

Fundación Cepsa and Atelsam work together on the socio-occupational integration of people with mental health problems

- **As part of the project 'Finca Isora: Prepara y Emplea' [Isora Estate: Prepare and Employ], a total of 120 participants receive training on organic farming and maintaining a poultry farm**
- **Winner of the last edition of Fundación Cepsa's Social Value Awards, the initiative also works to improve the quality of life of this group**

Since last January, a total of 120 people suffering from severe mental disorders have been participating in the project 'Finca Isora: Prepara y Emplea', an initiative aimed at enhancing their skills and training in order to promote their rehabilitation and socio-occupational integration while also bringing significant benefits for mental health.

The project, one of the five winners in the latest edition of Fundación Cepsa's Social Value Awards, will continue throughout the year on a 10,000 square meter organic farm at the Isora Occupational Center of the Mental Health Association (Atelsam).

On a visit to the facilities to see the project in action, the head of Fundación Cepsa in the Canary Islands, Belén Machado—accompanied by the project's sponsor, Fernando Hernández, and by one of Cepsa's volunteer program promoters, Maite Núñez—stressed that “by learning everything necessary to work in organic farming and poultry farming, participants learn an occupation founded on sustainability and respect for the environment. While this Atelsam center is purely occupational at present, it aspires to become a special employment center.”

In addition, “perhaps even more importantly,” she pointed out, “this activity allows them to establish and develop interpersonal relationships in group format, and it develops the personal skills of each participant, improving fundamental aspects for personal development such as communication, integration, and cooperation.”

For her part, the managing director of Atelsam Mental Health, Ana Concepción, accompanied the Fundación Cepsa representatives on the visit, as well as the organization's President, Ana Pilar Zamorano, the coordinator of the occupational centers in southern Tenerife, Marta Wallenius, and the farm's teacher, Rayco Regalado.

Ana Concepción emphasized how well the initiative has been received by participants. She explained that, “because it is an outdoor activity, it has a marked therapeutic effect, taking

into account that many are victims of isolation, which makes it difficult for them to relate to other people.”

She added that Fundación Cepsa’s support, through the Social Value Awards, has made it possible to hire a professional to continue advancing in the process. In this sense, the pre-employment trainer focuses on bolstering the professional skills and competencies of people with mental health problems with a view to their recovery and rehabilitation. “In addition to the work involved in the farm's activities, there are other key aspects such as abiding by the rules or developing social skills that help participants hold an occupation,” she said.

The aim is to mitigate the current difficult situation they face in the labor market, in many cases marked by the absence of previous work experience as a result of long periods of inactivity, coupled with difficulties in accessing new opportunities.

On the other hand, the project's sponsor, Fernando Hernández, highlighted the work being done through an initiative that he described as “solid, useful, and of great social value.” In this sense, he encouraged Atelsam to continue working along these lines, since, he added, “projects like this are what today's societies need.”

Agriculture, farming, and gardening

The project enables the 120 participants, aged between 20 and 54, to acquire skills for organic farming and raising Canarian Jabada hens, in addition to gardening initiatives.

The aim is to promote zero kilometer products, so that in addition to the planting vegetables and tubers, such as cauliflower, broccoli, squash, onions, chard, potatoes and leeks, participants learn to grow other crops such as alfalfa, millet, or barley to be used as feed for the hens.

They also aspire to earn an organic production seal and establish a point of sale for eggs. All this is coupled with the aim of becoming a special employment center in the future.

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