

Study Visit – O Mercado



As part of a study visit organized by our project, we had the opportunity to explore "**O Mercado**", an initiative by the Municipality of Valongo in partnership with the Cooperative of Agricultural Producers of the municipality. This project is an inspiring example of how it is possible to promote healthy eating habits, boost the local economy, and protect the environment while addressing the community's needs.

Through fresh, high-quality fruit and vegetable baskets offered at affordable prices, "**O Mercado**" brings local producers closer to consumers, creating a sustainable network of distribution and consumption. Since 2020, the results have been remarkable: 36% of customers have increased their vegetable consumption, 44% of families have started purchasing products they previously overlooked, and more people are now including vegetables in their daily diets. These figures reflect a tangible and significant impact on promoting healthier eating habits.

The project was initiated in 2020. In 2023, the Municipality strengthened its commitment to this initiative by subsidizing 30% of the basket costs. This measure reduced the prices to €5 (Family, 4 to 5 kilos) and €9 (Super Family, 8 to 9 kilos), making the products even more accessible. Orders can be placed online, with baskets delivered at strategic locations in Valongo, Alfena, and Ermesinde. Each delivery also includes suggestions and healthy recipes, encouraging people to explore new foods and cooking methods.



The visit highlighted how "**O Mercado**" aligns with practices of sustainability, circular economy, and environmental protection:

- **Sustainability:** By promoting the consumption of locally sourced products, the project reduces carbon emissions associated with the transportation of goods. The focus on fresh foods also contributes to more conscious and healthier eating.
- **Circular Economy:** Direct support to local farmers strengthens the regional economy and reduces waste by aligning production with demand. The food reaches families' tables without excess or unnecessary losses.
- **Environmental Protection:** By reducing the carbon footprint and encouraging agricultural practices that are more respectful of natural resources, the project demonstrates a strong commitment to the planet's future.

During the visit, we had the chance to speak with local producers and understand the positive impact the project has on their lives. Many shared how "**O Mercado**" provides them with the security to continue investing in more sustainable agricultural methods while offering high-quality products. On the other hand, consumers benefit not only from fair prices but also from easier access to fresh and diverse foods.



"O Mercado" is not just a food distribution program; it is an example of how small local initiatives can have a profound impact on the community, connecting health, economy, and the environment. It inspired us to think about how similar projects could be adapted to meet the needs of our communities and reinforced the importance of an integrated approach to tackling social and environmental challenges.

