

# Promoting edible cities through urban tree gleaning and empowering communities towards more sustainable food systems in Barcelona

Grantee: Espigoladors  
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Website: [espigoladors.cat](http://espigoladors.cat)

Espigoladors is a Catalan non-profit organization which fights against food waste and losses, while empowering people at risk of social exclusion. Since 2014 the organization addresses three key challenges: reducing food waste, guaranteeing the right to a healthy diet and creating job opportunities for vulnerable collectives. Espigoladors promotes gleaning (“espigolar” in Catalan) the traditional practice of collecting surplus produce such as wheat and nuts, left behind in the fields after the main harvest. Espigoladors seeks to revive and promote this practice as a strategy to reduce agricultural losses and food waste, ensure equitable access to nutritious food for all, and foster social transformation. Since 2014, the organization has recovered surplus produce through gleaning at a farm level, addressing inefficiencies in the agri-food sector. The gleaned food is donated to social entities, tackling social inequalities and advocating for universal access to nutritious food.

Towns and cities host a variety of fruit-bearing trees, including oranges, olives, and almonds, yet a significant amount of this produce goes to waste, often at the expense of public funds for disposal. In 2021, Espigoladors, in collaboration with the Barcelona City Council and local organizations, harvested sour oranges from urban trees to produce marmalade, which was then donated to social entities supporting vulnerable populations. Over the past four years, the project has expanded, engaging more social entities and volunteers. In 2024, Espigoladors launched Urban(eat)a to scale this initiative. Supported by the **Nando and Elsa Peretti Foundation – Delegació a Catalunya**

(NaEPF), the project aligns with the Foundation’s mission to foster a harmonious relationship between humans and nature. It supports global sustainability priorities and systemic change while focusing on local initiatives in Catalonia. Moreover, Urban(eat)a promotes a circular economy, drives social inclusion, and emphasizes local collaboration and community engagement.

Urban(eat)a aims to transform public trees from decorative elements into productive food sources, fostering community stewardship and reducing food waste. Through urban tree gleaning, the project will engage citizens, including vulnerable populations, to participate in harvesting and processing fruits from public trees. The project promotes Edible Cities, strengthens local food systems, and contributes to biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation.

The project seeks at promoting Edible Cities by:

1. Shifting the perception of urban trees by transforming them into sources of food and integrating them into urban food systems.
2. Reducing food waste by organizing at least 45 urban gleaning events involving 900 participants to harvest fruits.
3. Preventing a total of 16.800 kg of food waste and producing 38.850 jars of marmalade and olive oil.
4. Empowering vulnerable groups by involving socially excluded individuals in gleaning and food processing, providing skills and employment opportunities.
5. Raise citizens’ awareness through 90 educational workshops on sustainable food systems and food waste prevention.

By 2027, the project aims to establish a sustainable urban tree gleaning program, develop a legal framework for urban food systems, and create a replicable model that can be scaled across cities, promoting food sovereignty, climate action, and social inclusion.