

SAVING SEEDS PROJECT

Saving Seeds' is a project thought of and initiated by Prof. Willem Van Cotthem, botanist and consultant for Unicef. The idea is to gather as much seeds as possible for e.g. little gardens in refugee camps in the Sahara in Algeria. In a simple way and with little as no effort one can collect seeds of peppers, eggplants, avocado's and other tropical plants, dry them and send them to the professor. These seeds will be planted to ensure a food supplement for the local inhabitants.

In 2005 prof. Van Cotthem was invited by UNICEF ALGERIA as an advisor for the project "*Family gardens and school gardens in the Sahrawi refugee camps in South-East Algeria*".

A preliminary study gave evidence that it was rather easy to teach families and schools of these refugees (most of them nomads and fishermen), who have lived in those Sahara camps for more than 30 years, how to set up small kitchen gardens, how to grow fruits and vegetables with a minimum of water and fertilizers, using a water stocking soil conditioner.

In this part of the Sahara (the area around the city of Tindouf) there are two seasons:

(1) the **autumn-winter season** (from September till January) in which various vegetables can be grown: lettuce, beetroots, carrots, onions, parsley ...

(2) the **spring-summer season** (from February till August) in which it is too hot for vegetables, but in which they can grow various tropical fruits such as melons, watermelons, pumpkins, peppers, avocados, papayas and eggplants (aubergines).

The set up of family and school gardens poses no major problem, since there is plenty of space available. If one uses a soil conditioner with the particular ability to store irrigation water, a very small amount of it will ensure sufficient moisture in the soil guaranteeing a continuous growth. Unfortunately, there is a sustained lack of seeds of tropical fruits and vegetables. Commercial seeds are much too expensive for those people. Of vital importance to these people is not to grow special high quality varieties, but to have at their disposal some juicy food in the hottest period of the year, when nothing else is growing anymore in the desert.

Therefore we call on you to show your solidarity with those poverty-stricken refugees or with this poor rural population.

We don't ask any money

Only send, when it suits you, the seeds you find in the fruits you eat yourself and which you otherwise would throw in the wate basket: seeds of melons, water melons, pumpkins etc.

Just rinse these seeds in water and dry them on a plate (not on a piece of paper as it would stick to the seeds). As soon as the seeds are thoroughly dried, put them in a paper envelope and put the name of the species on it.

The more we gather seeds the more families we can help.

One thing we know for sure: this project can turn out to be a world initiative, since we, citizens of the developed countries, young or old, (grand) parents, children and grandchildren, we can work together. However small your contribution, however small the parcel of grains you send us, we can assure you that it will contribute to improve the standard of living of the poor, since YOUR SEEDS GET TO THE PEOPLE without any go-between.

This way we will contribute together to fight hunger and poverty in the world.

You can also group your seeds with friends and send larger packages to the same address. Thank you so much!

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