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## BelOrta lending Santa a hand

The Belgian cooperative is donating 25,000 pears to schools in Limburg and Antwerp to provide a local, sustainable alternative to mandarins



**B**elgian cooperative BelOrta announced that it was giving 'Sinterklaas' a helping hand this season, donating 25,000 pears to more than a hundred schools in the provinces of Limburg and Antwerp, "a sustainable and local alternative to the classic mandarin".

Since Covid-19, Belgians have started attaching more importance than ever to sustainable and locally grown products, according to the cooperative.

"That is why BelOrta wants to convince Saint Nicholas to leave pears in the shoes of the children during his passage through our country," a statement from the company said.

"The pear is a thoroughly Belgian product and, thanks to its sweet and juicy taste, the ideal snack for children," said Glenn Sebregts, head of marketing

at BelOrta. "In addition, our pear growers can use a helping hand because of the ongoing Russian boycott. So why shouldn't Sinterklaas hand out local pears instead of mandarins imported from far-off destinations? In this way, it provides children with the perfect healthy snack – full of fibre, minerals and numerous vitamins – and also supports the climate and Belgian pear growers."

"More than 350,000 tonnes of pears are grown in Belgium every year," said Sebregts, "making it an ideal place for this local initiative. We hope that our starting shot will encourage as many schools, other organisations and parents as possible, both locally and nationally, to follow this example."

Els Willems, general director of Scholengroep 13 South

Limburg, one of the schools involved, commented: "We are very happy that we can participate in a project that benefits everyone, together with such a locally anchored company as BelOrta. Thanks to them, we can offer our children sustainable, local and healthy pears for free. It goes without saying that, in addition to the interests of our children's health, we fully support BelOrta's call to support the local fruit sector in these difficult times."

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