Fruit for health at the playing field

Fruit trees and bushes have been planted around the Amsterdam Middenmeer-Voorland playing fields to encourage healthy eating among the sportspeople. This is the first pilot of the Fruit4Sport project.

Many Dutch people play organized sports, which makes sports facilities an excellent place for encouraging healthy eating habits and lifestyles. Managing a mini-orchard next to the pitch and harvesting the fruit can be a way of engaging sportspeople, spectators and local businesses more with fruit cultivation and healthy eating. If the harvest then ends up in sports canteens and becomes popular, this may persuade clubs and canteen staff to offer fruit as an option all year round. The idea is being tested in Middenmeer-Voorland in East Amsterdam, 40 hectares of sports grounds set in a park with football, hockey and baseball pitches, tennis courts and an athletics track. ‘We have found space for fruit trees and bushes at 11 different sites’, says project manager Marc Ravesloot from Applied Plant Research (PPO), which set up the Fruit4Sport project together with the innovation network of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture Innovation. Most of the trees and bushes were planted this spring. Varieties were chosen that were likely to produce a reasonable crop even with low-intensity care. Other factors determining the choice of variety were the soil type and the available space. The crops will include cooking pears, apples, walnuts, hazelnuts, cranberries, gooseberries, currants, raspberries and blackberries. There is already a path with blackberries on either side that you can pick and eat, and orchards with apple trees that will eventually form a two-metre high hedge. Firms, local residents and sports teams can apply to care for the plants, on condition that the crops end up in the sports canteen. A group has already offered its services for the first three orchards. The Amsterdam pilot is aimed at getting a better idea of the most effective type of participation and production system, and at seeing how the concept can help improve eating habits. Various provinces and municipalities have already shown an interest in this new community concept. Info: marc.ravesloot@wur.nl

Mosquito bites can be avoided

Alterra, Wageningen UR, has developed an application that can help predict the likelihood of problems from mosquitoes, midges and horseflies affecting future resident of a redevelopment plan. The tool is intended for land-use planners, developers and land managers involved in projects that include plans to inundate an area, which entails a risk of mosquitoes. The evaluation tool also gives advice on measures to reduce the problems. Info: piet.verdonschot@wur.nl

Less appetite after lengthy chewing

A study by PhD student Anne Wijlens at Wageningen University shows that chewing affects your appetite. Trial subjects were given liquid food to make them feel full, then asked to chew a piece of cake. Their appetite fell by 10 percent after one minute of chewing without swallowing, and by nearly 20 percent after eight minutes. So stimuli in the mouth do affect how hungry you feel. The results appeared online in July in the scientific journal Obesity. Info: anne.wijlens@wur.nl