

Interview

Rebeca Segura: “We recover unused land to redistribute wealth and generate jobs in organic farming”



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Rebeca Segura, director of Central Parc / Photo: Central Parc.



Central Parc promotes the social inclusion of vulnerable groups / Photo: Central Parc.



Several channels are used to commercialise the produce from Central Parc / Photo: Central Parc.

The cooperative Central Parc in San Boi “rescues” abandoned spaces in the Parc Agrari del Baix Llobregat (Baix Llobregat Agricultural Park) near Barcelona and uses it for social economy projects. The cooperative’s director explains this initiative.

For a year and a half, the cooperative Central Parc has been working for the recovery of unused land for agro-ecological farming. Where does this initiative start?

Central Parc was started by the NGO [DESOS Opció Solidària](#), a member of the cooperative that promoted the project and which, since the year 2000, has been working in the field of **international cooperation and social economy** in countries in the South, especially Nicaragua. Some 4 years ago, this organisation decided to explore a new form of cooperation here in Catalonia, after the crisis emerged, and started the Central Parc.

Through this project, we try identifying **unused and abandoned land** in the Parc Agrari and we use this land to **generate wealth** through agro-ecological production, **redistributing this wealth** by creating jobs and promoting the inclusion of **vulnerable groups**.

How do you achieve the social and labour inclusion of these groups? Do you get any support?

Our goal is to make this project **viable and self-sustained**. In other words, through the **production of organic fruit and vegetables** on these lands, generate **sufficient income to then projects** for training and social-labour inclusion.

Out of the 5 hectares of land we are currently farming, we use half a hectare for training programmes. We have entered into an agreement with the [Town Council of Sant Boi de Llobregat](#) and thanks to this agreement we have been given two plots of land and financial support to train **youths** aged 16 to 21 who have not completed their secondary education but want to go back to studying.

We also have groups of **adults older than 45** who are long-term unemployed and, together with the [Comissió Espanyola d'Ajuda al Refugiat](#) (Spanish Commission for Refugees) and the [Comissió Catalana d'Ajuda al Refugiat](#) (Catalan Commission for Refugees), we have taken **5 refugees and asylum seekers onboard for training**.

How does working the land and producing their own produce benefit these people?

All these people are self-organised to manage the plot of land, and the produce it yields is used for **self-consumption** or is **commercialised collectively**. So, the programme offers them **training, quality food** and, for next year, when we will be launching the commercialisation, it will also give them some income.

Besides getting **training** to develop organic farming in an autonomous way, agriculture also becomes a **highly therapeutic activity** for people in a vulnerable situation. **It promotes different skills** while it also promotes **integration, self-esteem** and interpersonal communication. Feeling able, feeling useful and feeling part of a community are **fundamental elements for social integration** and also to promote inclusion in the labour market.

What channels are you using to commercialise the produce from Central Parc?

We have **several ways of commercialisation**: on the one hand, large volumes of produce are sold to supermarkets or organic food distributors. These are **companies that are committed** with local producers and social economy. In other words, they are companies that **plan together** with the producers what vegetables will be commercialised.

The idea is that get the products and the quantities they need at a price that is satisfactory and that producers have a **guaranteed sale** of a large part of our seasonal production **at a fair price**. In this manner, we avoid losses and **food waste** and price **speculation**, all of which are usual in the agri-food industry.

Food sovereignty, social and labour reintegration and agro-ecological production are the main axes of your work, but you also raise awareness on sustainable consumption. How many projects are you running in this area?

Right now, together with Desos, we are promoting the project “**The right to food: global awareness and local**

transformation”, with the participation of **primary and secondary education students** from three schools from the Sants-Montjuïc district in Barcelona. Students are doing **research on the origin of the food they eat** in the school diner, while studying concepts such as locally sourced food, responsible food, food waste...

Furthermore, together with a high school from Barcelona, we have started the **project on learning and service** (APS) “Transforming the value of food: innovating in the organic food circuit” to promote economic, social and environmental **sustainability**.

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