

CITY FOOD POLICIES



Saragossa **A city developing a sustainable vision between tradition and innovation.**

Authors: Elena Messina, Luca Bossi
*With the collaboration of Jorge Hernandez,
 Technical Advisor to the Directorate-General
 for Consumer Affairs of Aragon*

City	Saragossa
Country	Spain
Population: city area	701.090
Surface area	1.062,64 sq. km
Green areas	847 sq. km

Saragossa represents a good example of the willingness to improve the resilience and quality of life for its citizens. The projects are copious and relevant, working through local expertise for local needs.

Among the greatest assets of the city, there is a deep commitment for environmental concerns, traduced by the will to use the local Agenda 21 as a strategic tool to design the future of the city. Saragossa has also developed the capacity to combine past, present and future, being able for instance, to focus on the future by developing an efficient mobility system and in the same time to give value to old traditions. It is also aware about the inter-twined destinies of urban and surrounding rural areas. Therefore, the city is developing a very rich and interesting vision able to generate fair and balanced innovation within a common-sense approach.

This has resulted in an ambitious and efficient program for water management and biodiversity preservation, which has been successfully related to local food consumption programs, thanks to the coordination of the efforts between the municipality and authoritative and influential associations. Education and practice are two important pillars of the food strategy. Both are made concrete through actions related to urban agriculture and also to school gardening. The resulting relationship among food habits, food education and responsible agriculture can be seen as a strategic asset to plan public food policies.

A forward-looking city with a rich historical and cultural heritage

Saragossa is a clean, safe and cosmopolitan city, the capital city of the Saragossa province and of the autonomous community of Aragon, in Spain, a decentralised sovereign state with three local levels of government: 17 autonomous communities (comunidades autonomas), 50 provinces (provincias) and 8.069 municipalities.

In Saragossa is concentrated more than 50 per cent of the Aragonese population. This historical city was founded in 24 B.C. by the Romans on the banks of the Ebro, on the site of an ancient Celtiberic (iber mixed with celtic people) town. Since then, it has been inhabited by many different civilizations: Iberians, Romans, Goths, Franks, Berbers, and Arabs until the Aragonese conquered the city in 1118.

Since the 1970s the economy and population has grown rapidly in the city; this growth is predicted to continue and the population is anticipated to reach one million shortly after 2020. The main economic activities are the services (62,5%), followed by freelance activities (18,1%), building industry (12%), manufacturing (7,2%) and farming (0,2%). Indeed, despite a decline in the outlying rural economy, Saragossa has continued to grow.

The city's economy benefited from car industries and also railway engines etc. Projects like the Expo 2008, the official World's Fair have also contributed to the dynamism of this city which is also one of the oldest universities in Spain and a major research and development centre. Located at the intersection of Madrid-Barcelona and Bilbao-Valencia arteries, it is also an important logistics node (railway and airport) for travellers. Considered the semi-arid climate and average rainfall of less than 400mm per year, Saragossa is heavily reliant on the Ebro for its water supplies.

The City has applied to become the European Green Capital in 2016. As a result, the city has adopted a set of specific strategies for climate change, water consumption and waste policies, local transport, urban agriculture and food waste reduction which are strongly linked to the European strategic plan Agenda 21.

A local Agenda 21 embedding an efficient policy for water management and biodiversity

Towards a local Agenda 21

EBROPOLIS, the Association for the Strategic Development of Saragossa, was set up in 1994 by the municipality, the Province, the chamber of commerce, the federation of neighbourhood associations, the university, the confederation of contractors and the confederation of SME's, etc. Its role is to develop a vision and a strategic Plan for the city and the urban district. It affiliates more than 80 companies (including the main national company supplying gas), banks, local authorities, associations, etc., asked to pay a fee to be part of the membership and to invest in some of the projects. A plan of action was delivered in 1998 based on consensus-achieving proposals, divided in five categories: infrastructures, training and human resources, economic structure, environment and quality of life, 14 concrete goals linked to sub-goals along with levels of performance to be reached for each one.

To go further

European Green Capital Award 2016, Zaragoza,
<http://www.zaragoza.es/contenidos/medioambiente/ZGZVERDEEN/9Wastewatermanagement.pdf>

European Green Capital, Expert Panel – Technical Assessment Report, Zaragoza,
https://www.zaragoza.es/contenidos/medioambiente/ZGZVERDEEN/EGCA_2016_Technical_Assessment_Report_Zaragoza_F01.pdf.

Mensa civica:
<http://mensacivica.com/project/mas-alimentos-ecologicos-y-menos-panga-en-los-comedores-escolares>.

Life Zaragoza Natural, Creación, gestión y promoción de la Infraestructura Verde de Zaragoza LIFE12 ENV/ES/000567,
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/index.cfm?fuseaction=search.dspPage&n_proj_id=4627.0.

Zaragoza Ayuntamiento public website, <http://www.zaragoza.es/ciudad/medioambiente/>

In 2000, the Saragossa city council signed the Charter of Aalborg and the Declaration of Hanover. The following year, it validated a document marking the start of the local Agenda 21 process, confirming thereby the Action Plan embracing sustainable development, town-specific indicators and the development of common European indicators, the principle of citizen participation and in particular, the Permanent Office and Functional Commission for its implementation.

Urban planning and land use.

Within the Urban Planning Agreements, the City of Saragossa has allowed local companies to move from the city centre to new industrial areas. The program *Esto no es un solar* (This is not a vacant lot) highlights the key role of the city to contrast unemployment, segregation and poverty. Starting in 2009, it aimed to promote the rehabilitation and residential development of 70 districts, according to social (job creation) and environmental parameters.

Mobility.

The most significant initiative developed by the City, is related to the new tram line connecting suburbs to the city centre. This solution, started in 2005, meant a reduction of the car traffic intensity by 14.5%, and even 28.3% in 2012, even if the car is still the most used mode. Furthermore the bicycle infrastructure was set in recent years together with a relatively large and popular bike-sharing system and the extension of 30 km/h streets for cars; this initiative has visibly produced a spread increase in bicycling. Eventually, among the possible developments of these kinds of initiatives, a gradual shift to achieve 80% hybrid and electric buses by 2020 is planned to start in 2015.

Water management.

Following a prolonged drought in the early 1990s, water management in Saragossa was considered as inadequate to satisfy the needs of the developing economy a growing population. As a result, the municipality redefined its approach to water supply, shifting from a policy of continued exploitation of limited resources to one where priority was instead given to demand reduction solutions.

Water consumption and water waste are now a main pillar of sustainability policies, linked to the

Agenda 21 Global programme which had also produced a set of relevant indicators in order to monitor and continuously control the progress trend within different strategic initiatives.

The City of Saragossa represents an exemplary case of overall water consumption reduction, in Europe, by promoting a set of strategic actions concerned with water management and waste water treatment. Involving large-scale consumers, educational institutions, political decision makers and the general public as a whole, the programme was implemented through the four phases, starting in 1990s and concluding in 2008:

- phase 1: 'Small steps, big solutions'** – A widespread awareness-raising campaign to reduce water consumption concerned with homes, public buildings and commercial activity and aiming to produce a behavioural change in water usage;

- phase 2: '50 good practices'** – The implementation and then the dissemination, of 50 examples of water efficient technologies and practices with references to parks, gardens, public buildings;

- phase 3: 'School for efficient water use'** – The dissemination of good practices guidebooks describing the good water saving practices identified in Phase 2 of the programme;

- phase 4: '100.000 commitments'** – The invitation of citizens and businesses to make online public commitments to save water with the aim of recording 100.000 such commitments in time for the International Expo "Water and Sustainable Development" which opened in Saragossa in June 2008 (30).

As shown, coordinated by the newly established Saragossa Water Commission, the strategy actively included a comprehensive stakeholder engagement programme and a reform of the billing system in order to achieve European Commission requests concerning water saving targets. Fourteen years later the city really reduced its overall consumption by almost 30% and is now known throughout the world as a leader in the field of water conservation.

According to recovered data the water consumption seemed to be reduced from 135,54 litres per person per day (in 2000) to 99.86 litres per person per day in 2012. Overall, Saragossa's water consumption per capita figures and trends are impressive and among the lowest in Europe. This situation is surely due to the interesting pricing structure for water consumption which is

used in order to encourage an efficient as well as widespread usage of water. For example, householders that achieve a 10% reduction in water consumption also receive a 10% reduction on their water bill, as those consuming excessive amounts may pay almost five times as much in the higher tiers (see European Green Capital, Expert Panel – Technical Assessment Report, Zaragoza).

Moreover, wastewater reduction has been importantly improved in the past period throughout specific measures such as the Plan for Improving its Water Infrastructures, funded by the FEDER 2007-2013 Operational Programme of Cohesion Funds. The Plan was made up of a copious number of initiatives to fully implement wastewater treatment and re-organize rainwater management. Overall, Saragossa's strategic plan to reduce water waste and consumption, rather than produce an increase of the supply to meet demand in order to solve the problem of the water scarcity tried to promote a better managing of the water consumption usage and re-usage. In fact, the water reuse initiatives are also good and crucial to future reduce the dependence on freshwater. Moreover, bettering the water usage may be strongly linked with the promotion of a new form of sustainable agriculture considered as vital objective for all.

Urban Agriculture to maintain biodiversity

For more than 20 years, the City has been carrying out an active reforestation planning 1632,5 ha of new forest areas, contributing in a direct way to the climate change mitigation, land conservation and the enhancement of water resources consumption, thus, improving the quality of life of its citizens. 41% of the territory is devoted to farming and other 46% are covered by forest and natural vegetation.

A widespread set of activities concerned with Urban Agriculture has been promoted by the Municipality. La Huerta Del Abuelo Rosel ("The Garden of Grandfather Rosel") is a flagship project: a 600 square metres area downtown, in the middle of high buildings and busy streets, has been destined to become a productive open urban space, managed by people living nearby.

The three years project Huertas Life km 0 (Garden Life km 0) was launched in 2013 with different objectives, including the promotion of the

agricultural sector and food security as well as social integration, empowerment and education of the citizens. The project highlights all traditional cultures related to the territory and allows to provide healthy and fresh local food with a leitmotif: "productos nuestros, productos Km0" (Our products, products zero km). An important collateral benefit of reinforcing urban, peri-urban agriculture and forestry is counteracting the loss of biodiversity and the maintenance of ecosystems. The overall project of the city gives particular significance the farmers' market Muestra Agroecológica (Agro-ecology Exposition) both a place to buy fresh, local and organic certificated foods and also to meet local producers and have the opportunity to discuss, discover and share competencies, experience and knowledge.

The conservation of different landscapes, also co-existing with human activity has produced results over the last years. Among 40% of the land area of the municipality is significant in terms of biodiversity. This includes 24.651 hectares of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) under the Habitats Directive, and 11.358 hectares of Special Protection Areas (SPA) under the Birds Directive. It also includes 167 natural protected areas under national law. Priority habitats cover 23.542 hectares. More than 1.312 species of flora and 402 species of fauna have been identified and recorded.

The commitment of the City can be represented by three main issues:

- agro-economy, health and environment: the promotion of local, fresh and organic foods in school canteens;
- social issues and access to food for everyone: during the summer of 2014, thanks to the effort of the Municipality and the financial sustain of the Ministry of Health and Social Services, five school canteens in Saragossa kept open to offer lunch to around 3.000 pupils whose families suffer of straightened circumstances;
- intercultural education and migrants job opportunities: El alimento que nos une (The food that join together) is a Mensa Civica's project committed to the promotion of intercultural food traditions, recipes and habits in public canteens, in order to foster social inclusion and migrant's occupation.

The lever of education to stimulate awareness and new behaviors

Starting from the projects developed on urban and peri-urban gardens, the City of Saragossa has promoted different initiatives to improve the local food system, with particular attention to the public food service that represents a long term strategic field for Saragossa's environmental and food policies.

The first project started in 1983, to introduce gardening at school. The initial aim of the municipality was to reconnect the different generations living in the city, highlighting how most of the inhabitants have rural origins. Today, school gardens represent a network of more than 8.500 pupils, 90 schools and gardens, managed both by the Municipality and the schools. They offer activities that are integral part of education programs. Schools are in charge of the maintenance of the garden and the educational activities including classes and workshops about the relevance of ecological farming, sustainable consumption of resources, including water resources, the relationship between food and health, where participants can share experience, knowledge and innovative proposals.

An award has been created: Premio Huertos Escolares Ecologicos (Ecological School Gardens Prize), to reward the best projects committed to the promotion of public awareness about ecological food and agriculture's future.

Numerous actors are involved in the whole process, such as public and private institutions, collective actors, NGOs and private citizens. More precisely, the list of stakeholders includes the University and schools of Saragossa, Slow Food and the Mensa Civica (Civic Canteen) project, the Unión de Agricultores y Ganaderos de Aragón (UAGA-COAG, the Farmers and Stockbreeders' Union), the Centro de Estudios Rurales y de Agricultura Internacional (CERAI, Center for International agriculture and Rural studies), the Comité Aragonés de Agricultura Ecológica (CAAE, Aragon's Committee for Ecological Agriculture), the Ciento de investigación de recursos y consumes energéticos (CIRCE, Research Center on Energy Resources and Consumption), catering agencies, local producers, buyers and farmers.

For instance, Slow Food and Mensa Civica contributed to the rising of awareness and commitment on food system issues with educational programs and classes about food and nutrition culture. The program was part of a wider effort to develop consciousness and activities about the importance of local, organic and traditional foods. Many of the Slow Food projects find in Saragossa a particular significance due to the concrete commitment of the city to preserve biodiversity or water resources, such as Arca del Gusto (Ark of Taste) a project aiming to identify, catalogue and protect traditional, local and small scale food species and products which are in risk of extinction; Baluarte (Bastion), which aimed to preserve traditional ways of food production, to improve specific markets and educate buyers and consumers; the project started in 2000 and today count 1.600 producers and 350 labeled products from 59 Countries.

In 2003, both initiatives to promote urban farming and school gardens converged to lead to the public commitment for the definition of new criteria of sustainability for city food services. The University of Saragossa took a part into the Campus Sostenibles (Sustainable Campuses) project, a network involving Spanish University Districts enhancing the creation of a system of pilot canteens in at least one Campus per District. The purpose of the project has been to promote the importance of a change in everyday food lifestyles.

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