

Pilot fiche O2.1

# Healthy Food Chain

## Part 1: The pilot

**Pilot name: Healthy Food Chain**

Located: Cadzand

*Pilot overview*

As outlined above little was known about the needs of the older residents of Cadzand. The initial intention of this pilot had been to consider what contribution access to good food had on the wellbeing of older people. Initially the project sought to improve the meals on wheels service which it was thought could be improved by involving local restaurants. A further aspect to linking up with local restaurants was to increase the range of opportunities for businesses within the area. The specific focus of these new business opportunities was upon how to reduce the seasonal variation in trade that was thought to present difficulties to local restaurants. One mechanism that was identified as a method to achieve this was through the use of the existing regional strategy for Zeeland as a food region. However, research undertaken during the Explore Phase of SAIL and used by both pilots within the town indicated a recurring theme linked to the importance of social contact and the need for an on-going strategy to promote opportunities for older people to meet and have social interaction. This discovery achieved in the Explore Phase of the SAIL project was to alter the course of the pilot. The initial intention of the pilot was to focus on healthy eating and encouraging the use of local fresh produce, but food was instead used as a vehicle to overcome the problem of loneliness among the older residents. The pilot began to look at ways in which older people might have the opportunity to meet up and socialise at a food related activity. This involved the building of networked solutions that could collectively deliver opportunities for older people to meet.

As highlighted previously this was a small community and central to progression of the project was building trust by developing personal relationships with the older people through social interaction. However, a lunch arranged for the elderly inhabitants of the village gave the pilot manager the opportunity to discuss with older residents what life was like for them in the village and what might help to overcome their feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Alongside the knowledge gained by the Healthy Food Chain pilot there was also the information being gathered for the Vitality Boulevard pilot. This research highlighted that

data on obesity rates and cholesterol levels suggested that any healthy eating initiatives should focus upon encouraging health meal planning and preparation. However, it became apparent that the older people were not as interested in preparing the food themselves as having an opportunity to meet and eat together. Further feedback from these sessions indicated those who attended were happy to receive information about healthy eating from an expert such as a chef or dietitian that they could put into practice later but what they wanted most from any event or activity was to have time with others to talk and build social relationships.

### *Key issues for the pilot*

For this pilot, it was evident that the degree of progress was determined by two different factors. The first was the relationship between the community and those developing the project. There was a need for the community to accept the pilot staff before the project could move forward. This was achieved by spending time with the community and gaining their trust. This process was enhanced by key figures from the community 'endorsing' the efforts of the pilot staff. The second factor that pilot staff believed had slowed progress was a lack of research into the specific needs of the community. However, the research that they undertook revealed several things. Firstly, that although basic health measures such as cholesterol levels or rate of obesity suggested the need for guidance on healthy eating habits a more pressing issue for the older people was their lack of social contact. It could therefore not be a lack of knowledge regarding planning healthy meals but rather that cooking for one led them to pick less healthy alternatives for ease and convenience.

A key learning point for the pilot staff was that social innovation required a shift in mindset and focus as outlined previously within the Vitality Boulevard pilot. In delivering the healthy food chain the same two key points applied. Firstly, some issues could be quite simply resolved. Secondly, unlike previous initiatives they had worked on the outcomes could not necessarily be measured in monetary terms and that the degree of value may vary as it was determined by each individual recipient and their specific circumstances.

As with the Vitality Boulevard pilot there had been an underestimation of both the staff time required and the amount of funding allocated to the pilot. Lack of sufficient funding

hampered progress as funding had to be first found and seeking funding distracted pilot managers from their primary role of planning the delivery of activities.



Participants from the Healthy Food Chain pilot enjoying a healthy lunch together.

## Part 2: Evaluation

## PILOT 6 CADZAND-DORP: HEALTHY FOOD CHAIN

### *Introduction*

Cadzand-Dorp is a small village mostly inhabited by elderly residents, which has led to a decrease in available facilities. There is, for example, no supermarket available and residents need to go to Cadzand-Bad (2 km from Dorp) to do their shopping. Therefore, this pilot is looking into how the availability of healthy food can be improved in Dorp. During the stakeholder meetings it also became clear that elderly residents would not only want to eat healthy food, but to eat together with other inhabitants to foster social connections. This has been taken into account while organizing activities. The local elderly organization organizes a lunch for the elderly inhabitants once per month. This organization has been used as a starting point for the activities and as a way to contact possible participants. Several lunches have been organized and promoted through the organization. One of these lunches was Kezanse kost, which offered a menu of local dishes cooked by a local chef. After the food, an local organization stopped by with a 'suitcase full of memories', which contained several items related to school that stimulate interaction and conversations between the elderly participants. A survey has been performed during this activity to get input from the elderly residents (n = 27). In Cadzand-Dorp a feel good market is organized every year, which consist of different activities such as yoga, healthy foods etc. SAIL had a stand on this market to promote the healthy food chain activities and to connect to local organizations concerned with health and wellbeing.

### *Results*

The survey shows that almost 60 percent of participants spoke to someone new, and that little over 40 percent would like to stay in contact with people they met during the activity. 48 percent of participants also indicated that the lunch motivated them to improve their eating patterns, even though during this lunch no explicit information was given about healthy foods. During the first lunch, the information was given by a dietician, focused on how to eat healthy when getting older. 48 percent of participants indicated that they would like to regularly receive information on healthy nutrition. Almost all participants want to join similar activities in the future. The first activity has been

promoted as 'cooking and eating together' and this was problematic as participants indicated they already know how to cook, and that it is relaxing to have someone cook for them. However, the cooking work

### *Sustainability*

By involving the local organization, it was easier to connect people to the SAIL project and the activities. During the process of organizing the activities, the local church also got involved and they are very willing to keep organizing the lunches together with the elderly organizations, therefore warranting the continuation of the project. Also, as participants indicated they were enthusiastic to join similar and regular activities in the future, it is clear that the interest from participants is also not an issue. The continuation of activities and active participation is expected to prevent social isolation and decrease perceived feelings of loneliness.