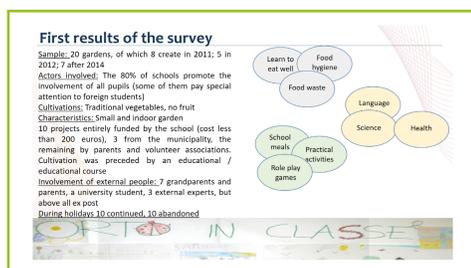
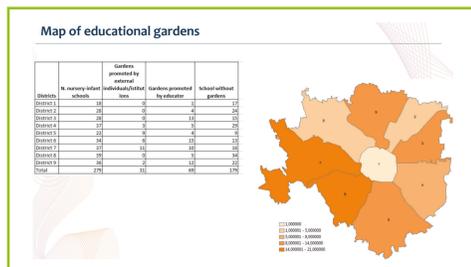
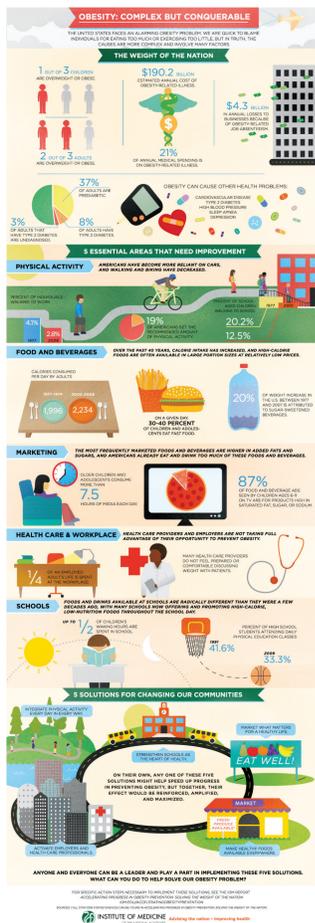




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For a policy in support of educational horticulture in the Milan metropolitan area



Project description

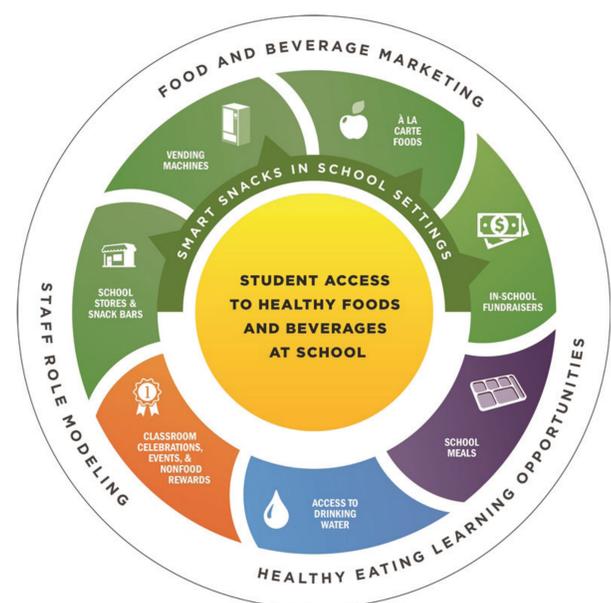
The experience of educational gardens in Milan is continuing even after Expo 2015. Nursery and infant schools realize that gardens are more numerous. Of the 279 institutes, 100 are active in horticultural projects, mostly thanks to the involvement of teaching staff.

In these projects, the “educational components” are very important. Teachers tell about biodiversity through examples and images. Through this exercise, they try to understand the eating habits of children and their families and their knowledge of the times and places of production of the most common vegetables and fruits. Afterwards, they decide what to cultivate (with respect to the season) and they represent the production process on billboards (sowing, water use, etc.), sometimes in English, sometimes with the description of times and costs. At the end of this theoretical stage, teachers, even though animated readings or with the help of grandparents or volunteer parents, help children to sow in wooden boxes or directly into the ground. After the plant growth observation, children look more closely at the different characteristics of each plant. When ready, they collect products, but they do not consume them in the class. They share them with their families or in exchange for small financial contributions.

The school closure in the summer months is a problem: in the most productive phase, children will hardly be able to follow the project. To overcome this inconvenience, some schools have been equipped to open the garden in a few days and organize some „harvest festivals” or other similar events. Other ones have left the task of a volunteer grandfather who is responsible for maintaining the garden for a few hours; others have abandoned the project by counting to restart it at the opening in September.

Despite this difficulty, teachers, children and families are satisfied with the initiative. Interviewed, the first one experiment with alternative and multidisciplinary teaching methods, the latter learn various disciplines, interact more easily with each other and with the adults involved, and finally the latter see their children more mindful of nature and more likely to accept a lesser diet sugar.

Teachers note that children do not deny totally vegetables or, at least, less than the past. Parents also notice a greater interest in feeding on children, both in their speeches and by influencing family food choices.



About me

Valentina Cattivelli, PhD in Economics for Agricultural system at Università Cattolica di Milan, is an enthusiastic senior researcher at Eurac Research in Bolzano. She collaborated with Wageningen University, Ersaf and ISMEA in research activities with focus on urban-rural governance relations, economic evaluation of conservative agriculture and policies to support young farmers, urban/social agriculture. Her research interests are in the regional economy and regional policies for local and rural development.