapted to the health measures implemented by each school, with bubble classrooms containing fewer students, making it necessary to use more

resources. In spite of this, the participating teachers and students showed their interest and enthusiasm for the initiative at all times, which allowed them to discover methods for healthy eating while enjoying the satisfying experience of growing their own food.

As a preventive measure against COVID-19, the traditional food workshop where students prepare their own tasting of healthy foods was replaced by an analysis and debate on the convenience of the products that the students themselves brought from home for their breakfasts, delving into the importance of the need for good nutrition and responsible consumption.

To achieve all these objectives, the 'Pequehuertos' team developed pedagogical strategies through games, stories, riddles and songs, allowing the theoretical content of the training to be absorbed by the participants. The initiative also included a practical component where each student developed a vertical home garden.

Among the main conclusions drawn from an analysis of the project after the activity, the participating students are able to recognize foods typical of the Canary Islands, as well as to value the importance of consuming local products. This is in addition to the training and awareness of the young people in reusing waste materials.

The 'Pequehuertos' project will continue this coming school year, with the collaboration of Fundación Cepsa, in what will be its seventh edition.

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