

# COS magazine

Rijk Zwaan's Committee for Development Cooperation



Boosting vegetable consumption

**A**prodes stimulates and facilitates families to grow their own vegetables.

p21

# Development projects Rijk Zwaan

Rijk Zwaan's Committee for Development Cooperation



# Word of Welcome



*"Together we shape our own identity. Together we are Rijk Zwaan."*

**A**s a stable company Rijk Zwaan is well on its way to celebrating our 100-year anniversary in 2024. We have a deeply rooted commitment to remaining an independent, family-owned business and retaining our unique company culture: one which puts our employees first. They define our identity. They are Rijk Zwaan.

Our colleagues and all the other people in the world have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. We want 'sharing a healthy future' with our colleagues and all our collaborative partners to become a given. This is all the more reason for us to strive to help all those who lack the essential assets or knowledge.

Needless to say, every individual can spare something to give to those less privileged than themselves. But while that is a wonderful gesture, it does not take account of the fact that we also want to do our bit as a company – especially for people who want to share a healthy future.

We founded the Committee for Development Cooperation (COS) over 20 years ago. It is focused on people who are active in horticulture but have insufficient knowledge or resources to achieve a successful yield. We do not select the people we support based on their background. Needless to say, we want to help as many people as possible.

We regard every extra person we can help as another success. Furthermore, we support people who are

fleeing or have been otherwise affected by a natural disaster or conflict.

We are proud of our colleagues who are working so hard and with so much professionalism and enthusiasm on various cooperative development projects worldwide. We know for sure that they are improving not only the lives of the people they help, but also their own lives too.

Ben Tax  
Director of Rijk Zwaan



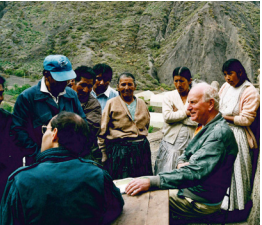
The work of COS is seamlessly aligned with our company philosophy and slogan: 'Sharing a Healthy Future'.

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# What does COS do?



Co-founder of COS, Maarten Zwaan, on a visit to a development project.

**S**ince 1999 the Rijk Zwaan Committee for Development Cooperation (COS) has been involved in development work, with a focus on sharing our knowledge about vegetable production.

We work together with local organisations to offer technical advice, share knowledge and provide support to farmers and growers in developing countries. Our aim is to stimulate vegetable consumption within families and to help farmers and growers to improve their income position. We are currently supporting projects in Peru, Guatemala, Haiti, Albania and Gambia.

The projects are partly funded by the Rijk Zwaan board. Employees provide financial support too; once every two years, the money that would have been spent on the traditional Christmas gifts for all workers is donated to a good cause instead.

The COS committee is made up of Rijk Zwaan employees and two external advisors. They are directly involved in the projects so that they can monitor and evaluate the results with their own eyes. This COS magazine provides an inspirational insight into the projects that we support. We hope you enjoy reading it!

Heleen Bos, Gerard Hulisz, Kees van Maaswaal, Michiel Tamminga, Anton Schins, Linda van Veen en Michiel Zwaan.



**“The support of COS for development projects is firmly anchored in our company.”**

The COS committee members.





# FUDI, Guatemala

**U**tz Samaj, a FUDI programme, is aimed at stimulating small businesses and above all young people to grow vegetables professionally. Rijk Zwaan has been supporting Utz Samaj for more than 15 years. COS supplies the college with seeds for use in the greenhouses, and our colleagues from Guatemala teach classes there.





# Utz samaj!



'Utz Samaj', which is from Kaqchiquel (one of the 22 languages spoken in Guatemala), means 'Well done!'

**H**aving grown broccoli for many years, Odilia González decided it was time for change in 2007. She wanted to do something else instead, so she signed up for the one-year horticultural course at Utz Samaj college in Tecpán (part of FUDI), in the Guatemalan region of Chimaltenango. Besides receiving intensive teaching, students also gain hands-on experience in growing all kinds of crops – from sowing and planting through to harvesting.

## Art form

"I regard tomato production as an art form. I had lots of experience with open-field crops, but growing tomatoes is a whole new ball game. It calls for a lot more knowledge," says Odilia as she proudly stands in her greenhouse surrounded by tomato plants.

After completing the course, she and her husband built the greenhouse with the help of a small business loan from the bank and some of their savings. "This step has changed my way of thinking. At first, I was worried about how much land I would need, but this production method enables you to make much more efficient use of both land and water."

## Business instinct

Besides that, nowadays she makes substantially more money than she used to. Before switching to tomato production, she had just 20 days on which to generate income. Now, she spreads the tomato harvest out over three months. Odilia sells her tomatoes directly to customers. She combines a sharp nose for business with a willingness to take risks. "It's important to explore other opportunities, to dare to venture off the well-trodden path. I'd encourage other men and women to take the leap and go to Utz Samaj!" Not everyone appreciates her boldness, as illustrated by several small holes that jealous neighbours have

burned in the greenhouse cover, but Odilia won't let that stand in her way. She is a woman who knows what she wants.

## From far and wide

Odilia González is not the only one to have completed the horticultural course; it attracts around a hundred students each year – young and old, male and female. They come from far and wide. There is even one student all the way from Zacapa, which is a four-hour drive to the northeast of Tecpán, which means an eight-hour round trip every week to attend classes.

The course is rated very highly, and Utz Samaj recently became officially recognised by the University of San Carlos of Guatemala. That recognition opens up new opportunities because it further increases the college's appeal – not only to students, but also to potential partners and investors.

The one-year course includes four days of teaching each month: one per week. Students are required to have a basic knowledge of horticulture before they start.



**"I regard tomato production as an art form"**



# New direction



**“It’s my dream to build even more greenhouses and also to produce other crops”**

**O**n a hillside in the mountainous region of Chimaltenango is the greenhouse of ex-student Jayro Hernández. Jayro completed the horticultural course at Utz Samaj in 2018 and is now a successful tomato grower.

Jayro originally worked in electrical engineering, but the sector became increasingly competitive so he chose to take things in a whole new direction. He embarked on the course to learn about growing vegetables. “I have a lot of respect for Utz Samaj, particularly because of all the knowledge and experience that the college has to offer related to crops and vegetable production.” Thanks to a bank loan, Jayro was able to build his own greenhouse after finishing the course. “One of the lecturers from Utz Samaj, Juan Manuel Álvarez, was a huge help – and still is. As a new grower I can cope with the day-to-day activities, but you sometimes need a little extra technical expertise.”

### Rightfully proud

Jayro clearly takes good care of his company. The tunnel greenhouse, constructed from canvas over a bamboo frame, is clean and tidy, and the tomato plants look healthy. The young grower is optimistic about the future. “I’m happy and very proud of my tomatoes. It’s my dream to build even more greenhouses in the future and also to produce other crops.”

“Things that are difficult for individual growers are possible for Utz Samaj as a cooperative,” says René Morales – former manager of Utz Samaj and now manager of the Puentes Project, which is a similar initiative. The college buys the vegetables from its current and former students and sells them on to supermarket organisations such as Walmart.

Utz Samaj also has good links with various financial institutions that are now keen to invest in the young entrepreneurs. René: “The collaboration with Rijk Zwaan is very important in this process. Heleen Bos has been a big help in putting us in touch with the right partners.”



*“The key to the college’s success is that Utz Samaj is able to connect the students with the market.”*



# Sharing knowledge



*"The current and former students receive intensive guidance. Not only from the Utz Samaj lecturers but also from Rijk Zwaan."*

**J**ayron Alexander Coyote has been a lecturer at Utz Samaj since 2018. Just two years earlier he was a student at the horticultural college himself, and he now enjoys sharing his knowledge about vegetable production and crop management with today's students.

### Valuable lessons

The course made a good impression on Jayron in 2016. "Everything I learnt here has helped me to set up my own business. I was able to get a loan from a credit cooperative. I'm currently growing tomatoes and cucumbers in the greenhouse and beans as an open-field crop, all organically."

### Follow-up

Not long after completing the course, Jayron returned to Utz Samaj as a lecturer. "I'm keen to share best practices with the students in order to help them – and ultimately the whole sector – to professionalise. We offer technical support to former students too, and help them to market their products. They can sell all their products through us, which is a tremendous help for them." According to Jayron, however, there is still room for improvement in that respect: "Utz Samaj has built up a strong reputation and an extensive network. Developing a single brand as the cooperative would create a nice opportunity for us to further improve the way we market our products."

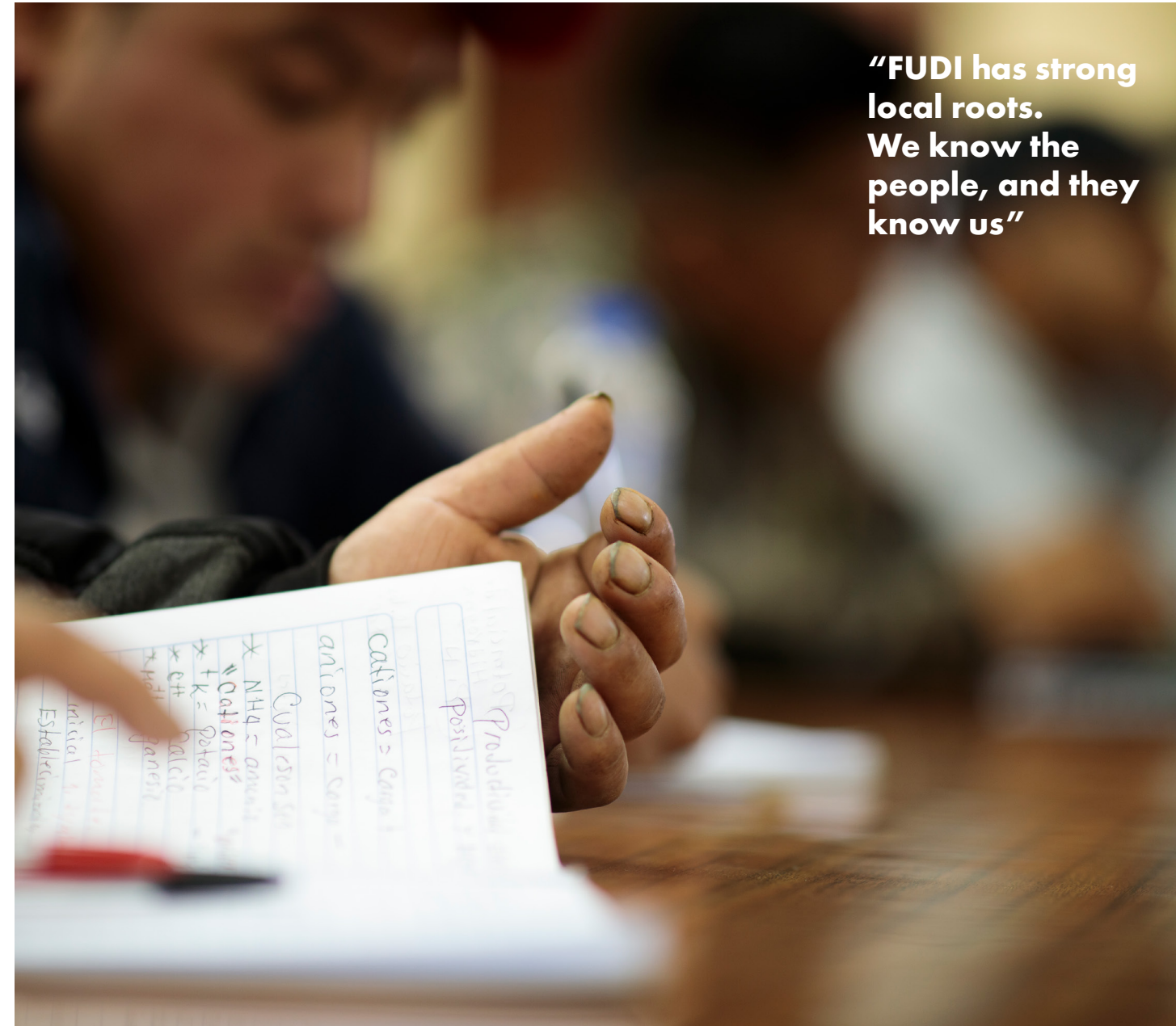
### Partnership

The current and former students receive intensive guidance, not only from the Utz Samaj lecturers

but also from Rijk Zwaan. The company has been supporting Utz Samaj, which is part of FUDI, since 2002. The funding has gradually been reduced over the years, and the college is now almost entirely financially self-sufficient. Rijk Zwaan's support mainly revolves around sharing knowledge and expertise and providing seeds. Heleen Bos, who is involved in this project on behalf of COS, is very pleased with the progress. "The ultimate aim is for a project to stand on its own two feet and become a long-term success. Utz Samaj has reached maturity."

René Morales, former manager of Utz Samaj, is happy with the support. "The partnership with Rijk Zwaan has always been very good. We're in close contact with Rijk Zwaan Guatemala. They helped to set up the greenhouses and also provide technical training for students."

René regards it as a good match: "Rijk Zwaan supplies the seeds and the expertise we need in our teaching. Besides that, we share the same values, plus we're both keen to improve the availability of healthy food in Guatemala."



**"FUDI has strong local roots. We know the people, and they know us"**



# Success stories



**“For me, the main benefit of the course has been the realisation that farming is not just a man’s world. Women can do this too.”**

**The experiences of the current/former students and lecturers at Utz Samaj are not the only testimony to its success. The college has also caught the attention of the international development agency USAID. The Utz Samaj model forms the basis of the five-year Puentes Project, which USAID launched in 2017. Jennyfer (18) and Debora (16) are both students on the course at the horticultural college in the Quiché region.**

### Future doctor

Jennyfer recently completed the course, but now provides lunches at the college which means she still hears about some of the lesson content. She has a very clear plan for her future career. “I want to become a doctor,” she says enthusiastically. “That’s why I’m particularly interested in growing herbs so that I can use them later in my practice.”

### Healthy soil

She formed that plan during the course. “Thanks to Puentes I now know what I want to do. I love being out in the field, experimenting with different seeds and crops. Here, I learnt about the importance of healthy soil, about all kinds of plants and trees, and about greenhouses and tunnels. It feels like I’ve been to university. Nowadays, whenever I see an agronomist on TV, I understand exactly what they’re talking about!”

### Girl power

Debora openly admits that she wasn’t keen on doing the course initially: “But I’ve seen and learned so much, it’s amazing! I didn’t know anything at first, but now I want to just keep learning.” Debora’s father is a farmer too, she says. “My dad is enormously proud of me, and both my parents supported me when I started the course. It’s my ambition to have my own greenhouse

and grow my own crops.” She can depend on the support of her friend Jennyfer. “We met through the college. And if Debora sets up her own greenhouse, I’ll support her too.”

### Leading by example

The course is modelled on the example set by Utz Samaj, but with a few differences of its own. The teaching programme includes classes on various production methods and techniques, marketing, business skills and administration. It is a six-month course. Over the duration of the five-year project, René Morales (manager of Puentes) expects the college in Quiché to provide training to around 600 students.

Besides USAID, one of the other partners affiliated with the Puentes Project is World Vision, which coordinates the project. Sara Sywulka is Chief of Party of the Puentes Project. She is pleased with the partnership with FUDI. “FUDI has an impressive track record and has continuously perfected its model over the past 15 years. One of the keys to the success of Utz Samaj is the college’s good reputation, which means it benefits from good word-of-mouth publicity.”

*“It feels like I’ve been to university”*



*“I didn’t know anything when I started the course, but now I want to just keep learning.”*



# Creating opportunities



*“Working together to create opportunities for young people in Guatemala”*

**D**espite not being far from the college in Santa Cruz del Quiché, 27-year-old Joel Toledo’s farm is tucked away in a remote mountainous location. Joel seems to personify the whole project: he studied at Utz Samaj and is now a lecturer at the college in Quiché, he grows his own tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers, plus he is a Rijk Zwaan customer.

### Let’s go!

Joel graduated in agricultural engineering from the University of San Carlos in Guatemala Ciudad in 2016. “I was in a group of five friends at university. Four of us decided to study at Utz Samaj. We just said to one another ‘Okay, let’s go!’ and signed up for the course. At the same time I set up a tunnel greenhouse, here on my parents’ farm, with around 300 tomato plants plus some cucumbers and peppers.”

### Theory and practice

Joel hoped that the course at Utz Samaj would expand his practical knowledge. “I went to Utz Samaj to learn how you can use a greenhouse. The course also taught me how to work with artificial fertiliser and drip irrigation, the best way to sell fresh produce and how to treat the crops in order to keep them healthy and safe. I attended college every Friday and I was busy with my company from Monday to Thursday, so I could immediately put the theory into practice. And if I ran into any difficulties, I could discuss my questions in class.”

### Good partnership

In his 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> greenhouse, Joel is mainly producing tomatoes and cucumbers. He is using biological crop protection agents only. “We used Rijk Zwaan seeds at Utz Samaj, so when I decided to set up my own greenhouse I wanted to grow their varieties too. The results are good and the plants are very productive.” Besides being a grower, Joel is also a coordinator and lecturer at the agricultural college in Quiché. He gets a lot of energy from that combination. “Together with our partners we want to create opportunities for young people in Guatemala. As part of the Puentes Project we’re building small replicas of Utz Samaj in three places so that students can further develop their agricultural skills. It’s great to see how happy the youngsters are with their produce.”

### Leading by example

The college in the Quiché region – which is one of the three facilities being built – is not quite finished yet. Eventually, it will have four tunnels and three greenhouses. Rijk Zwaan employees supply the seeds for the crops – which include tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers – and give practical training.



**“The results are good and the plants are very productive.”**

*Former student Joel Toledo is now a lecturer at the college in Quiché.*





# | Aprodes, Peru

**T**he Aprodes Foundation stimulates poor families in Peru to grow their own vegetables by providing training on new and existing production methods and sharing practical technical knowledge with the locals. Aprodes also holds informative sessions about healthy eating. COS has been supplying vegetable seeds since 2005 and also shares its technical expertise.





# Boosting vegetable consumption



"Aprodes teaches me how to optimally take care of the plants"

**D**evelopment agency Aprodes helps families to grow their own vegetables. The organisation runs courses in crop production, and nutrition experts explain the importance of healthy eating to the locals. As a result, more and more families have created their own vegetable garden, and there has been a strong improvement in the local diet. Aprodes has been active in the south east of Peru, close to the city of Cuzco, since 2006.

Beatriz Ordoño has been following the Aprodes course for the past three years. She recently installed a net to protect her plants against too much sun or hailstorms. A small plastic greenhouse protects her plants from frost. It doesn't get cold in the 'adobe' – a small greenhouse with clay walls – says Beatriz: "The plants always grow well in there."

## Own vegetable garden

"My vegetable garden contains vegetables for my family," she explains with pride. Beatriz grows various crops in her own vegetable garden: lettuce, tomatoes, cauliflower, broccoli, carrots and herbs. "If I have any produce left over, I sell it in town. The local council has given us a space where we're allowed to sell our vegetables. Every Monday, I go to the Aprodes training centre. I learn all kinds of things there! I now know much more about the best way to plant and water the crops, as well as about biological methods for tackling diseases and pests. Everything we grow here is produced organically."

## Better nutrition

The support of Aprodes means that more vegetables are being grown. The nutrition experts have also helped to greatly improve the diet of local families, and more vegetables are being consumed. The change is tangible: children and adults catch fewer colds, have diarrhoea less frequently and are less likely to be anaemic.



"I'm proud of my vegetable garden"



# Happy place



"Looking at my vegetable garden makes me happy!"

**T**hanks to support from Aprodes, Isabel González Sevilla has had her own vegetable garden for over five years. It is a big success. The vegetables are mainly for her own consumption, and when her sons and daughter come to visit Isabel always gives them some vegetables to take home with them.

Aprodes is improving the quality of life for the local population in a sustainable manner. The vegetable garden offers them financial independence; any surplus vegetables are sold at the local market. This provides a constant income for people like Isabel: "I sell some of my vegetables at the local market in Inquilpata, and on Sundays I sell them at the market in Chimpahuaylla."

Aprodes provides training on various new and existing production methods and shares hands-on technical knowledge with the locals. The Aprodes team are working to help some of Peru's most vulnerable families, and a growing number of them have their own vegetable gardens thanks to Aprodes. They eat some of the vegetables themselves, and they give away the rest to friends and family and/or sell the produce at a market. Aprodes has already helped more than 1,300 families.



**"Grower families attend classes at the training centre"**



# Sharing technical knowledge



The Maarten Zwaan Training Centre close to the city of Cuzco.



**“We pass on our technical knowledge so that even more families can enjoy fresh vegetables”**

**G**rober Huaman Collatupa grows vegetables in a 500 m<sup>2</sup> tunnel thanks in part to funding from Aprodes. In addition to producing lots of vegetables, the greenhouse is also for teaching purposes.

At first Grober tried to grow vegetables on his own, but he didn't have much success. "But now I've got some technical support from Aprodes it's going really well – look!" he says, proudly. "We pass on our technical knowledge so that even more families can enjoy fresh vegetables."

As a bonus, as well as eating the vegetables that they grow, the families also earn some extra money by selling their produce. "My wife gets up at 4 o'clock every morning to go to the market in Cuzco, where she sells lettuce and other vegetables that we've produced here." Grober believes it is important to share knowledge: "The new tunnel that we're building with Aprodes will be a place where other local people can come to learn."

### **Maarten Zwaan Training Centre**

In the municipality of Anta, which is close to Cuzco, Aprodes has opened a 'Maarten Zwaan Training Centre' in several villages. These training centres have been named after Maarten Zwaan to commemorate his contribution as a co-founder of COS. Each centre comprises a greenhouse and open-field area for the production of vegetables and serves as a meeting place where families can learn to grow vegetables in practice.



# More than just seeds



Eduardo Lavalle in front of one of the training centres.

**A**prodes has been working together with Rijk Zwaan for many years, according to Eduardo Lavalle, director of the development agency. “We provide the seeds we receive to the families that we’re involved with.”

This method enables the families to start a vegetable garden of their own – partly for their own consumption, and partly to sell at the local market to earn money to pay back Aprodes.

“We have built training centres and our agronomists teach people how to grow vegetables successfully. Besides that, we cover the business side of things, such as when is the best time to sow the seeds in order to get a good price when selling the produce,” explains Eduardo.

In addition to vegetable seeds, Rijk Zwaan shares its technical expertise with Aprodes: “Renato, an Aprodes employee, has been to the Rijk Zwaan facility in Spain where he learnt more about both greenhouse and open-field production from the employees and local growers. That was really useful. Renato is now passing on the knowledge he gained to our crop specialists who provide technical advice. They then share that knowledge with the growers here in Peru.”

“As another important result of our work, the diet of local children is improving. More vegetables are being produced, and a nutritionist holds cookery lessons based on those vegetables. This has substantially increased the nutritional value of meals

for entire families. The regional diet tends to revolve around a lot of maize and quinoa – the traditional Inca crops. The fact that families are now eating more vegetables is having a clear impact on their children’s health.”

Aprodes has already reached a lot of families in the region: in Chanchamayo (500), Cusco, Mollepata (200), Cusco, Anta (300) and Lurin (180).



**“Patricia Ninan Cusihuaman teaches about different types of production methods”**

A fresh produce market in Cuzco.





# Kusimayo

**T**he Kusimayo Foundation offers help to the local population in some of Peru's poorest areas, such as by building heated accommodation and setting up small-scale greenhouses. It also fosters knowledge sharing about healthy eating and hygiene. Rijk Zwaan has been supporting Kusimayo since 2017.





# Schoolchildren



Schoolchildren eating some delicious vegetable cake baked by their mothers.

**A**t 3,800 metres above sea level, in Peru's Altiplano region, The Kusimayo foundation provides various kinds of support to children and their families. The locals are very happy with the help they receive.

There is a high death rate among the region's vulnerable groups, such as young children and the elderly. This is mainly due to the cold climate and malnutrition. Additionally, many people also suffer from respiratory infections because the locals cook over dry dung, which gives off a lot of smoke. Despite the widespread poverty on the plateau, it is largely overlooked by the Peruvian government and NGOs. One of the few that are active is Kusimayo, which supports the local population in various ways.

## Local support

Kusimayo was founded by two Peruvians – Joaquín de la Piedra and Laura Fantozzi – living in the capital city, Lima. Joaquín used to have a trout farm in Lake Titicaca, which is how he learnt more about the south of Peru. Now, a team of four people are based in Juliaca to support the locals.

The team help mothers to prepare breakfast for young children before school, and organise activities for the elderly revolving around healthy eating and hygiene. Besides that, the foundation helps to build heated accommodation units and small-scale greenhouses.



“Children from the plateau in front of the old school”

The new school.





# Help at high altitude



The Chambi Huaracha family: father Walter and mother Delia in front of their greenhouse. Visible in the background is their house where they live with their two children, Yhadira and Andres.

**F**rom 'just making ends meet' to 'money spare for reinvestment'. From 2005 to 2015, Kusimayo invested in 44 families. Technical knowledge forms the basis for training the local population to grow vegetables both sustainably and profitably.

## Growing vegetables

The Altiplano region now includes 147 small greenhouses (5 x 20 metres in size) which are used to grow all kinds of vegetables using entirely organic methods. Each greenhouse is run by an enthusiastic family, with increasing success. The walls of the greenhouses are made from adobe (a combination of water, sand, clay and other organic materials) and they have a plastic roof. This design ensures that the temperature in the greenhouse remains warm enough for vegetable cultivation. There is also a drip irrigation system. The families construct the walls and work in the greenhouse.

Some of the vegetables they produce are for their own consumption, and the rest are supplied to local schools or childcare facilities or bartered for other goods at the local market. Mothers work in partnership with Kusimayo to make breakfast and lunch for the children. Vegetables are a healthy addition to meals.

## Sufficient knowledge

Kusimayo's 'Puno programme' ensures the transfer of knowledge relating to various aspects, including the improvement of the water supply. Kusimayo supplies a water tank or reservoir, pipes and irrigation system.

This guarantees the water supply during the dry months (April to October).

Kusimayo is also setting up an extensive programme for the open-field production of crops such as maize and quinoa. The cattle can graze in the fields on the family's property. Besides that, the programme teaches families how to make their own fertiliser, resulting in a fully organic cultivation process.



**“Technical advice to farming families”**



# Happy families



The greenhouse is made from the composite material called adobe.

**T**hanks to Kusimayo, people in the Altiplano region of Peru are making real progress. Life is gradually improving for local families and their children. They are healthier, not least thanks to a more nutritious diet. The quality of life is considerably higher now.

The government has neglected the former mining region. Wells still provide access to water, but the electricity supply is unreliable. No tourists visit the area. Children and adults regularly suffer from health issues due to the poor diet and/or the cold climate, or they have respiratory problems.

“Kusimayo’s impact is truly enormous; it is changing lives. You can see it in people’s eyes. But as well as that, children are getting sick less often. According to health centre data, there has also been a decline in the number of cases of diarrhoea and anaemia,” explains Heleen Bos.

### Better nutrition

“The Peruvian government is focused on ‘food security’, i.e. the availability of sufficient food, but not so much on ‘nutrient security’ – the vitamin and mineral content of food,” she adds. Heleen is involved with Kusimayo on behalf of COS. When the project started in 2005, the local population in the Altiplano region ate hardly any vegetables. Their diet included onions, maize and quinoa, but no spinach, tomatoes or carrots, for example. Since the small vegetable gardens have been created, the locals have started to consume more vegetables. Cookery classes have also taught

women how to prepare vegetables. “Vegetables really are a healthy addition to the local diet. Now, people here eat vegetables every day!” states Heleen enthusiastically.



“The Jiménez Iquiapaza family inside their own greenhouse”



# Jarikin Foundation in Haiti



The Jarikin Foundation during a visit to Rijk Zwaan.

**H**aiti has suffered a series of natural disasters, including an earthquake in 2010 and several hurricanes. They caused extensive damage and contributed to Haiti becoming one of the world's poorest countries. Active in Haiti for several years, the Jarikin Foundation provides primary and secondary-level education and is also starting to teach horticultural skills.

The Jarikin Foundation has been active for the past 25 years in the region of Croix des Bouquet, Le Rocher. Jarikin was co-founded by Mr J. Prins, the former owner and director of PRIVA. The foundation was initially focused on providing access to primary and secondary-level education in the region, and it built a school attended by around 500 pupils in the 6-18 age range

Besides providing general education, Jarikin is now focusing on horticultural education too – not only for the schoolchildren, but also for local farmers. It has purchased a plot of land right next door to the school in order to build a training centre and greenhouse. Haiti's horticultural sector is still underdeveloped and people mainly grow vegetables for their own consumption. Any surplus vegetables are sold, although often at low prices. Crops are rarely cultivated for the market in anticipation of a period when vegetables are in short supply. The lessons will therefore be focused on new production techniques such as in greenhouses and the use of better vegetable varieties. This is expected to result in

vegetables being available all year round. In addition to providing extra income for farmers, this will also increase the availability of vegetables on the local market.

In 2019, the Jarikin Foundation hired two Haitian agronomists to shape the horticultural education programme. In September 2019, Nadel and Noviega spent six weeks at Rijk Zwaan France in Aramon. During their time there, they learnt more about growing lettuce and other crops. The knowledge they have gained will come in useful when setting up the training centre, as well as in the demo fields and when developing the teaching programme.



**"Nadel and Noviega gained knowledge that will come in useful back in Haiti."**



# Hope for Albania



Mothers are given seedlings to take home with them.

**A**lthough things are improving, there is still a lot of poverty in Albania. The Hope for Albania Foundation has been set up to help the country and provides support for many projects nationwide, including the Seed of Hope project in the capital, Tirana.

Every two weeks, a truck leaves the Netherlands headed for Albania, packed with all kinds of household goods, clothing and school-related items. Hope for Albania organises the entire shipment. On the outskirts of Tirana, the Shkoze mountain is home to many poor families who have migrated from the north of Albania in the hope of finding work in the city. There, Hope for Albania supports the 'Seed of Hope' community centre.

The community centre not only provides free hot meals to 300 children three days a week, but also provides access to a number of computers, hosts schoolbook swaps for children and is a venue for classes in English and Bible studies. In the cold winter months, it hands out flour to the families.

A greenhouse was built next door to the community centre in 2015. Sponsored by COS, the greenhouse is used to propagate and grow vegetables. The volunteers in the kitchen use these vegetables to make hot lunches for the children. The seedlings are shared out between the women in the village who have their own vegetable gardens. The greenhouse is also used to teach people how to grow vegetables.

Hope for Albania committee members, including Erwin van der Ende and Jan Prins, regularly visit Albania and the community centre, and they have noticed steady improvements: "It's rewarding to see the quality of the meals getting better all the time. They contain more vegetables. During our most recent visit, we met a girl who is now doing a law degree. She spoke perfect English. The community centre offers children growing up in underprivileged families a future. They now have a chance in life."

#### Extra emergency help after the earthquake

In late November 2019, Albania was hit by a powerful earthquake followed by a series of severe aftershocks. Urgent help is needed, including in the regions where Hope for Albania is active. Many families have seen their houses – often the only thing they own – destroyed and are now homeless.



**"New greenhouse for vegetable cultivation"**

Free hot meals for children.





# Humanity School of Learning, Gambia



The support for the school includes seeds, expertise and funding.

**F**abakary Saidykhan grew up in a poor family. They sometimes had no food and he had to earn money to pay for his own education. After studying in Germany as part of a scheme by the German government, he returned to Gambia. He was determined to contribute to his country's development, so he set up the Humanity School of Learning.

Fabakary founded a school in a rural village close to his birthplace. In fact, he built the first school building literally in his own backyard. "I wanted to do something for children who are growing up in poverty, homeless or disabled." The school has taught over 230 children since 2009, and around 170 pupils (aged between 3 and 8) are currently enrolled.

Every day, the Humanity School of Learning serves the pupils a tasty breakfast. "We regularly had children turning up an hour late – or not at all – in the past, but now they're here at 8 a.m. on the dot." But the greatest gift for the children is what they learn. "Children don't have any influence over the situation they grow up in. Education gives them the chance of a better future."

In early 2018, Jan Padmos and Caroline Sitskoorn – both working at ISW 's Gravezande (a local school at the Westland region in the Netherlands) – put Fabakary in contact with Jan Omvlee, who was Manager Export at Rijk Zwaan at that time. Since then, COS has supported the school by providing seeds, expertise and funding. Among other things, this support has facilitated the installation of an irrigation system,

the hiring of a gardener and the construction of a small greenhouse (15 x 8 metres). Whereas the breakfast used to comprise just bread and mayonnaise, vegetables have now been added to the menu too: tomatoes, carrots, cucumbers, onions, peppers and lettuce.

Nowadays, the Humanity School of Learning produces more vegetables than the children can eat. The surplus vegetables are sold on the local market, and the extra income this generates comes in handy for the school. An extension is already in the pipeline; the longer-term aim is to become a fully-fledged school teaching pupils from the age of 3 to 18.

Fabakary is really pleased with the help that he receives. "Thanks to the hard work of the Humanity School team and the efforts of ISW 's Gravezande and Rijk Zwaan, we've been able to make the school what it is today: a safe haven for some of society's most vulnerable people."



**"The greatest gift for the children is what they learn"**



# Colophon

Read more about the projects in this magazine:

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[www.aprodes.org](http://www.aprodes.org)

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[www.jarikin.nl](http://www.jarikin.nl)

[www.hoopvooralbanie.nl](http://www.hoopvooralbanie.nl)

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