

Throwback

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FOOD CHAIN WITH FABA BEAN



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On June 14, 2024, farmers and local food partners gathered in Zwijnaarde, Ghent, for a field day focused on faba bean. Organized by Ghent farmers, Paniflower, Aernoudt Bakery, Boerenbond, and supported by the City of Ghent, this event brought together diverse players in the agriculture and food supply chain. The goal? To explore how locally grown faba beans could be used in bread, creating a sustainable, profitable cycle that benefits each link in the chain.

The event opened with welcoming remarks from the organizing parties. It then shifted to the fields, where participants discussed the benefits and growth cycle of faba bean. Representatives from Limagrain (seeds), Paniflower (milling) and Aernoudt (bakery) shared their experiences.

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Local farmer: Geert Derycke

Ghent farmer Geert Derycke sowed a winter variety of faba bean on a 3ha field. Bakery Aernoudt agreed to use the crop for a new type of bread, to be sold in their shops. “Our main goal was to educate the public in the city of Ghent on agriculture that still takes place in the outskirts of the city” farmer Geert says. “We ended up taking it even a step further. We’re now looking at possibilities of working together with other local businesses. That way, we can produce a bulk product and valorize and process it locally.”

Processing company: Paniflower

Processing company Paniflower was responsible for the milling of the faba beans into flour. “Faba bean needs little fertilizer, which makes them highly sustainable”, the company comments. “They significantly reduce the carbon footprint of this product.”

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Bakery: Aernoudt

Finally, Aernoudt bakery committed itself to turning the flour into an actual product. They came up with “Fleur”, a new type of bread, unique to their assortment. “Faba beans are rich in fiber and protein”, the bakery comments. “We’ve managed to incorporate them in a flavorful bread. It was great to go out in the field and see how the different parts of the value chain fit together.”

BUILDING ON SUCCESS

This field day was a result of several successful local initiatives designed to strengthen the connection between farmers and food processors in Ghent:

- 1. Entrepreneurs festival (July 2022).**
Ghent farmers and processors met to explore local food supply chains, building trust and interest in partnerships.
- 2. Generation food dinner hack (December 2022).**
Local farmers discussed legume production with key players, like Paniflower, exploring new uses for faba bean in bread flour.
- 3. Paniflower meetings (2023)**
Farmers committed to growing faba beans in 2024, with the eventual goal of integrating the crop in local food production.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

The field day inspired positive reactions and reaffirmed participants’ commitment to this collaborative model. The enthusiasm for sustainable, locally sourced ingredients is clearly growing. Hence, this initiative is poised to expand, welcoming other farmers and businesses to explore a local, low-impact approach to food production.

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