Title of the Story: Futaleufu: A path of sustainability in the Chilean Patagonia.

Destination Name: Futaleufú – Región de Los Lagos

Country: CHILE

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Nomination Category: (Please check the boxes that indicate the focus of your story)

☑ Culture & Communities
☑ Environment & Climate
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☐ Islands & Seaside
☐ Immediate responses in dealing with the COVID -19
☐ Post COVID -19 recovery
☑ One of the 17 SDGs* (if yes, which one) GOAL 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

*The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. The 17 SDGs are integrated—that is, they recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability. What are the Sustainable Development Goals? https://www.unsd.org/survey/sustainable_development_goals.html

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Issues faced
Futaleufú, which means “large river” in Mapudungún - fūta (large) lewfu (river) - is a town located in the Province of Palena, north of Chilean Patagonia. Surrounded by natural attractions and with a geography that makes it very difficult to access, Futaleufú is becoming an example for the comprehensive management of waste in remote locations with a low population.

In 2012 the first steps were taken to achieve urban solid waste management in the commune. To do this, it began to project how it would be to segregate household waste into three categories, taking European cities as an example and then the neighboring city of Esquel, Argentina, which already had a similar program.

In 2016 the Futaleufú municipal council approved an ordinance related to the management of household waste that gave way to the implementation of the door-to-door differentiated collection plan for household solid waste from the urban sector of the targeted commune to 1,000 homes. To execute the project, the consulting firm Geociclos was hired, which was in charge for a year of providing containers, conducting information campaigns, environmental education activities in educational establishments and training for municipal officials and collection teams to accompany the testing process.

Futaleufú generates approximately 1.4 tons of urban solid waste daily, that is, about 0.6 kg / inhabitant / day. In Geociclos’ initial characterization, urban solid waste was made up of 52% organic, 15% other waste, 9% sanitary waste, 8% glass, 7% plastics, 5% paper and cardboard, 2% metal and 2% textile. The short-term objective is to reduce 60% the household solid waste reaching the sanitary landfill.

Methods, steps and tools applied
The differentiated collection plan works under the municipal ordinance, which establishes norms to promote and implement a solid household waste management that will be developed under the principles of co-responsibility, prevention, responsibility, participation and sustainability.

Likewise, the municipality considers five pillars for the proper functioning of the program:

1. Home classification
The program contemplates segregation at source into three categories, for which the municipality delivers a free set of three containers per home, with a volume of 40 liters for homes and 240 liters for commercial premises:
• Yellow container for recyclable waste: PET bottles, aluminum cans, tetrapak, glass, cardboard, white paper and magazines.
• Brown container for organic waste: remains of fruits and vegetables, remains of pruning and gardening, yerba mate, ash and dry leaves.
• Gray container for disposable (non-recyclable) waste: household food waste, sanitary waste, inorganic waste, animal waste and everything that is not part of the other two categories.
2. Selective collection
The collection is done door to door in the urban area between 8:30 and 14:00 hrs, on Monday, Wednesday and Friday for disposable waste, Tuesday and Friday for organic waste and Monday and Thursday for recyclable waste. In the rural sector not yet The sorting plan is fully implemented, but the collection of disposable waste is the same as in the urban area and they can take their organic and recyclable waste directly to the collection center.

3. Inspection
Although the percentage of community participation is high, there are still households that do not correctly classify their waste. Therefore, there are inspectors who have strategic routes to accompany the weekly collection and to promote compliance with the municipal ordinance. Those who do not comply with what is stipulated in the ordinance, in the first instance receive courtesy fines and flyers with information with the withdrawal schedules and the types of waste that correspond to each container and if this situation continues, they receive economic fines.

4. Collection in plant
In the second half of 2016, Futaleufú inaugurated its Comprehensive Waste Center in the Lonconao sector, located 13 km from the town. The center has 29 hectares of which 5 are destined for the three treatment facilities. The project called Comprehensive Waste Treatment Center is a nationally recognized initiative. In the case of compost, in a way it is returned to the community, since the obtained from the recovery of organic waste is used to fertilize greenhouses and fertilize the communal green areas such as meadows, the plaza, the soccer field. It is also given to the community upon registration in the municipality or in the different fairs and activities that take place in the commune.

5. Dissemination
At the beginning, the dissemination was carried out by providing door-to-door information, with workshops in educational establishments, health establishments and in the municipality. Today, the two local radios and the municipality’s Facebook page and the collection plan “Residuos Futaleufú” are used to report monthly recovery statistics, collection schedules and disseminate the work that is being done carried out at the Comprehensive Waste Center (CTI).

Key success factors
Recycling fairs are held in the plaza and guided visits are made to educational establishments and neighborhood groups to the Comprehensive Waste Treatment Center so that they can see what is done with their waste on site. During the summer, which is when the population increases due to the large flow of tourists arriving in the area, an environmental fair is held in the plaza where samples of compacted waste, compost and activities are carried out so that the floating population understands the importance of the program for the care of local nature. On the other hand, the community itself has been in charge of spreading the program among visitors and there is a kind of pride in being the pioneers in waste treatment. The local community states that the program was a contribution to keep the natural areas free of contamination, especially the Futaleufú and Espolón rivers, which are the main tourist attractions in the area.
Lessons learned

The Integral Waste Center was financed through economic resources from the Undersecretariat for Regional and Administrative Development (SUBDERE) and the Regional Government of the Los Lagos region for 1.3 billion Chilean pesos ($1,860,000 USD approx.).

Currently, the Municipality of Futaleufú finances the maintenance of the Integral Waste Treatment Center and selective collection through the municipal common fund. Transporting the waste to the recycling centers or waste marketers in the city of Puerto Montt, the largest city closest to Futaleufú, does not represent an expense, since paper, cardboard and aluminum are used as exchange currency with carriers supplying the locality, significant savings considering that the distance between both places is 390 km and getting from one place to another implies almost 12 hours of travel alternating road and ferries, which means an expense of around 1 million Chilean pesos per truck ($1,400 USD approx.).

The collection of recyclable waste has no cost to the community; however, there is a charge from the Municipality for the right to cleanliness that is paid in the months of April, June, September and November. This cleaning right covers household waste withdrawals, which are estimated between 0 and 60 liters per day; however, the collection does not cover the actual costs of the system.

Results, achievements and recognitions

According to figures provided by the municipality, in 2018 of the total of Urban Solid Waste (between 430 tons and 495 tons/year), 36.6% (approximately 158 tons) corresponds to waste that could be recycled or composted and 63.4% (approx. 274 ton) to disposable non-recyclable waste.

In the low season, which is when the population maintains around 2,300 inhabitants, for each collection of recyclable waste, it is estimated that around 2 tons are recovered. As for the collection of organic, this can reach 1.2 tons per week.

On the other hand, in high season, its population increases exponentially, reaching up to 8,000 people, which is why the waste and the efforts to recover it are doubled. Considering the above, between the months of December and February, for each collection of recyclable waste, between 4 tons and 4.5 tons are recovered and the collection of organic can reach up to 3 tons per week.

In this way, Futaleufú becomes a regional leader and one of the maximum examples in Chile of waste management, making concrete progress in caring for the environment.

Finally, it is expected that the plans to increase the types of waste collected in the town can be carried out, but above all, that they go hand in hand with an incentive plan to reduce waste generation, on all of those that are very difficult to recycle or that cannot be done, as is the case of single-use plastics. The expansion of adventure tourism based on the great natural attractions of the area, the important figure of the Futaleufú river and the forests that surround the town, should be essential motivations to reduce waste generation and continue advancing in its management plan so that Futaleufú is consolidated as the sustainable commune that it aspires to be.

Additional references


http://www.subdere.gov.cl/sala-de-prensa/municipio-de-futaleuf%C3%BA-desarrollar%C3%A1-pionero-sistema-de-gestión-de-residuos-sólidos/