

## The Tenerife Island Council and Fundación Moeve are organizing the First Island-wide Meeting “Separate Oil, Utilize the Resource” for schoolchildren

- The educational campaign has raised awareness among more than 3,600 elementary school students, who have become advocates for recycling used cooking oil

The Tenerife Island Council, through its Department of Natural Environment, Sustainability, Safety, and Emergencies, has organized, with the support of Fundación Moeve, the First Island-wide Meeting “Separate Oil, Utilize the Resource,” aimed at a group of elementary school students participating in the educational campaign of the same name. The campaign seeks to raise awareness and promote, from the classroom, a change in habits regarding the proper management of used cooking oil, thereby enhancing its recovery. The program draws on the expertise of the Ataretaco Foundation, which is responsible for developing the activities and content.

Organized as the closing event of the campaign's third edition, this first island-wide meeting brought together a group of participating students and teachers. Specifically, forty elementary school students from Acaymo School and the CEIP La Verdellada, Punta del Hidalgo, and San Andrés schools, along with five teachers, came together for an interactive session to share their experiences as sustainable waste managers in their schools and homes, particularly regarding used cooking oil. The meeting also served to analyze the achievements, potential, and challenges identified during the program's implementation, which has now been running for three years. Additionally, ideas and suggestions for improvement provided by the students themselves were collected to strengthen the content of the next edition of this educational campaign, which will begin with the start of the 2026–2027 school year.

The event was attended by Blanca Pérez, Regional Minister of the Environment, Sustainability, Safety, and Emergencies; Alejandro Molowny, the island's Director of Waste Management; Belén Machado, head of Fundación Moeve in the Canary Islands; and Pedro Armas, president of Ataretaco. They gained firsthand insight into the work carried out by the participating students and listened to their proposals for future editions of the program.

In this regard, Blanca Pérez emphasized that “this event is the result of three years of consistent work during which we have succeeded in engaging the educational community in a common goal: reducing the environmental impact of an everyday waste product like used cooking oil. “The most valuable aspect is seeing how students not only learn but also become agents of change in their own homes, adopting sustainable habits that help protect our environment.”

The island's Director of Waste Management, Alejandro Molowny, explained that "proper management of used cooking oil is fundamental to our circular economy strategy, as it prevents contamination of our sewer systems and allows us to transform this waste into new resources, such as biofuels. "Programs like this are key because they combine education, outreach, and tangible results, laying the foundation for a citizenry more committed to sustainability from an early age."

For her part, Belén Machado noted that "the most important aspect of the three years we've been running this campaign is the commitment of the thousands of children who have already participated in the program, who have seen that small gestures can bring about big changes. With their curiosity and enthusiasm, they have carried a very important message from the classrooms to their homes: that an everyday waste product like used cooking oil can become a valuable resource if managed correctly, while also preventing water pollution." She also highlighted the role of "the volunteer awareness-raisers, who have become a key element in spreading the message within their own schools and in their communities, demonstrating the new generations' awareness and commitment to caring for the environment."

Finally, Pedro Armas stated that "this project also has a social dimension, since, thanks to Ataretaco's work, oil recycling helps create jobs and opportunities for people in vulnerable situations, demonstrating that caring for the planet and caring for people can and must go hand in hand."

### **A Solid Track Record**

To date, 18 schools in Santa Cruz de Tenerife, La Laguna, El Rosario, and Candelaria have actively participated in this initiative, involving more than 3,600 students in the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades of elementary school. Of these, 262 have voluntarily become awareness ambassadors, receiving additional, specific training to convey the campaign's messages to other classes at their schools.

This initiative aims to raise awareness among elementary school students about the impact that waste has on the environment—especially used cooking oil—and to promote its proper management in households.

Through hands-on, participatory activities, the students discover what happens when oil is poured down the drain and learn about concepts such as the circular economy, water pollution, recycling, and resource recovery. Above all, they develop the habit of storing used oil in a sealed plastic bottle—using a funnel provided by the program—and depositing it in the designated containers at their schools, which are supplied and managed by the Ataretaco Foundation.

In addition to attending informational sessions on the environmental effects of improper waste management, they learn that, when collected properly, used

oil ceases to be a pollutant and becomes a valuable resource—even used for the production of biofuels as a source of renewable energy.

### **Participating Schools**

A total of 18 schools in Tenerife have participated in this program since its launch in 2023: the CEIPs Isabel la Católica, Tíncer, Bethencourt, Molina, San Andrés, and Julio Castillo Torroba, as well as the Santa Catalina de Siena School, in the municipality of Santa Cruz de Tenerife; the CEIP La Verdellada, Santa Rosa de Lima, Camino Largo, San Benito, Punta del Hidalgo, Narciso Brito, Cardonal I, and Fernando III “El Santo,” as well as the Acaymo and Mainlop schools, in the municipality of San Cristóbal de La Laguna; the CEO Leoncio Rodríguez, in the case of El Rosario; and the CEIP Igueste de Candelaria, in the municipality of Candelaria.

Beyond the collection results, the “Separate Oil, Use the Resource” campaign has succeeded in bringing about a behavioral change that extends beyond the classroom and reaches into homes, involving families in the proper management of used cooking oil and helping to establish more sustainable habits in everyday life.

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