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Members of the Urban Farmers' Network in Lima

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# Strengthening Urban Producers' Organisations

**Increasingly, local authorities have come to understand the role urban agriculture can play in sustainable development of their cities, especially in eradicating hunger and poverty. Urban producers' organisations are seen as important actors in this process and seek to represent their members in various fora (e.g. in policy dialogue, in project planning) and as a channel to supply technical assistance and other services to their members.**

*Editorial*

Joanna Wilbers
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However, in some cities, farmers' organisations are hardly recognised and receive little attention and support. In these cities urban agriculture is not (yet) valued for its multiple benefits, not accepted as a formal urban land use and thus largely informal. Under these conditions urban producers' organisations remain mainly loosely organised groups and informal networks. Any existing formal urban producers' organisations, especially those representing the urban poor, are often poorly managed and generally do not perform well.

Urban producers' organisations, like their rural counterparts, can play an essential role in the development of safe and sustainable intra-urban and periurban farming, by training and educating their members, jointly procuring inputs, improving access to credit, enabling quality control, processing and marketing produce, lobbying and establishing strategic partnerships. But in order to play such a role, the capacities of existing urban producers' groups, networks and organisations need to be strengthened in various ways (organisational, technical, financial, managerial, and political).

## DIVERSITY REIGNS

Most urban producers belong to the poorer strata of the population, but they can also be middle-class farmers (like in Montevideo), lower and mid-level government officials, school teachers or even richer people seeking a good investment for their capital. Women constitute an important percentage of the urban producers. Immigrants are well represented in the group, but it also includes long-time urban residents who do not have a rural background but choose agriculture as one of their livelihood strategies. Urban producers operate on an individual or family basis, and usually belong to formal or informal organisations.

Urban and periurban producers' organisations (UPOs)[1] are very diverse. Some only supply specific services for their members (e.g. a credit and savings group, a lobbying group to defend or obtain land use rights) while others fulfil a whole

range of functions (e.g. multi-purpose cooperatives). They also vary in the socio-economic profile of their members, type of production they focus on, degree of formalisation, the way in which they are organised and financed, and the strategies they apply to realise their aims.

The articles in this magazine demonstrate this diversity. UPOs are the product of a number of factors that determine their internal organisation and functioning (see also the next article). This heterogeneity makes it hard to create a typology of organisations of urban and periurban producers. Characterisations of UPOs thus need to be strategic and flexible.

*Contextual factors*
The experiences described in this issue of UA-Magazine show that the context in which urban producers' organisations operate influences their goals and functioning as well as the main challenges and opportunities for development they face (see also the article on page 15). This context may also change over time as the cases of Amsterdam and Beijing illustrate. Such contextual factors include local government policies (illustrated by the Beijing and Cairo articles), the institutional environment, degree of support obtained, access to resources, agricultural economy, local traditions, degree of experience with collective action and the diversity of local socio-cultural and production systems.

In general, many similarities can be found between producers' organisations operating in rural and urban settings. However, the challenges faced by UPOs operating in an urban context are often bigger and more numerous than those of their rural counterparts. These include restrictive or even prohibitive policies on urban agriculture, the subsequent absence of institutional support and a higher diversity of members, often including part-time farmers involved in a variety of income-earning activities. These farmers are therefore more difficult to organise (as the experiences with farmer research groups in Nairobi and Lima show), are more transient (which endangers sustainability), have highly insecure land tenure (which can be a major distinguishing factor, as the article on Bamako shows), and their activities are more likely to pollute environmental resources (leading to public concern and restrictive measures). On the other hand, UPOs also have specific (relative) advantages over rural organisations, like a closer proximity to markets (creating more opportunities for direct producer-consumer linkages as described on page 11), centres of knowledge (e.g. in Cape Town, Nairobi and Lima) and sources of credit.

*Level of operation*
UPOs function at various levels, ranging from street and neighbourhood to city level. (Aside from in Nairobi, there are still few examples of urban farmers' organisations operating at regional or national level). These different levels have their comparative advantages and disadvantages. First-line organisations draw their memberships from a specific community or group of communities. Interactions are mostly face-to-face, organisational structure is relatively flat and the leaders have good insight into the needs of their members and maintain strong local links with other organisations in that same environment. Many of these local organisations remain intentionally informal. Those functioning at city or national level are often second and third-line organisations that either combine the constituencies of various local UPOs in order to fulfil a stronger advocacy role (politically oriented organisations) or combine capital and product flows of these local organisations to allow a stronger role in processing and marketing (economically oriented organisations). Since they are multi-tiered there is less direct contact between leaders and local members

## TYPES OF URBAN PRODUCERS' ORGANISATIONS

To better understand UPOs, their specific problems and opportunities, and how they differ from rural organisations, we can divide them into categories or orientations of organisations. Various criteria can be used to categorise urban producers'organisations: origin and type of membership, type of actors, farming system/products they focus on, functions they fulfil for their members, degree of specialisation/differentiation, size in terms of members and/or turnover, level of operation, organisational structure, leadership, degree and type of external support and/or legal status. Eventually each category of organisation can be evaluated based on whether it caters for the needs and wishes of its members. To determine their effectiveness in doing so, we can look at their internal organisation and modes of operation or functioning (see also the next article).


APODU
**Products sold at a market in Rodó Park in Montevideo**

Based on existing literature and the articles in this issue, the following three main orientations of UPOs seem most meaningful for understanding specific problems and opportunities and in developing strategies to strengthen such organisations.

*Socially oriented UPOs*
This category includes urban poor, women, youth (Accra) and handicapped or elderly people (who may or may not receive a pension), who have formed groups to start or strengthen home, community or school gardening activities in order to improve their nutrition and obtain a supplementary income from sales of surpluses. These groups are often initiated by local organisations (churches, NGOs, municipal social programmes, etc.) aimed at poverty alleviation, food security and social inclusion, which provide them with (initially) minimal technical and financial support (often in kind) . In Western countries and larger metropoles in particular, we also encounter organisations of home and community gardeners who undertake gardening for leisure, health and/or community greening.

These UPOs are often organised in an informal and flexible way. Sometimes formalisation is required, but it is not always desired. See for instance the experiences in Lima (VMT), Rosario, Cape Town and Accra described in this issue. Their main support needs involve strengthening group formation and cohesion, leadership building and conflict resolution, basic crop cultivation and animal management practices, and initiating group savings to maintain and develop the basic infrastructure they have. Training support in these areas has to be followed up by periodic coaching visits over longer periods of time in order to arrive at sustainable results. These groups also often need assistance in

acquiring the minimal resources needed to start operating (seed, tools, access to land and water, compost). Since the members of these groups belong to the weakest categories of the urban population, external support has to be supplied largely on a grant basis. However, it is important that principles of "own contributions" and "group savings" be introduced and maintained right from the start to encourage group ownership and responsibility.

Such UPOs have a strong social impact, and they are important in urban community building (which is the topic of the next issue of the UAM). They can be found in intra-urban and especially periurban areas. Some of these groups seek to develop gradually into more market-oriented UPOs (see the next category below) by seeking to attract more institutional support, gradually strengthening their internal functioning and internal organisation, improving their production levels and becoming more profitable undertakings with larger surpluses (see the cases on Cuba, and as described on page 25 on Dakar). As the case of ASPROVE in Brazil shows (in UAM 16), care should be taken not to become too dependent on governmental support.

Meanwhile other groups may maintain their initial focus or will cease to exist when other opportunities to secure a livelihood come within reach. Others may connect with groups in other parts of the city to become a more politically oriented UPO (as described under the third category below, and illustrated by the experience of NEFSALF on page 23).

*Economically oriented UPOs*

Examples of economically oriented UPOs are producers' associations, cooperatives and group-based small enterprises. Such organisations are often more market oriented, have developed their internal organisation and management and often have gained legal status. Their membership counts more full-time farmers (including also periurban conventional farmers and urban residents who invest in some profitable type of agriculture). These UPOs are often organised by commodity (food as well as non-food) and for various reasons are more frequently encountered in the periurban areas (see Nairobi case on page 43). Primary production is mainly family based (or takes place with the help of hired labour) and is less of a group activity than in the first category. These organisations are mainly concerned with joint input supply and marketing, identification of methods for scaling up production levels, and the improvement of marketing channels.

As illustrated in the next article, which describes the study by IPES/ETC, one can distinguish two sub-categories here: (a) groups organised according to a more rural and traditional logic in terms of their management, production and marketing, for instance former rural producers who have gradually become surrounded by the city, and (b) those with a more modern logic, e.g. those that focus on organic production (as in Montevideo) or other niches in the urban market (herbs, mushrooms, pot plants, tree seedlings, fish, etc.). And of course we find various UPOs in the process of changing from a more traditional perspective to one that faces the new urban challenges (like in Kumasi and Dakar).

The main support needs of the organisations in this category are related to strengthening management and administration, strategic planning, development of adequate production technologies (adapted to the specific urban conditions), development of processing and packaging capacities, quality control and certification, and access to credit (which can be formal credit or all kinds of group-based arrangements). The articles on Lima and Nairobi (on pages 41 and 43) show experiences with farmers research on market-oriented production, illustrating several of the issues indicated above.

*Politically oriented UPOs*

These organisations, which are not specifically socially or economically oriented, focus on the organisation of (poor) urban farmers as a way to more effectively influence policy making, for instance to improve access to and security of resources (as illustrated by the cases in Bamako and Amsterdam) or lobby for support of organic production (Montevideo). They may in addition organise other activities like capacity building (as done by NEFSALF in Nairobi). Such more politically oriented UPOs emerge through networking activities between various groups/organisations of urban poor involved in farming that unite forces to lobby for legalisation of urban

## In this issue



Andrés Vélez-Guerra

**Dyen Te Don members meet in Bamako**

agriculture, more land use security or more support from governmental institutions (NEFSALF). They can be formalised organisations or have the character of an informal network that brings people together to advocate for policy change regarding specific joint interests.

## TRANSFORMATION

The articles in this magazine show that, over time, organisations evolve and may change their purpose and activities, level of operation and/or formal status, depending largely on (changing) contextual circumstances. The Farmer Field Schools in Lima (on page 41) were formed for research or extension purposes but gradually developed into a formal producers' organisation. More socially oriented organisations may become more economically oriented in order to improve income for the organisation. The articles on Nairobi and Dakar tell stories of such transformations. Transformation may also be the result of consolidation and changes in objectives (or shared values), as the cases of Montevideo and Amsterdam show. In fact UPOs may always have a varying emphasis on the social, economic, and political factors affecting their members' interests. Understanding this may assist us in supporting UPOs.

Small, in his article on Cape Town, discusses the transformation process of UPOs from the survival level to more commercial types of organisations and argues that UPOs in the various stages of that transformation (he distinguishes four stages) have other specific strategic development support needs. According to his observations, supporting organisations do not take these stages and differential needs into account, leading to unsuccessful projects. Several articles in this issue demonstrate that such a transformation is not an easy process and such a shift in orientation or level of operation might give rise to internal conflicts.

BVV

**Children learning about nature in gardens in Amsterdam**

Economically oriented organisations also go through processes of transformation, often related to a shift to more profitable products, market chain development and processes of specialisation and differentiation. Support to urban farmers' organisations is too often one sided and does not cover the range of assistance needed (e.g. production technology, market strategies, enterprise management, access to credit, etc.).

## WHY SUPPORT UPOS?

Different institutional actors seek to strengthen producers' organisations for different reasons. Some actors see the promotion of UPOs as an effective strategy to enhance social inclusion, poverty reduction and food security in the city. Other actors use UPOs as an effective mechanism to provide certain services cost-effectively to urban producers (farmer education, input supply, quality control, animal health services, etc.) and as an important vehicle in the development of the product value chain, and therefore seek to strengthen these organisations. Again other actors see support to UPOs as an investment in building social infrastructure, as a vital complement to investments in other forms of capital (see the article on page 15 and the experience in Cape Town) or as a way to empower urban farmers. They do this by facilitating the establishment of strategic partnerships among UPOs and with other urban actors so that they can equally participate in processes of negotiation and the formulation of public policies and programmes affecting their well-being and to gain access to information, productive resources, services and markets. In Rosario and Lima, the urban producers' networks have been given municipal support and explicit attention. The urban producers' groups in Cape Town have been supported by a local NGO, while groups in Lima and Nairobi have benefited from initiatives taken by researchers and others. However, no matter how important external support can be, self-reliance and mobilisation of members' resources is important and needs to be pursued right from the beginning (see the article on page 15).

## WHAT ACTIONS AND SUPPORT ARE NEEDED, AND FROM WHOM?

There is no universal approach to supporting UPOs, but in order to be most effective, activities designed to support and strengthen UPOs should:

- take into account the type of organisation, its stage of development and related specific strategic needs
- be based on a clear joint vision on the present and future role of the UPOs concerned
- be focused on building the strategic capabilities of the UPOs with the aim of achieving ownership, empowerment and sustainability
- be part of a multi-stakeholder and participatory approach focused on helping farmers' organisations become important actors (see also UAM no. 16)
- be sustained over longer periods of time.

Local government can play an important leading, stimulating and enabling role in this process. The support and commitment of governmental organisations, local NGOs, universities, CBOs present in the cities are also indispensable as well as the cooperation of private enterprises and the sustained support from international aid organisations and NGOs.

Four main support areas can be identified for UPOs:

*1) Favourable policy environment* – If UPOs can operate in a policy environment that acknowledges them as full-fledged and equal partners in the urban arena, by having in place favourable regulations as well as instruments that stimulate participatory processes and the establishment of (strategic) alliances with other urban actors, this will provide the producers' organisations with a fertile breeding ground for their development and optimise their contributions to sustainable urban development. The article by FAO in this issue also underlines the importance of this contextual factor.

*2) Internal organisation, management and functioning* – Without a clear vision and shared objectives together with a sound system for decision making, communication, management, administration, etc., the UPO will loose a lot of its effectiveness and efficiency and will even be prone to internal conflicts and disintegration. The Inter-regional Action-Research Agenda on page 7 provides recommendations in this area and suggests, for example, capacity development in the areas of accountability, democratic procedures for decision making, participatory and gender-sensitive management skills and effective two-way communication, as well

*Continued on page 7* ▶

# Social Organisations of Agricultural Producers in Latin America and Europe: Lessons learned and challenges

**In an effort to improve knowledge about and positively impact local realities, IPES and ETC-Urban Agriculture, in partnership with local institutions and researchers and with the support of IDRC (Canada), carried out between 2005 and 2006 a project entitled "Social organisations of urban and periurban producers (SOUPP): management models and innovative alliances for political influence".**

Joanna Wilbers

**Urban gardener member of the BVV, Amsterdam**

The analysis of the case studies showed that farmers' organisations are strongly influenced by two factors: the profile of its members and the context where they operate. The study gave insights on the relationship between the success of organisations for accessing resources and influencing public policy and their management models. It also identified indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of these organisations, and a set of actions for strengthening them were suggested.

## PROFILES

The organisations constitute a legitimate representational space for a diverse group of agriculturalists, varying from the urban poor who carry out organic farming in vacant urban spaces to traditional farmers whose lands have been surrounded by urban growth and who still maintain some of their rural agricultural practices. The different types of producer organisations studied reflect this diversity. Four profiles of farmers were identified.

The first group of urban farmers consists of the poor and unemployed people (many of whom were originally rural migrants) who live in intra-urban areas. They are engaged in organic production, both for their own consumption (in their backyards) as well as for processing and sale. They tend to have some experience with participation in social, political and labour organisations.

A second group is made up of poor farmers located in periurban areas, engaged in conventional farming (although it is possible that some are in the process of converting to organic production). These, often more traditional, farmers have less organisational experience given their social and cultural traditions. Within this group two main subgroups can be distinguished: a) the poor farmers who migrated to the city, with little education (sometimes illiterate); and b) those farmers whose farms gradually have been surrounded by urban development, mostly with basic education.

The third group is completely different and made up of urban gardeners engaged in providing recreational and other services. Their experience in social and political organisations varies.

Finally, a fourth group is composed of new organic farmers of urban non-farming origins (for example, academics, organic produce consumers, etc.). They are located in periurban areas and often participate in social organisations. These farmers are committed to organic farming, commercialisation, research and service provision (and to a lesser extent, processing).

MAIN ACTIVITIES AND MANAGEMENT

There are three central motivations for creating farmers' organisations: 1) to

### ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED IN THE SOUPP PROJECT

**Amsterdam Gardeners' Association** – BVV (Netherlands)
**Association of Organic Farmers of Uruguay** – APODU (Uruguay)
**Biokultura Association of Central Hungary** – BCHA (Hungary)
**PROVE Producers Association** – ASPROVE (Brazil)
**Las Vertientes Cooperative in Villa El Salvador** (Peru)
**Alternative Health Centre of Muribeca** – CESAM, Jaboatão dos Guararapes (Brazil)
**Duinboeren Platform** (Netherlands)
**Network of *Huerteras and Huerteros* (urban gardeners) of Rosario** (Argentina)

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improve members' quality of life and income, 2) to increase their access to resources, or 3) to increase their political influence and/or confront external threats in a collective way. The organisations can emerge out of the initiative of the farmers themselves or out of the concern of an external institution wishing to organise and strengthen them.

The organisations carry out three basic kinds of activities or services for their members: a) support services (training, legal support, input provision, etc.); b) promotion and support of activities to improve income generation (e.g. joint processing and commercialisation); and c) lobbying and establishing alliances with external stakeholders to improve access to resources, respond to external threats and enhance political influence.

Without underestimating the importance of proper internal organisation and availability of funding, the study revealed that how well an organisation functions is key to its success. Good results in terms of access to resources and political influence are achieved by organisations with shared values, clear and agreed objectives and strategies and democratic decision making.

A good example of an organisation that functions well is the "Huerteros" Network in Rosario, which, despite its informal nature and still weak internal organisation, has proven to be able to influence policymakers, participate in urban land use planning and gain access to resources (land and water) and national and international cooperation funds (see page 10).

Internal organisation is relevant but not necessarily key for the sustainability of farmers' organisations. Strengthening the functioning of the organisations seems to be more important to guarantee their sustainability. The "Las Vertientes" cooperative, founded in 1969 to improve production and secure title deeds for members' lands, managed to set up a good infrastructure with paid staff and acquire the land titles, but in the last years it has become almost inoperative due to internal problems and loss of unity, common values and trust.

The member profiles of an organisation (origin, initial income level, social and cultural tradition, educational and participation background) influence the definition of shared values and objectives, procedures and common trust. Nevertheless, context also influences the functioning (objectives, strategies, alliances, procedures) and internal organisation (availability of infrastructure, financial resources , training and others).

TYPES OF ORGANISATIONS

Two broad types of urban producers' organisations were identified, with different management models and subsequent results in accessing resources and influencing public policies:

a) sponsored/supported organisations and
b) self-organised organisations or those formed out of the interests of the members.

Sponsored / supported organisations emerge as a result of the interest of external stakeholders. They include organisations initiated by anti-poverty and socio-economic inclusion programmes sponsored by the Catholic church or the government. These organisations were created to support poor (migrant) farmers working and living in intra-urban areas. The organisations are dependent on this permanent external support. They achieve good results in terms of accessing resources and receiving training (for processing their products). In addition they perform well on participation of their members and the improvement of self-esteem, social inclusion and empowerment, particularly of women, who manage to take part in management and representational spheres within the organisation. This is fundamentally due to the political interest of the sponsoring organisations, which include these issues in their working agenda.

However, despite this external support and a positive context, there is no guarantee that such organisations will be sustainable. This will depend in part on the strength of their internal organisation but mainly on their functioning. An example is ASPROVE, an association initiated by the state government of Brasilia in an attempt to improve the social status of its members through the creation of agribusinesses (see also UAM 16). Despite positive achievements in terms of production, processing and commercialisation, the organisation disappeared after the new state government withdrew its support.

Self-organised organisations (those formed out of the interest of members) tend to focus on traditional practices, organic-ecological agriculture, or advocacy. They are formed in response to a specific need or in pursuit of a specific goal and usually concentrate on one commodity. Typical members are urban gardeners, (new) organic farmers, and conventional periurban farmers.

Organisations formed by (new) organic farmers stand out in their great capacity to wield political influence, due, among other factors, to the presence of shared values, a high level of commitment among members to the organisation (and to an alternative model of production and life) and a strong capacity to establish strategic alliances.

The effective functioning of these organisations allows them to achieve good results in terms of improving their members' income, developing innovative commercialisation strategies and improving the environment and landscape. Nevertheless, they face weaknesses in obtaining resources for processing their products, and in establishing alliances with the more conventional farmers' organisations, or equitable

**Table: Indicators of Functioning and Internal Organisation**

| Functioning | Internal organisation |
|---|---|
| Existence of clear, shared objectives.<br>Existence of defined strategies.<br>Capacity for establishing strategic alliances.<br>Presence of shared values.<br>Existence of agreed-upon procedures for making decisions on internal issues (alliances, marketing, production, etc.).<br>Equal access to benefits. | Availability of infrastructure and an administrative/accounting system.<br>Availability of human and financial resources.<br>Existence of a permanent management structure.<br>Regular elections and rotation of positions.<br>Equitable access to management and representative posts.<br>Commitment of members to the administration and maintenance of the organisation. |

access of women to management and representational positions. An example is APODU in Uruguay, which has several commercialisation channels, influence on public policy related to organic production and keeps strong alliances with several key stakeholders (see page 11).

The traditional organisations have shown that it is possible to achieve significant changes in the attitudes of members who tend to be risk-averse and who are not accustomed to participating in collective efforts. These organisations get good results in access to resources like land and water, they improve incomes and win political and social recognition. Nevertheless, they have still not been able to make progress in terms of the participation and empowerment of women, and in some cases, face serious threats to their survival because of the low levels of collective commitment to the operation of the organisation. An example of this is the Dutch Duinboeren Platform, which has been able to implement a variety of innovative projects (eco-health, alternative commercialisation, etc.), but faces difficulties in incorporating a great number of its members, who prefer to stay on the sidelines waiting to see how these experiments develop.

## MAIN CHALLENGES

Well-organised and effective producer organisations have a better negotiating position and greater access to resources, inputs, services and markets. Above all, their contributions to the creation of public policies related to urban agriculture are recognised and valued. Strengthening these organisations appears to be a key factor, notably in ensuring the recognition, legitimacy, representation and participation of farmers' groups as urban stakeholders. Based on participatory action-oriented analysis of the organisations involved in the project, an Inter-regional Agenda was developed. The Agenda proposes activities that organisations and actors interested in supporting them could implement to improve their functioning and internal management and then achieve better results in accessing resources and influencing public policies (see the box on page 8).

In order to strengthen urban agricultural producers' organisations, concrete and specific agendas need to be formed for each of these groups. It is advised that they review periodically their vision and common objectives, and establish participatory mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating their performance and their internal and external communication. The organisations need to identify strategies that will help them diversify their markets, offer new products and/or services, and expand their sources of income. This implies an improvement in their systems of production, and the development of micro-enterprises that add value to their production. They should also try to join forces with organisations with similar objectives, establishing strategic alliances, for instance with universities, NGOs, the private sector and the public sector.

Finally, in order to improve their access to resources and their ability to influence public policy and practice, they need to learn to cooperate with other stakeholders, establishing win-win relationships, and using complementary strategies (lobbying, communication, information, mobilisation, etc.) that can guarantee their effective participation in local political processes dealing with the management and planning of the areas where they carry out their activities.

**NOTES**

1) Information on the project, the case studies, the comparative study of the experiences, photos and other related documents are available at http://www.ipes.org/au/osaup/.


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*From page 4*

as installation of adequate administrative and management systems.

*3) Planning, implementation and monitoring of core activities* – UPOs need assistance in improving the way they perform their principal activities, e.g. provision of training and technical assistance, marketing of products or management of a savings and credit scheme. Support activities may include strategy development, training, technical assistance, supply of market information, etc.

*4) External linkages* – UPOs need to develop specific skills on how to build and maintain strategic partnerships with other urban actors, such as private enterprises, credit institutions, government agencies, municipal departments, NGOs, universities, and CBOs.

*5) Capital and infrastructure development* – UPOs need to develop their capacity to make savings and generate capital for maintenance of existing infrastructure and investment in new infrastructure. Entering each subsequent stage in the development of the UPO requires another level of profits/savings to enable a growing working capital and new investments. Support organisations are needed to assist in strategy development and technical assistance, to supply subsidies, grants and credit or to participate as (co-)investor.

## CHALLENGES

Despite increasing initiatives, still relatively little is known about how informal groups and networks of urban farmers function and how to help these groups develop into micro-enterprises and formal organisations with a sustainable market position. Support to UPOs needs to be adapted to their specific situation and orientation. The high diversity of UPOs needs to be acknowledged, which includes understanding and sometimes accepting the specific needs and wishes of their members. This means understanding context, perspective, and institutional organisation and operation. Through participatory action research in particular, the existing potentials of urban farmers' organisations can be further explored and developed.

**NOTES**

(1) We use the term urban "producer" rather than urban "farmer" because it covers all aspects of agricultural production, including livestock and fisheries and the processing of agricultural products on-farm or in other premises. We focus on small "urban producers" to indicate low-income people whose livelihood depends on urban agriculture-related activities. In this issue we will abbreviate urban producers' organisations as UPOs.

# An Inter-Regional Action-Research Agenda: Recommendations for strengthening social organisations of urban and periurban producers[1)]

*Within the framework of the IPES-ETC-IDRC project entitled "Social organisations of urban and periurban producers: management models and innovative alliances for political influence" (on which the previous article reports), an inter-regional action-research agenda was formulated based on inputs from the participating urban and periurban producers' organisations. The agenda highlights aspects within the organisations that need strengthening and external support and is meant to guide all stakeholders involved in the development of new research and action projects concerning urban and periurban producers' organisations.*

**1) Organisation and management**

Producers' organisations should analyse the strengths and weaknesses of their organisations, which includes identifying opportunities for and threats to their development. The results of this analysis should be discussed among all members and proposals for improvements agreed upon. These should lead to the elaboration and implementation of a strategic plan for organisational strengthening, which should include monitoring and evaluation systems. In addition, regular monitoring of the performance is necessary to assess the organisation's functioning and come up with improved strategies.

Members in an organisation should share common principles and objectives. A basic written constitution (detailing vision, strategies, main activities, etc.) is recommended to help legitimise the organisation, inform members and interested outsiders and guarantee smooth functioning. This document should not be cast in stone, however, as it will have to be adapted as the organisation develops, new member (or member groups) join and external circumstances change.

Transparent and regular communication within the organisation on its vision, objectives, decisions, etc., sustains the involvement of the members and helps avoid disagreements, mistrust and misunderstandings. Leaflets, informative websites, videos, radio broadcasting and other communication methods can enhance the awareness of other stakeholders about the organisation's activities and its (potential) contribution to their livelihoods and cities.

Intermediate levels of management should be strengthened in the organisation so that it can respond to the interests and needs of different individuals or groups of members. This can be done for example by supporting informal groups, task forces or committees (per region or district, per type of product produced or per social group of members).

The participation of women and young people in membership and management structures should be encouraged to increase gender equity and retain a certain dynamism and innovation.

**2) Sustainability and alliances**

External funding can help introduce new technologies and ideas (not operational costs), but in principle, organisations should be capable of financing and managing their own activities. Apart from the commonly used membership dues, organisations should diversify their revenue base, for example through service fees, project funding or profits from increased marketing and new business activities (e.g. agritourism, health care).

Members' capacities to improve production, processing and marketing should be strengthened through training, workshops, farmer-to-farmer exchange visits and pilot projects. Partnerships with (applied) research institutes should be established to implement programmes for participatory technology development and innovation.

Individual and smaller groups often do not have the resources needed to pursue broader objectives, such as gaining access to external markets or influencing political processes. In such cases, inter-organisational cooperation may be needed, either at local, national or regional level, to achieve results. This will increase know-how, strengthen economies-of-scale, policy lobbying and marketing power.

Strategic partnerships should be established with NGOs, universities, governments and funding agencies, for research support, design/set-up of training materials, commercialisation and diversification of the financial revenue base, lobbying strategies, negotiation on and participation in the policy formulation process and legalising production, processing and marketing.

**3. Policy lobbying**

Strategic alliances should be established with other urban actors, such as schools, health care institutes, etc.. The producers' organisations can offer them services in return for their support, political weight and bargaining power, to jointly defend and promote activities implemented by the producers' organisations.

Diverse and complementary policy lobbying strategies should be employed, such as offering information (through regular written correspondence or by organising visits or conferences, or sending out press releases), peaceful manifestations, mobilising others or participating directly in local policy discussions related to land use and strategic planning, elaboration of legislation, ordinances and budget allocations. In doing so, it will be important, however, to understand local policy frameworks, manage policy lobbying skills and gain the support of influential partners.

Producer empowerment for effective policy lobbying on various levels (local, provincial and national) should be based on education related to existing normative and legal frameworks, as well as on capacity building in lobbying, negotiation skills and policy formulation.

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*This text is based on the 'Inter-regional Action-Research Agenda for Strengthening Social Organisations of Urban and Peri-Urban Producers' by Marielle Dubbeling (ETC-Urban Agriculture) and has been adapted from its full version, which is available at http://www.ipes.org/au/osaup/english_version/documentos_en_linea/doc_generales.html*

# Urban Farmers' Network of Villa Maria Del Triunfo

**In various cities in Latin America, local governments have supported the organisation of urban farmers. The preferred form is usually a network, because of its flexibility. In this way the farmers work collectively, but without any formalisation. Two such farmers' networks can be found in Villa María del Triunfo and Rosario (see box). In the city of Villa María del Triunfo (VMT) in Lima, Peru, urban agriculture is primarily carried out by members of the Urban Farmers' Network, which currently includes more than 2,000 agricultural producers, and which is undergoing a period of formalisation and consolidation.**

Marco Bustamante - IPES

**Members of the Urban Farmers' Network during a ceremony**

Villa Maria del Triunfo is a municipality of almost 70 km$^2$ located on the outskirts of Lima. In 2001, the Municipality of Villa Maria del Triunfo decided to promote urban agriculture as a strategy to fight poverty (see UAM 16). Urban agriculture was at first practiced only in back and/or front yards of houses and on hillsides. Currently, it is also practiced on community and institutional land. In a participatory assessment carried out during 2005, it was found that 82% of the farmers are women, and 83% migrated from the interior of the country [1].

The Urban Farmers' Network began to form in 2002. Its roots can be traced to an initiative taken by a group of eight families in the area of Nueva Esperanza, who were seeking to take advantage, in an organised way, of training and inputs offered by the Urban Agriculture Programme of the municipality. This initial group appointed a coordinator in charge of managing the training and municipal support for the farms. Other families became motivated to organise themselves after seeing the results in the implementation of the community farms *(huertos)*.

The municipality formally recognised this form of self-managed organisation by farmers, as it became clear that the farmers achieved greater effectiveness in promotional activities and in the use of human and financial resources as a group than when they were not organised. As a result, municipal officials began to promote this kind of interaction among farmers in other municipal zones.

Although the groups remained active in their respective farms or collective plots, they did not manage to consolidate linkages between the different zones of the municipality, nor at the level of the whole municipality. In 2005, progress was made in linking these groups. Networking was stimulated through the multi-stakeholder process (see UAM 16) under the project called "Villa Maria Planting Seeds for Life[2]". A participatory assessment was carried out on the situation of urban agriculture, with the active participation of the urban farmers. These encounters allowed the farmers of the district to get to know each other better, to interact, and above all, to share and identify the limitations, potential and alternative solutions for urban agriculture in the municipality.

The farmers discovered that they had common problems and challenges, which stimulated them to take on the challenge of creating linkages on a larger scale. They decided to begin by reinforcing the organisations at the level of the zones, and elected zone coordinators, who were sworn in during a public ceremony witnessed by members of the District Urban Agriculture Forum[3]. The agriculturalists agreed to implement a series of joint activities, some to stimulate the multi-stakeholder process, and others to reinforce their technical-productive capacities.

The zone coordinators identified a number of priorities among the farmers' demands for training and technical assistance, including implementation of new community farms, raising small animals, generating inputs, transformation (processing) of products, commercialisation, and the management and organisation of agricultural producers.

A training programme for network members has now been implemented in all of the zones of the district, under an inter-institutional agreement carried out by four members of the Urban Agriculture Forum amongst which the network itself. The network is also developing, with support from IPES, a brand and logo for the products its farmers produce and it is working on a proposed document for the formal organisation of urban agriculturalists. This document should describe the objectives, roles and functions of the Urban Farmers' Network. It is hoped that once the discussions are over, the network will achieve formal status and will democratically elect its representatives at the district level.

Considering that Villa Maria is a city that is physically and socially fragmented at zone and district levels, with very few organisations of a district-wide character, the progress made in the organisation of urban farmers is a great qualitative leap forward for them and for the city itself.

The organisation and formalisation of the Urban Farmers' Network provides visibility for the farmers, but it is intended most importantly to strengthen and empower them so that they can participate in decision-making forums, like the participatory budget and local consensus-building roundtables (i.e. of gender, the fight against poverty), and actively contribute to the holistic development of the city.

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# THE HUERTEROS NETWORK OF ROSARIO (ARGENTINA)

The *huerteros* (urban farmers or gardeners) of Rosario, who are mostly poor urban dwellers, have joined together in a non-formal network in order to reinforce their achievements and their presence in the management of the city. Currently, this network is undergoing a process of organisational strengthening.

In 2005, a participatory project to consolidate the *Huerteros* network was developed by the NGO CEPAR and the Municipality of Rosario. It was implemented in four stages:

- ***Reflection*** on the purpose of the organisation, and the principles and values
- ***Agreement*** on the operational structure of the network
- ***Formalisation*** of the network
- ***Creation*** of a local agenda for the network.

A 25-member Board of Directors was created (5 delegates per district) for the purpose of carrying out democratic and participatory management. The network currently includes 600 huerteros and is implementing a local agenda established by its members.

**The huerteros have demonstrated the advantages of being organised**

The local agenda of the network includes the following:

- Network Organisation and Management: developing a democratic decision-making mechanism and strengthening internal communication channels (through decentralised meetings, and a massive membership campaign).
- Training of members in management and productive capacities (production, transformation and sales of UA products).
- Strengthening of the strategy for forming alliances with academic and research institutions, cooperation agencies, local and national governments and consumers (through awareness-raising campaigns on the consumption of organic products sold at farmers' markets).
- Promotion of new sources of income tied to network activities in the context of an economy of solidarity. The proposal is to carry out production agreements with other groups of producers for the provision of tools and infrastructure for the *huertas*. This involves groups that produce fence posts, tools and other needed items.
- Lobbying and advocacy carried out by the network to achieve stability in urban agriculture activities. For this, the creation of a legal framework to support these new kinds of economic relations is indispensable.

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Joanna Wilbers

**Members of the Urban Farmers' Network in Rosario, attending a meeting**

The *huerteros* have demonstrated the advantages of being organised. By working together in the farmers' markets, they have been able to establish better relationships, based on ethics and respect. Their work has given them the opportunity to support their families – through the generation of a dignified wage – and provided their community and wider society with the possibility to consume high-quality produce.

Joanna Wilbers

They have been able to put vacant lots to productive use, thereby transforming the neighbourhood landscape and contributing to a healthier habitat. Their active participation has allowed them to influence public policies and practice, like the preparation of ordinances to obtain secure tenure of their land and the creation of agribusinesses using funds from the participatory budget voted on by citizens.

Joanna Wilbers

**Urban garden in the northern district of Rosario**

NOTES

1) Urban Agriculture Assessment in Villa Maria del Triunfo, CCF-IPES/RUAF.
2) The project was developed in the context of the global programme "Cities Farming for the Future" implemented by IPES as regional partner in the RUAF Foundation.
3) The Urban Agriculture Forum, initiated by the RUAF Foundation, is the multi-stakeholder space for consensus-building and action that brings together 20 institutions active at the local level in Villa Maria del Triunfo. These include the local government, farmers, educational institutions, NGOs, national governmental entities, and international organisations.

APODU


Workshop of the SUMA CUD project of APODU

**The Organic Farmers' Association of Uruguay (APODU) is a national organisation of rural and periurban organic farmers. A study was undertaken by CIEDUR in 2005 and 2006 [2], which concentrated on farmers from the Montevideo metropolitan area, the country's capital.**

# Strategic Alliances: the Organic Farmers' Association of Uruguay

The Eastern Republic of Uruguay, with a population of 3,240,887[3], is located on the Atlantic coast, in the area between the Brazilian plateaus and the Pampas plain. Its economy is primarily based on export agriculture (meat, grains, milk). Social services are widespread in terms of health (96%) and education (97%). The Department of Montevideo is home to 42% of the country's total population. Uruguay's Gross Domestic Product fell in the years 1999 to 2003 from about USD 21billion in 1999 to a low of USD 11 billion in 2003. By 2005, it had rebounded to nearly USD 17 billion (representing a GDP per capita of USD 5,081), but the economy of Uruguay is still in the process of recovery.

As a result of the 2002 crisis, the poverty rate in the Department increased significantly, reaching 41% in 2003. While this rate has since gone down, it is still above what it was before the crisis.

## MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF APODU

APODU is a national organisation founded in 1997 that was created and is now run exclusively through the voluntary efforts of its more than 150 members, mainly individual producers. It is legally constituted as a non-profit civil association. Its highest authoritative body is the General Membership Assembly, which is held every two years and elects a Board of Directors to represent it. Affiliation is on an individual basis, and membership is open to anyone who is a certified organic producer. There are three different types of farmer members of APODU: rural farmers (located in other interior regions of the country), periurban farmers (located in metropolitan Montevideo), and urban huerteros, or garden-farmers located in the inner city of Montevideo.

APODU is divided into four autonomous regional divisions: South, West, East and North. It does not have its own offices, but rather uses facilities provided by other institutions or the members themselves for carrying out its activities. The operating costs (communication, transportation, etc.) are paid for by the members.

APODU has consolidated itself as an "ideological"[4] organisation. The leadership team is made up of farmers whose origin is mainly urban but who decided to move and live in the rural and periurban areas. Its members are deeply committed to agro-ecological production and they have an alternative vision of society. Their activities are in that sense related to the urban dynamic. These characteristics shape their actions: frequent meetings, prioritising direct sales and customer relationships, political advocacy and alliances with groups or organisations that support alternative practices, environmentalists and research organisations. APODU is a formal organisation, but its internal organisation is relatively limited, in the sense that leadership is in the hands of a small group. However, this does not affect its functioning in a negative sense. On the contrary, APODU has a strong presence in public and political spheres, especially in related themes (such as organic production and food system thinking).

## APODU MEMBERS' PROFILE

The members of APODU are characterised by a very high level of education, unlike the educational and cultural profile of traditional farmers and the average Uruguayan. Their houses have most commodities and basic services, and only 15% live below the poverty line. Their family size is relatively small, and the members tend to participate in many other non-farm activities (like civil organisations). They are considered neo-rural farmers in that they live on their farms (located in periurban and rural areas), but for the most part are of urban origin. The participation of APODU's women members is significant in production and commercial efforts, but it is still quite low in the organisation's management functions. The majority of the income of APODU's members comes from organic food production.

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As an organisation, APODU is constantly looking for alternative ways to sell members' products in order to provide them with better incomes. APODU facilitates the farmers' participation in three different "intermediary-free" marketing systems: weekly farmers' markets (located in areas with high purchasing power), the Baskets (involving house-to-house, personalised delivery), and the Ecostore (a permanent point-of-sale located in downtown Montevideo).

Most of the members are accustomed to working in a participatory way in various events. Within APODU, there are various thematic groups that address topics such as commercialisation, or in some cases joint production and planning, which implies elevated levels of unity and trust that are not common in traditional agriculture.

## ALLIANCES AND STRATEGIES DEVELOPED BY APODU

APODU is seeking to find its own path that will allow it to have political influence without being isolated as an organisation. For that purpose, it has established temporary and strategic alliances with various organisations, which has made it possible to carry out activities aimed at improving production and commercialisation as well as defending and promoting organic farming.

In order to reinforce its relationship with local stakeholders in promoting ecological agriculture, APODU engages in a strategy of decentralisation, incorporating consumers, technical specialists and NGOs into its regional affiliates.

At the national level, it maintains alliances with public institutions, social organisations, academic institutions and international cooperation agencies. In addition, it has strategic alliances with civil society organisations like the Association of Organic Product Consumers (GACPADU), which has led to improved commercialisation and the promotion of campaigns on certain issues of interest (avoiding the use of pesticides, responsible consumption, etc.).

In order to publicise organic agriculture, APODU promoted the creation of the Agro-ecology Network, an inter-institutional entity currently in the process of consolidation that brings together NGOs (CIEDUR, CEUTA, Foro Juvenil, REDES), consumer organisations, research institutes, some departments of the University of the Republic and representatives from different governmental bodies.

It also has a specific alliance with FAO, with which it is implementing a project on participatory certification, which is seen

**APODU is constantly looking for alternative ways to sell products**

by the producers as their only chance to get certified given the high costs of the traditional procedure. This project has put the Association to the test in terms of the direct management of cooperation funds.

Nevertheless, the establishment of these kinds of alliances concerns many members, and at the moment, APODU is facing some internal tension between those who are pushing for closer relations with urban stakeholders linked to the production, commercialisation, and consumption of organic products and those who prefer to relate to other rural farmers.

While its members recognise the value of establishing alliances that promote ecological/organic agriculture (and therefore its producers), there is some question as to the capacity for advocacy that the Agro-ecology Network has.

As a result, APODU wears two hats: that of a producers' union (demanding attention for issues related to production, commercialisation, access to credit, inputs, etc.) and that of a social organisation that is open to other demands and interests (of consumers, NGOs, environmentalists, academic institutions, etc.).

## MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

APODU has managed to achieve social objectives (the settlement of rural and periurban farmers, a decent level of income, a better quality of life) and productive objectives (varied commercialisation channels, strengthened native seed varieties) as a result of the strong commitment of its members to achieving political influence through broad alliances (NGOs, universities, local governments, various national government offices) and vertical integration (production-processing-commercialisation-consumers).

Partnerships with NGOs have allowed APODU to gain access to an appropriate infrastructure in order to operate (offices, certain resources, etc.). In addition, its organisational strengthening has given it access to markets (farmers' markets, Baskets and the Eco-store) in partnership with other stakeholders.

The alliances with international organisations, like the FAO, and with the national government have allowed APODU to improve upon research aimed at increasing production (biological pest control, etc.). In a similar way, there has been progress in the consolidation of the Agro-ecology Network.

Its alliances with NGOs and social organisations has allowed APODU to become

APODU

**An APODU workshop in the open air**

an important player in political advocacy, opposing the liberation of genetically modified (transgenic) organisms, in the National Biosecurity Committee and in the promotion of participatory processes for the certification of organic farming.

**NOTES**

1) Ivet Alvarez and Hugo Bertola, Board Member and President of APODU, respectively, generously contributed to this article.
2) "Social organisations of urban farmers: management models and innovative alliances for political influence" coordinated by IPES-Peru with financing from IDRC.
3) 2004 Census, phase I, National Statistics Institute.
4) GUINOT, C., refers to the first works on organic farming movements in France, in the 1970s, and identified as urban those movements that entered into organic farming for "philosophical or ideological" reasons. The first organic or biological agriculture in France was the GABO (Groupement des Agriculteurs).

# Municipal Policy Influencing: Experiences of Gardeners in Amsterdam

**In 2001 the Amsterdam municipality started preparations for a new spatial plan, which became the basis for city planning development in the period 2002-2010. The plan, entitled "Choosing urbanism", aimed to place residential and economic functions within the city limits, while green areas were to be established on the city fringes. Among other steps, the plan involved sacrificing five allotment garden parks for housing construction and infrastructure developments. It compelled the tenant of the allotment garden parks, the Association of Allotment Gardens (or in Dutch: Bond van Volkstuinders, BvV), to choose an entirely new and different strategy for influencing policy, of which this article provides an account.**

Joanna Wilbers

Allotment garden in Amsterdam

Allotment gardens in the Netherlands originated in the second half of the 18th century. Well-to-do citizens established a society in 1784 aimed at the intellectual growth of the 'average' people, such as workmen. One of the society's activities was to rent out plots for gardening to labourers so that they could grow their own food and increase their family incomes. Furthermore, gardening was seen as an activity to stimulate personal and societal development.

The development of allotment gardens increased rapidly towards the end of the 19th century when industrialisation took over in the Netherlands. The fast growth of the labour population and the poor living circumstances were reasons for many municipalities to rent out garden plots to cultivate potatoes and vegetables.

Currently, the Netherlands has around 250,000 recreational allotment gardeners, half of whom are members of gardeners' associations. A number of allotment gardeners' associations have united in a national union, the AVVN (*Algemeen Verbond van Volkstuindersverenigingen Nederland)*, which represents around 25,000 gardeners[2)].

## AMSTERDAM

In 1909 the Committee for Allotment Gardens was established in Amsterdam. The members were primarily concerned with advancing their health and life in general and not so much with increasing the gardeners' incomes. The first Amsterdam garden group was established in 1910. Nowadays, Amsterdam (the largest city of the Netherlands with 22,000 ha and 740,000 inhabitants) has 39 allotment garden parks (300 ha) on its territory encompassing 6,000 individual gardens. The land on which the garden parks are located is owned by the municipality. Most allotment gardens are no longer located where they originally started out, while some have disappeared all together due to urban planning and infrastructure developments.

Twenty-six garden parks have a so-called accommodation-recreational function, which means that each garden has a cottage in which one can stay overnight from April through September. There are four recreational parks where one cannot stay overnight. This also applies to the nine food garden parks where gardeners mainly grow vegetables, herbs and fruits. Most parks are on the urban fringe, but one park is located in the middle of a residential area and is part of a city park.

Twenty-four of the 39 parks in Amsterdam are rented to BvV (5,000 gardens), and the remaining 15 are rented to a total of 14 other associations (1,000 gardens).

## BVV

The BvV has 6,000 members, which makes it the largest allotment gardening association in the Netherlands. In addition to the parks in Amsterdam, the association rents five more parks (1,000 gardens), which are located outside the city limits due to changed boundaries or because the gardens had to be moved from city land that was no longer available. The BvV also maintains a list of 1,500 aspiring members, who are on a waiting list to begin their own gardens.

The BvV was established in 1917 as a non-profit organisation. Per garden park the members choose the representatives for the General Assembly, the highest authority in the association. This authority chooses the main board. The members also choose park boards to perform the management tasks for each garden park. All board activities are performed by members who receive a small compensation for costs made. The organisation has a small office with paid staff who provide membership administration and support to the board. The challenge for the BvV is to keep its structure and regulations as efficient, simple and cost-effective as possible for its members. Therefore these are revised periodically and the results of these revisions are incorporated in the association's policy plans. These plans describe the BvV's activities and strategies and are formulated by the General Assembly. The current plan covers the period 1998-2007[3)], and the subsequent plan now being developed will be in effect until 2011.

Besides defending the interests of its members, the BvV's goal is to acquire land for the gardens and promote gardening as a form of active recreation and as a way to learn about the environment, flora and fauna as well as the cultivation

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of flowers, plants, vegetables and fruit in an environmentally friendly way. While the latter goals are mainly achieved by informing and educating both members and non-members through the BvV website, a newsletter and the organisation of courses, the first two goals are achieved by applying a policy influencing strategy.

## INFLUENCING POLICY MAKING

A central pillar of this strategy is to point out to the local government the wide-ranging potential of the allotment gardens – which are located on land owned by the municipality. They should be considered a valuable instrument for the municipality with which it can develop the city further in many different ways. Through this lobbying, the BvV wants to create a new support base in society for the allotment gardens now and in the future.

The same strategy was also applied during the formulation process of the spatial plan organised by the municipality in 2001. From the beginning, the municipality involved the BvV as one of many civil society organisations in Amsterdam. The BvV opted for a pro-active, cooperative and non-activist approach as its members believed this strategy would be more fruitful than active resistance to any proposed change (see box). A special working group of knowledgeable and active members was formed to advise the board on the issue.

In dealings with the city administrators, the BvV chose a business-like but also cooperative approach, emphasising that it recognised the administrators' responsibility to consider all of the interests at stake as well as its desire to create a healthy city. This approach was very fruitful as the association managed to create good, informal and even friendly working relationships with the local government officials. The good institutional as well as personal ties were emphasised when the BvV appointed one of the administrators as an honorary member in appreciation of her competence and involvement with regard to the Amsterdam allotment gardens, which she gladly accepted. The association's alliances with housing corporations and health care and welfare organisations also helped create a stronger base for policy negotiations.

The BvV's main goal in these negotiations was to receive acknowledgement of the value of the allotment garden parks for the city, as this would lead to the preservation of the garden parks in the short term – especially the five threatened parks – as well as the possible expansion of the number of parks in the longer term. A very important factor in this process was that the BvV emphasised its willingness to be flexible, while keeping in mind that this willingness could be withdrawn at any time if necessary.

Of course, the process caused internal turbulence within the BvV. The board initially underestimated the emotions of the gardeners with respect to the threatened parks and a consensus on the approach to be followed could not be achieved. Some park boards even decided to follow an individual approach, mobilising both gardeners as well as city district administrators, but hereby losing sight of the bigger picture of the entire organisation. To overcome this problem, the operation and structure of the organisation are now being reconsidered. The results of this process will be reflected in the new policy plan for 2007-2011.

**Some tips on policy influencing (from BvV board members)**

a) Know what is politically wanted.
b) Show respect for the administrators, also by expressing appreciation for their work and actions if this is deserved.
c) Try to achieve a situation where politicians can flaunt and show off with what they have done for you.
d) Never personalise the discussion.
e) Use humour as an instrument.
f) Try to build a network within the administrative organisations, the outside world and among (ex-) politicians and call upon their expertise and involvement.
g) Make explicit that you are making a contribution to the entire society and not just to your own members.
h) Build alliances with other civil society organisations allowing you to make a stronger case towards local administrators together.

## RESULTS

As a result of this tumultuous process, the current garden parks can remain at their present locations until 2010. In addition, the city government acknowledged the current and potential meaning of the allotment gardens for the city of Amsterdam. The BvV followed this up by challenging the local government in 2002 to develop a city-wide vision on the allotment gardens, in collaboration with the city districts and all allotment garden associations. Consequently, the municipality adopted the "Policy Note on Allotment Gardens in Amsterdam" in early 2006, as a reflection of its vision on the gardens for the city[4]. Although the BvV was able to participate in the formulation of this vision, unconditional preservation of the current allotment gardens could not be enforced.

Currently, preparations are underway for the practical implementation of the vision, in consultation with the city districts and the BvV, among others. One bottleneck in this process is that the local government has not yet made the necessary extra financial means available. However, experiences in the western part of Amsterdam where allotment gardens have been made part of new spatial development plans provide the BvV with hope for the future[5].

## LESSONS LEARNT

A crucial part of the BvV's new strategy is that it has moved away from a demanding role and has placed itself more in a motivational role by stimulating the local government to put the allotment gardens to a productive and multi-functional use for the entire city. It pointed out the allotment gardens' varied potential to the municipality and challenged its administrators to take advantage of this potential. Because of this cooperative, and sometimes somewhat humble approach, the board met with resistance from its members, who expected that it would take a more forceful position. This resistance eased down somewhat when the members saw the local government's increasingly positive posture towards the allotment gardens. This in turn made it easier for the BvV to participate in the formulation of the policy note and to start lobbying for more municipal cooperation in achieving its objectives.

NOTES

1) Member of the board of the Association of Allotment Gardeners (BvV), www.bondvanvolkstuinders.nl
2) See the AVVN website www.avvn.nl.
3) See www.bondvanvolkstuinders.nl for an online copy of the policy plan called "Strong Together" (in Dutch: *'Samen Sterk'*).
4) In Dutch: 'Nota Volkstuinen Amsterdam', see www.dro.amsterdam.nl for a copy of the policy note.
5) See the report *'Tuinen van West'* on the development plans on www.dro.amsterdam.nl.

# Towards a Better Understanding of Low-Income Producers' Organisations

**The FAO/IDRC Project, "Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture: Towards a better understanding of low-income producers' organisations" aims at identifying concrete solutions to the difficulties faced by urban producers' groups in achieving sustainable livelihoods for their members. In this article some preliminary results are provided, regarding the groups' capacity to attain self-reliance and sustainability; and the role of mayors, local authorities and city executives in promoting a politically friendly environment for civil society participation, farmers' entrepreneurship and capacity building.**

IWMI India

**Transporting fodder for urban dairy production in Hyderabad**

In June 2005 the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) launched a joint project on "Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture: Towards a better understanding of low-income producers' organisations", to be implemented over an 18-month period in ten cities in developing countries. The purpose was to generate knowledge that would lead to a better understanding of the types and performance of existing formal and informal urban and periurban producers' organisations working in the food and non-food chains, and to prepare specific guidelines for strengthening their effectiveness and sustainability and improve their access to natural resources, funding and knowledge.

The cities were selected according to their potential for developing a long-term strategy for strengthening urban producers' organisations in collaboration with the major stakeholders including the municipalities, local authorities, local research institutions and NGOs. The selected cities are Phnom Penh and Hyderabad in Asia; Accra, Antananarivo, Dakar, Nairobi, Kinshasa, Harare and Cairo in Africa and Caracas in Latin America. A Local Task Force on Urban and Periurban Agriculture –including representatives of local authorities and city planners, UPA experts, NGOs, producer organisations' representatives, etc. – was established in each of the cities, in order to ensure participation and strengthen multi-stakeholder dialogue on UPA issues at municipal level. This article is a first analysis of the project's initial reports. Further systematisation will be done at the project's final workshop in Rome on 29-31 January 2007. Results of this workshop will be available on the FAO Food for The Cities web-site[2].

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## CONSTRAINTS OF URBAN PRODUCERS

In their efforts to improve their livelihoods and food security and to overcome poverty, urban producers face many constraints. Some of the more important constraints identified by previous studies are:

- lack of legitimacy and security of land tenure
- an adverse policy and legal framework
- lack of access to resources; credit and other agricultural inputs
- lack of technical knowledge and information due to lack of extension and support by line ministries of agriculture
- lack of access to viable markets and a transport infrastructure.

The experiences of the ten cities in the study show that there is a need for a policy and legal regulatory framework to stimulate and regulate the development of urban and periurban agriculture in the world's cities, which would allow low-income producers' organisations to operate in a secure and effective environment. Such a framework rarely exists and, where it exists, often lacks effectiveness in terms of compliance. This is the case in Accra, where enforcement of the existing legislation is inadequate. In Nairobi the lack of a regulatory and policy framework is the single most important constraint faced by the producers' organisations: as a result, both formal and informal organisations and institutions can only offer limited services.

Where urban and periurban agriculture is considered an illegal activity, producers have no means to protect their rights: for example, in cases of non-payment for services rendered, the producers' organisations have no means to seek redress. In Kinshasa, where the urban development plan is currently being drafted, it is not possible to develop long-term activities, because a land use plan is still lacking. The demarcation of a Green Belt, like the one agreed on in 1991 within the Accra-Tema Metropolitan area, could be useful although delays in promulgating the necessary legislation and lack of governmental controls have undermined the Green Belt initiative, and land owners have started selling some of the land to estate developers.

In Phnom Penh the price of a square metre of residential land in the city rose from USD 250 in 2000 to USD 700 in 2006. Due to a similar trend in Dakar, agricultural

activities are being relocated from urban to periurban areas. In Hyderabad major agricultural activities – green fodder, dairy and perishable vegetables production – are threatened by escalating land prices and loss of agricultural land, reoriented to residential purposes.

The preliminary results of the study show that urban producers are more successful in overcoming the many constraints when they are well organised. It has been observed that a lack of institutional and organisational capacity deprives low-income producers of the necessary power to bargain and negotiate with the authorities and other better-organised and more powerful groups in society. This reduces their access to resources, inputs, services and markets and is a major reason for their economic and social marginalisation.

Social formation and organisation are critical for interest groups wishing to secure recognition, legitimacy, representation, access to resources and to influence outcomes through direct participation as stakeholders in the formulation of public policies and strategies affecting their well-being. This is particularly true in an urban context, where the majority of small urban and periurban producers in developing countries operate today at the margin, often with an illegitimate, or illegal, status.

## URBAN, PERIURBAN AND RURAL GROUPS

Differences between urban, periurban and rural groups are not found in their structure and dynamic, in their participation procedures, in the effectiveness of information sharing, or in their degree of independence. Differences are found, however, in the *context* in which they operate, and in the *opportunities* that such a context offers to their members. Thus, to understand the differences among rural, urban and periurban groups, attention should be focused on the characteristics of the environment surrounding the groups, in the specific ways the groups interact with such an environment, and on the influences the environment exerts on the groups in terms of constraints and opportunities.

Even if some typical characteristics can be often observed in urban and periurban groups (i.e. most of the members have more than one job; food processing and street food vending are important among the various value-adding activities, etc.), such characteristics are not exogenous, but depend on the characteristics of the spatial system in which the group is rooted. A thorough group analysis, using a systemic approach, cannot ignore the external environment surrounding the group, its history, properties, dynamics and goals.

The urban environment is characterised by strong, diversified and growing pressure on the available resources, led by rural-urban migration and increasing demand for food, water, shelters, infrastructures, energy, services, etc. Adequate planning - based on a participatory and multi-level approach - is a fundamental requirement for the promotion of sustainable urban development. However, many institutional, social, and cultural constraints still affect city management and planning systems. Regarding UPA issues, it has been observed that agriculture is often considered an illegal activity, and is not adequately regulated. In most cases urban plans do not even mention UPA activities. In such a context, any initiative aiming at strengthening UPA producers' groups would crash against the lack of political and institutional will.

The promotion of producers' groups rooted in an urban environment requires that particular attention be paid to the establishment of multi-stakeholder relations involving the groups themselves, local authorities, urban planners, private entrepreneurs, etc. Such relations should be conceived as multi-sectoral and multi-level, like formal/informal platforms for the composition of diverting and often conflicting interests, the promotion of synergies, the voicing of participants' needs within the central government, and the organisation of lobbying initiatives. Local NGOs and international donors have a key role in supporting the attempts of local municipal authorities to attain the goals mentioned above. NGOs are particularly well situated to work extensively at the ground level with groups, providing training and support in participatory planning programmes, organisation of micro-credit schemes, participation in multi-stakeholders platforms and networks, etc. International donors have a competitive advantage in the dialogue with local authorities and central governments for the establishment of a favourable policy enabling environment, which is responsive to the urban and periurban groups' needs, and provides adequate room for multi-stakeholder dialogue and decision making in a democratic, participatory and sustainable approach.

Noha Ramadan

**Selling meat produced in Cairo**

### The Story of Ablekuma Grasscutter Farmers' Cooperatives, Accra

*"...Mr. Adu of the Animal Research Institute, Pokuase, encouraged me to form an association so that MoFA could assist us with our training and other needs. Then we will be able to train others as master trainers…Six of us started in Pokuase and later formed the Awoshie group. I received an Award from MoFA in 2002….membership in a group was also the only way to increase my credit-seeking ability so I have worked hard to sustain this group…now Heifer Ghana, an NGO, is helping and we have two projects from the metropolitan assembly. We have been given a grant to establish a learning centre and are processing members for individual loans…."* (Ocansey, AGFCS, Accra).

## THE ADVANTAGES OF BEING ORGANISED: SOME EVIDENCE FROM THE CITIES

Numerous advantages of being organised have emerged from the case studies. Some groups have managed to gain better access to land and to have security of tenure by using their political clout and negotiating with the municipal and local authorities. In Accra, where there is a long tradition of organising groups into associations or cooperatives, pig farmers formed a group before 1960 that enabled them to acquire a piece of land in their current location, Ablekuma sub-metro. In Hyderabad the Uppal Raithu Sangam association established in 2005 is currently seeking registration under the Societies Act, in order to represent the interests of farmers affected by land acquisition processes and to negotiate with the government to exempt their land from the acquisition process (see box).

Other groups have organised themselves to improve their skills and knowledge and share experiences. Grasscutter farming is a new phenomenon that caught on a decade ago. As most of the farmers have less than 5 years' working experience in grasscutter production, in Accra "they are organised into an Association with the hope of improving access to information and other resources" (RUAF, 2006).

More recently, a group promotion initiative for micro-scale yoghurt making, a growing phenomenon among low-income women processors in Accra, was endorsed by the Ministry of Food and Agriculture.

MDP

**Farming around Harare**

The Women in Agriculture Development Programme, as it became known, provided training to women's groups that are already engaged in other income-generating activities.

Some groups were able to access credit and achieve economies of scale through organisation. For instance, in Nairobi the Uthiru Muthusa Organisation was established in 2003, and was subsequently registered as a savings and credit cooperative, in order to access group loans from the Cooperative Bank of Kenya at a lower interest rate than required by the private micro-financial institutions. In Kinshasa manioc processing is becoming more profitable. Through informal groups, equipment for peeling and cutting the produce that individual members could not otherwise afford is being shared.

The Kayole Environmental Management Association, established in 1999 in Nairobi by 23 men and women who were former street children, is currently working in the waste management sector. It serves 4,500 households by collecting garbage, which is then separated and recycled (plastic or paper), moulded (metal) or sold (glass). The Association has not only improved the cleanliness of the Kayole Estate area, but also generates income for the youth employed in the scheme.

The paragrass producers in Hyderabad also represent an interesting example of producers informally working together to arrange a market place in the old city and to streamline the fodder trading process. The membership changed over the years, and finally registered as an organisation in 1999 with the name of Farmers Green Paragrasss Growing Society. Its aim was to resolve problems in the marketplace and improve dialogue with the new governmental authorities (see box).

**Ginger processing groups in Kinshasa**

*Ginger transformation is currently a growing activity among women's groups in Kinshasa, whose members aim at raising revenues to cope with their households' basic needs. An effective credit system, the tontine is at the basis of the functioning of such informal solidarity groups. Members contribute to the group with their own resources and take part in weekly meetings. The tontine system is an informal financial method based on the capacity of poor people to save. It makes micro-credit available to those who have no access to formal credit. Tontine groups are specifically rotating savings and credit associations, which provide their female membership with an autonomous savings and credit mechanism through which the members access informal financial services. Each ginger group raises an overall amount of USD 50 to be assigned to one member, who has to pay it back within two weeks with no charge of interest. Due to the growing demand for ginger products in the city, members were able to raise revenues of up to USD 80 a month.*
Source: SENAHUP, 2006

**The Farmers Green Paragrass Growing Society, Hyderabad**

*At the end of the 1960s, farmers cultivating fodder were involved in informal consultation and information sharing. An association was eventually formed with various aims, including the search for a suitable marketplace and negotiations with dairy cattle owners and brokers. However, once a marketplace was arranged in the old city, and once the fodder trading process was streamlined, there was no further attempt to register the Association or to take up further activities by the group. In the mid-nineties, the marketplace came under threat and collective action among producers and brokers gained momentum again. The farmers consulted with a number of acquaintances in the governmental and legal sectors, and were advised to register, in order to collectively pursue their interests. Informal organisations cannot receive critical support services, including extension and credit. The Farmers Green Paragrasss Growing Society was thus formed and registered in 1999. They are currently facing several problems associated with the marketplace they are using, and in the dialogue with the new governmental authorities.*
Source: IWMI, 2006

## LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES FROM THE CITIES

The effectiveness and sustainability of organisations representing low-income urban and periurban agricultural producers would be enhanced if institutional, economic, social and environmental bottlenecks were removed or their effects minimised. From the various experiences observed in the cities, some preliminary lessons learned can be drawn, which can be organised around the four major pillars of the group's capacity to achieve sustainability and self-reliance, i.e. the group's capital, considered in its human, social, natural, and financial components. It should be observed that, while these four elements are not exhaustive, they have a critical impact on the sustainability and competitiveness of the producers' groups.

i) It is extremely important that producers organisations strengthen their *internal management capacities, by improving members' skills and knowledge*, in order to promote strategic thinking and problem solving, as observed in Kafr-ELShorfa and Dar El-slam Cooperatives in Cairo, or in the Dzorwulu Vegetable Farmers and in the Pig Farmers Associations in Accra. Group-based training activities that enhance members' capacities and skills, as well as capacity building both of the staff and of the facilitators involved in the training activities strengthen the group's human capital, which in turn has a critical impact on its managerial, organisational, value adding, negotiation and bargaining activities. In this context good leadership, transparency and democratic decision making processes positively impact members' motivation to invest their own resources in the group.

ii) Trust, common values and informal shared rules are at the basis of what is called the social capital, which is one of

Takawira Mubvami

**Selling at the Harare Chitungwiza farmers' market**

the pillars of the group's performance. The group's social capital depends on the characteristics of the local environment. Community-oriented initiatives aimed at strengthening the social capital would result in a twofold outcome, i.e. a fertile context for strengthened cohesion among group's members and improved synergies among local stakeholders. *Information and experience sharing* allows groups to build on the others' experiences and set up successful strategies. The producers' organisations' capacity to influence UPA policy and governance can be improved by the *establishment of alliances* with various stakeholders in the UPA chain. In order to minimise the cost of inputs and ensure proper handling of output by middlemen or command higher output prices, group

**A favourable policy environment is a precondition for sustainable groups**

negotiation is a valuable advantage. It also strengthens experience sharing, and offers opportunities for inter-change programmes and training. Alliances with public sector authorities promote UPA visibility and legitimacy, allow the extension agents to do their jobs more effectively, and stimulate the establishment of a clear policy and legal framework for UPA activities. A women's group, GIE Ndaie', established in Dakar in 2000 to process and sell food cereal products, enhanced its market share and members' income after a promotion day organised by the municipality. The establishment of umbrella associations should also be promoted and followed up: in Nairobi the establishment of Umbrella Associations (Kenya Green Towns Partnership Association and Kayole Environmental Management Association) served to provide a much-needed link between the members and public authorities. Under these organisations they have more effective representation and bargaining power. The key point is that these organisations with effective representation have more bargaining power to lobby for their members' interests in the public policy arena.

iii) *Access to natural resources* was highlighted as a major constraint affecting groups' sustainability, as well as a major motivation for members to establish a group. Lack of access to land and water is mostly due to inadequate legal and regulatory frameworks, stemming from a lack of political will. In many other cases the availability of UPA supportive municipal policies and plans is undermined by lack of coordination and fragmentation of responsibility among various public institutions, at municipal and national level. Building on the case of Accra, it is strongly recommended that the government regulate access to and use of suitable areas, like the Green Belt, devoted to urban and periurban agriculture and forestry. The appointment of an Urban Agriculture Coordinator in the Ministry of Agriculture in Harare is a new promising development. In some cases, the establishment of a department in a line ministry and in the municipality with the mandate to address legal and regulatory issues related to UPA activities promotes coordination and negotiation among various stakeholders.

iv) *Self-reliance and mobilisation of members' resources is a condition sine qua non* for group development, which needs to be pursued from the beginning. To ensure that financial self-reliance goals are reached, each group should develop its own long-term plan, with clearly-defined member savings/resource mobilisation targets. Any external funding should always complement members' own resources. The positive values of saving, financial self-reliance, member control, decision-making autonomy and group enterprise sustainability need to be taught as part of all training and group strengthening efforts.

As observed in Accra, registered associations are motivated by external support through the provision of credit, training and general organisation. Once the external support is ended, all business-like organisational models are not practised fully. Thus, the internal relations and processes enacted to achieve consensus about common goals break down. For example, the Ablekuma Grasscutter Farmers Cooperative Society, which is heavily supported by Heifer International Ghana, is currently fairly well organised whereas the Mushroom Growers Association disintegrated a few years after the National Mushroom Development Project ended. In strengthening producer organisations, the focus must be on re-orienting members' motives to reflect not only organising for personal gain but also for societal gain, like environmental sustainability and consumer safety. In this way, the overemphasis on "organising for credit from external sources" would become less important. Entry based on share sales is a recommended practice. It commits members as long as the moneys yield returns and these are distributed equitably after the payment of all debts.

Finally it should be observed that a *favourable policy-enabling environment*, i.e. one that encourages the use of participatory approaches and promotes negotiations between governmental institutions, private sector and civil society organisations. is a necessary precondition for the establishment and strengthening of sustainable groups. The availability of UPA-supportive municipal policies and plans, on the one hand, and the producers' organisations capacity to influence municipal authorities, on the other, both rely on the availability of an effective urban governance system.

**NOTES:**
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**The city of Cairo has been the capital of Egypt for more than a 1,000 years and its roots extend back more than 50 centuries. The city's population in 2006 was 7.8 million on a total area of about 3,085 km². Cairo is made up of one old city and five new cities encompassing about 29 municipalities.**

Noha Ramadan

Donkey-pulled cart

# Urban and Periurban Agriculture Producers' Organisations in Cairo

A significant portion of those involved in urban and periurban agriculture (UPA) are the urban and periurban poor. Women constitute an important segment (FAO, 1995) of the urban farmers, since agriculture and related processing and selling activities can often be easily combined with their other tasks. For instance, it is not difficult for women to combine selling livestock products such as eggs and milk with their urban jobs that already require travelling to the town centre or to the houses of the rich in Cairo.

Authors


**Figure**
**The urban agriculture areas under study (El Matarya and Helwan in orange).**

## GOVERNMENT POLICY

The Egyptian government's urban policy, which has been in effect since the 1980s (MALR, 1999, 2004), seeks to prevent informal urban development on scarce agricultural land, guide urbanisation towards new towns on desert land, and improve living conditions in poor and underserved urban areas. Even though conservation of agricultural land has long been a priority of Egyptian development policy, much of the critically needed arable land in Cairo is being lost to urban development. Half of this urban development consists of illegal (non-approved) building and the remainder is made up of planned new developments in the desert. Although reports of a housing crisis have emerged in the international news media, it is estimated that Cairo actually may have a surplus of some one million housing units (FAO, 2004).

A case study on urban and periurban agriculture in Cairo was conducted by the Agricultural Economic Research Institute (AERI) and supported by FAO (FAO, 2006). The study revealed that land tenure for UPA activities is insecure in Cairo, whether the land is privately owned, rented or public (in parks and along roads, canals and streams). Urban and periurban agricultural activities in Cairo include the production of food (grains, root crops, vegetables, fruits) and livestock products (poultry, rabbits, goats, sheep, cattle, pigs, fish, honey. etc.) as well as non-food products (ornamental plants, tree products, cut flowers, etc.).

The primary objective of UPA in Cairo is self-consumption, while the producers trade any surplus for additional income. However, the volume and economic value of the market-oriented UPA should not be underestimated. Market-oriented products are usually transported by human- and donkey- or horse-pulled carts (see photo) to be sold at the farm gate, in surrounding neighbourhoods, local shops, local informal markets or to intermediaries (rate tail consumer cooperative chains, co-ops and supermarkets). Products are mainly sold fresh, but some are processed for self-consumption; cooked and sold on the streets; or processed and packaged for sale to one of the outlets mentioned above.

The study identified 24 urban and periurban agricultural producers' organisations in Cairo, only ten of which are co-ops for small-scale producers. These co-ops are formal organisations dedicated to helping small holders improve their productivity and income and the community's livelihood.

This lack of low-income producers' co-ops in Cairo deprives the producers of income and reduces their access to resources, inputs, services and markets. This lack of organisation also prevents the small and unorganised, weak and vulnerable groups in urban areas from realising the full potential of their contribution to food security, income and employment generation. The majority of UPA co-ops in Cairo operate in the margins of society, as they often do not have a legal or legitimate status. Many low-income people's livelihoods depend on UPA-related activities in the food supply chain, such as production or exploitation, small-scale processing, and marketing and preparation (such as hawking, street food vending, and community-based catering). The precarious status of most urban and periurban producers often forces them to use degraded or dangerous sites and resort

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to practices that are unsafe and damaging to their own and others' health, as well as the environment.

The studied UPA co-ops have a legal status, however they are handicapped as a result of government interference. They are not able to address market inefficiencies, reduce transaction costs, protect the holding rights of their members or improve their members' financial position. As UPA co-ops generally do not have tools, facilities, capacities, experience or the means to provide financial support for market access, they can only provide extension services, crop inputs, and credit from their partners (such as the Ministry of Agricultural and Land Reclamation and its departments for co-operatives and extension, and the Principal Bank for Development and Agricultural Credit).

Rapid urbanisation in Cairo has created informal employment opportunities for the urban poor, but it has also created increasing problems for those involved in agriculture who have to find ways to dispose of UPA wastes and wastewater. Most of the irrigation canals in Cairo have been buried, forcing farmers to use groundwater, which is not cost-effective. Moreover, the use of wastewater is allowed only for wood tree production.

The fundamental challenge currently facing urban agricultural co-ops and their members in Cairo (as in many other developing and transitional economies) is to restructure their organisations into more market-oriented operations. This restructuring should also include harmonising the members' role as users of the cooperative's services with their role as capital investors. The following two cases illustrate different outcomes of this restructuring.

Noha Ramadan

**Goats and sheep at a governmental market**

### THE ANIMAL WEALTH CO-OP IN HELWAN

This cooperative was established in 1995 with only 22 members and L.E. 2000 (7.4 Egyptian pound to the euro) in capital to provide animal fodder for its members as well as the public. In just three years, the co-op grew to include 123 members. A new service of producing table eggs for consumption was then added. The co-op now has a capacity to manage one million eggs per cycle (of 14 months), offering proteins at a low price for its members and other local consumers. These activities have increased the co-op's capital to more than L.E 180,000. In the future, the co-op's primary challenge will be to develop the capacity of its members, using participatory and community-based approaches.

**There is a lack of low-income producers' co-ops in Cairo**

### THE LIVESTOCK DEVELOPMENT CO-OP IN MATARYA

Several members of a family established the co-op Ahmed Oraby Agricultural Foundation to increase investment in the development of animal production. The co-op also had to invest in other agricultural products, however, to secure animal feed for its members. However, in 2000 the co-op's board was forced to comply with the new WTO policy, which limited subsidies for agricultural inputs such as fertiliser. The costs involved in attaining their primary objective thus increased beyond their means. As a result, the co-op board voted to change the primary objective to the rezoning and urbanisation of the agricultural land. If the board members had received capacity development support at the time the policy changed, they would have had a greater chance of achieving their original objective.

### LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Co-op boards suffer from opposing policies and fragmented responsibilities to different government agencies. This lack of alignment can only be solved by new legislation in support of UPA producer co-ops at local, district and governorate levels. This legislation will support and facilitate the daily work needed to develop the co-ops.

The value of agricultural production is relatively low compared to the value of other uses of the relatively scarce land, and thus agriculture can hardly compete in zoning plans. The Ministry of Agriculture thus has to restrict the re-zoning of agricultural land for non-agricultural use and/or the development of informal housing in or near agricultural areas.

Historically, water canals within Cairo served as an important source of low-cost irrigation. When the land is used for construction or other purposes, alternative pipelines should be considered to prevent the steep increase in irrigation costs beyond the producers' means. While large producers have the option of moving their agricultural production to desert lands outside the city, this is not possible for poor and low-income producers' families. Poor producers are thus forced out of business and eventually suffer from unemployment, poverty and hunger.
Due to urban growth and development, the areas held by UPA producers' co-ops continue to shrink at an alarming pace. Reversing this trend will likely require UPA co-ops and related actors to adopt a complementary strategy for reducing urban poverty and food insecurity.
A major problem in UPA co-ops is that the producers and their leaders lack the capacity to stimulate innovation and solidarity. Government agencies, decision makers, co-op board members and the producers themselves should be supported and trained in market orientation and management of the co-ops. Incentives offered by the co-ops also need to be restructured to ensure harmony between the members' roles as co-op service consumers and capital investors.


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# Sustaining Low-Income Urban Agricultural Producers' Organisations in Accra, Ghana

**Many small urban agricultural enterprises in Accra are members of informal organisations that invest little capital and yield low income, even though more formal alliances would ensure more effective bargaining and negotiations with urban authorities and other groups. This article describes the results of a study initiated by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in the city of Accra, Ghana. Each individual enterprise in a producers' organisation is a stakeholder but not necessarily a shareholder in the operation. Trust is a key feature in informal alliances.**

Agricultural production in Accra mainly takes place in back and front yards of residential areas, open spaces reserved for future uses, and along riverbanks, drains, water catchments areas, roadsides, railway reserves and hills. The production activities are dominated by men and include irrigated vegetable farming, livestock keeping, ornamental production, cultivation of seasonal food crops (maize and cassava), fishing and non-traditional farming (snail, grass cutter, beekeeping, mushroom production, etc). Food processing and trading (particularly retailing) are dominated by women.

The main motives for establishing an enterprise are additional income and subsistence (especially backyard farmers). For most urban farmers agriculture is a secondary occupation. The farmers learn by doing. Training programmes are occasionally organised by both governmental and non-governmental organisations, such as Heifer International Ghana (which facilitates training of the Ablekuma Grass Cutter Farmers' Association) the Livestock Development Programme and the Women in Food and Agricultural Development of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (which supports training, particularly of women in the processing of yogurt and soy products).

Apart from knowledge, urban agricultural producers and processors need physical resources: land, water, labour and capital items. Land in Accra is very scarce, so many people who want to farm or raise livestock squat on yet-to-be developed open spaces or areas around streams and tension cables where agricultural activity is prohibited. Many processors work from home or use spaces along major roads. Water for agriculture is also scarce in Accra because the city lies in the coastal savanna zone and receives normally no more than 810 mm of rainfall in 80 days (Obuobie et al, 2006).

*... There are no well organised irrigation facilities [provided] by the government and we are unable to finance borehole drilling, pumps and drip irrigation...we use grey water from the stream created behind the Burma Camp in La...There used to be a treatment plant at the Base but I do not know if it is still in use.... (Opare, La Farmers' Association).*

Treated water supplied by the Ghana Water Company and other retailers is expensive, so only food processors and ornamental nursery operators have consistent access to it. The labour market is well developed but agricultural labour is also expensive. Farmers and processors tend to depend on their own labour and that of families and friends, often for in-kind rewards. Capital in the form of tools and equipment, improved seed and agrochemicals is available, but too expensive for most urban farmers. As a result, many farmers produce under unhygienic conditions and their products lack any form of quality assurance.

Subsequently, there are many bye-laws that do not seek to regulate, but only prohibit agricultural activities. For example: *"No person shall keep any swine, cattle, sheep or goat within the area of administration of the AMA and without a permit issued by the AMA for that purpose, which shall be determined in accordance with the fee-fixing resolution"*. The media has also voiced concerns about water and air pollution as well as food contamination. A vicious cycle is thus created.

## THE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS' ORGANISATIONS IN ACCRA

Firms determine the optimum governance structure by considering the type of alliances available with respect to their attributes, viz., provision of tangible assets (physical assets and human resources), intangible assets (shared knowledge or data) or both (Adams et al., 1999).

More than 75 percent of all agricultural producers' organisations in Accra are informal associations. Our survey found that only 5 out of 20 associations consulted could be categorised as formal: the Ablekuma Grasscutter Farmers Association (AGFA), Nungua Zongo Livestock Farmers Association (NZLFA), Marine Drive Vegetable Farmers' Association (MDVFA), Dzorwulu Vegetable Farmers Cooperative Society Ltd. (DVFCS) and Ga-Adangbe Pig Farmers Association (GPFA). These

IWMI Ghana

**Experts visit urban farmers at Marine Drive in Accra.**

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formal associations gained legal recognition by registering with Ghana's Registrar General's Department or the Department of Cooperatives or both. They are production rather than post-production oriented and are dominated (65 percent) by men (FAO, 2006). They have constitutions, meet at least once a month (to collect dues, among other reasons), provide training and monitor the progress of projects (acquisition of credit and other assets). These formal organisations face the following problems:

- Lack of finance for planned activities: "We make good plans but we cannot implement them because there is no money".
- Non-payment of dues by some members because "What we contributed earlier did nothing for us".
- Unclear vision and mission: most members expect credit from the association or its benefactors and when that is not forthcoming they see the leaders as "not doing anything and spending our money on nothing".
- Lack of adequate external support and recognition: the members' interest and enthusiasm wane if they cannot trust the association to facilitate access to external support.

The achievements of the formal associations studied in the survey do not provide enough incentive to members. The associations' achievements in sustaining external support, employing administrative staff, accumulating assets, improving access to goods and services, ensuring better prices and product quality, engaging in promotional activities and forming new organisations in other communities have for the most part been meager[2]. Some have performed better, however, because they received external assistance in the form of training and created linkages to credit facilities. These achievements have kept members interested in the associations.

In contrast to the small number of formal organisations, there are many informal producers' groups in Accra. One reason for this scarcity of formalised associations is lack of funding. Money is needed for an organisation to collect registration fees, maintain a bookkeeping system, pay auditing fees, and organise planned activities. But there is also a lack of trust among producers: *"I cannot trust anybody; many of the people in the trade have migrated here like me and may be in business temporarily"*. Some say there is also a lack of democracy in the governance of the associations: *"Leadership in all trader-based associations in the markets is undemocratic because the leaders call themselves King and Queen and are not subject to change.... Our main challenge is to transform the Association into a democratic organisation in which the existing 'monarchy' will be replaced by elected executives"* (member of the Exotic Vegetable Sellers Association, Agbobloshie).

Many trader-based associations are more socially oriented, however, and concern themselves with issues that are of importance to their members such as funerals, weddings and occasionally health and sanitation.

## STRENGTHENING URBAN FOOD PRODUCERS' ORGANISATIONS IN ACCRA

It is only through trust that the advantages of strategic fuzzy alliances can emerge, such as lower transaction costs, greater flexibility, increased knowledge and less risk.

Poor food producers in Accra prefer to belong to informal organisations mostly because of their lack of trust. They prefer to associate with people they know. They can expect ethical behaviour from these members (and particularly from their leaders) and they can expect to receive personal and tangible gains through these alliances (albeit fuzzy). The following steps are thus needed to make urban food producers' organisations more sustainable:

-Formation of a network of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in urban food and urban food production. A first step in this direction has been taken by RUAF[3] under the auspices of the Accra Working Group in UPA (AWGUPA). This network should be strengthened.
- These stakeholders should assist in dissemination of technical information and descriptions of best practices in agricultural production, emphasising public health and safety. The focus should be on local practices, which are practical and easily understood by the food producers. Action research and face-to-face fora are needed to educate the general public.
- Public health campaigns must call for group action and for the organisation of producers and others. Links between social and environmental gains should be emphasised, for example: "Let's join hands, save the environment, and save our livelihoods". This calls for a formal network of urban producers' organisations. External support is needed, such as in helping producers' organisations design programmes that result in regular communication, joint meetings and activities that aid people in building trust and setting aside unwarranted fears.
- Action that improves access to physical, financial and human resources for production is paramount and needs to be facilitated and implemented by developing an adequate policy environment (that is also supported by non-producer stakeholders).
Strategic alliances and cooperation improve an individual's social assets and should eventually lead to better competition and opportunism. Micro-entrepreneurs in urban food production in Accra contribute to the urban food supply and employment. They need support to improve their management skills. Linking them with other producers in networks will only be successful if their suspicions and unwarranted fears are removed through interaction and the sharing of common experiences. The first step towards maintaining strong low-income producers' organisations is thus building trust: producers have to trust each other, their leaders, governmental and non-governmental organisations. The latter organisations should assist in developing programmes that build knowledge about safeguarding public health and that improve access to physical, financial, human and other resources.

**NOTES**

1) The author is a lecturer at the Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra, and a member of the Accra Working Group on Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture.
2) Respondents included both executives and members of associations who participated in focus group discussions.
3) Regional Resource Centre on Urban Agriculture and Food Security for Anglophone West Africa, operated by the International Water Management Institute, Accra.

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# Organising Urban Farmers' Groups in the City of Nairobi and Environs

**Various types of informal groups can be found in urban and rural areas in Kenya. One would expect farmers, livestock keepers and producers' groups to be located only in the rural areas, but they actually also exist in the cities and their environs, where they are engaged in urban and periurban agriculture.**

A. Njenga

**Farmers and livestock keepers from the Farmers' Network and members of NEFSALF Secretariat.**

**Some groups in Nairobi**
- Kabete Women Farmers' Group in Lower Kabete is interested in obtaining information on farming practices and marketing.
- Crop farmers in Soweto Kahawa West grow kale, spinach, onion, arrowroots and carrots, and their main interest is in obtaining information on increasing yields.
- Mathare Youth Foundation in Mathare grows crops such as spinach and other vegetables and rears cows, goats and pigs.
- Mathare Mbolea in the Mathare area is made up of compost makers and their interest is in marketing compost.
- Mwirimiri Mugunda Self-Help Group in Wangige area keeps livestock and would like to obtain more information on marketing.

The groups listed in the box above are mobilised in a multi-stakeholder forum – Nairobi and Environs Food Security, Agriculture and Livestock Forum (NEFSALF) –which has been operated by the Mazingira Institute[1] since 2003.

## NEFSALF

NEFSALF is a mix of actors from the community, government and market sectors. It promotes cooperation around the city and environs in matters related to food security, agriculture and livestock keeping. The Forum envisions creating a better way of enhancing food security and sustainability for the greater population rather than just a few in Nairobi and its environs through urban crop production and livestock keeping.

The goals of the Forum are to facilitate sectoral interactions; to acquire and target relevant knowledge; and to monitor process and evaluate outcomes. One of the key objectives of NEFSALF is to facilitate organisation at community level through group and network building. Other objectives are to:
- enable farmers and livestock keepers to exchange information through periodic meetings of NEFSALF and through the NEFSALF Bulletin (www.mazinst.org);
- facilitate access by communities to appropriate provincial and municipal services;
- provide knowledge on current research being undertaken by the Institute's collaborators;
- produce policy-relevant information and knowledge in collaboration with all stakeholders;
- facilitate interaction between the community and the market sectors; and
- track the process and activities.

## NEFSALF FARMERS' NETWORK

The Farmers' Network was set up in January 2004 by Mazingira Institute. It consists of individuals and groups practicing agriculture, livestock keeping and composting in the city and environs of Nairobi. A Steering Committee of eight members of mixed gender from different locations in Nairobi and environs was elected in January 2004 by farmers present during the first NEFSALF meeting. Currently there are 32 groups, with membership ranging from 5 to 1000 members (an average of 10 members per group) and 141 individuals from Nairobi and environs.

The members of the Network get together during the periodic meetings of NEFSALF, the annual International Trade Fair held by the Ministry of Agriculture and other events such as the World Food Day and the launch of the Nairobi Agriculture Livestock Extension Programme (NALEP).

NEFSALF provides the farmers and livestock keepers with an opportunity to interact with all stakeholders present during Forum meetings, which are usually held three times in a year. The participants are kept abreast of the latest happenings and information on urban agriculture, including progress on research being undertaken on zoonoses and brucellosis. The discussions and debates are lively, with the concerns of the farmers, the livestock keepers, the market sector and researchers being aired and discussed openly in order to enable and regulate urban agriculture and livestock keeping in Nairobi and environs.

## SUPPORT PROVIDED

*Training courses*

The Institute organises training courses on urban agriculture and livestock keeping in collaboration with the Nairobi Provincial Livestock Production

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A. Njenga

NEFSALF meeting in October 2005

Office of the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries Development, Urban Harvest and Kenya Green Towns Partnership Association. Pre-training site visits are made to assess the type of training required by the farmers. So far, about 120 farmers, livestock keepers and compost makers have been trained on a variety of pertinent urban agriculture topics. Post-training site visits have indicated that 80% of the trainees have adopted skills gained from the training courses.

In the words of Sylvia Oluoch, a member of a women's periurban group, "Through the Forum we have learnt not to fight with our neighbours but to teach them what we know". Another farmer, Julius Mirara, a dairy goat keeper in the Nairobi environs commented, "Before the course, we were in the dark. By taking the course we have learnt what profit is and how to keep records".

*Research on zoonotic diseases*
The Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Nairobi, in collaboration with NEFSALF, has conducted research on the risks associated with livestock keeping in slums in Nairobi. Currently a study is being undertaken on the prevalence of human brucellosis. The study on zoonoses revealed the possible existence of brucellosis among the livestock keepers.

*Nairobi International Trade Fair*
The Nairobi International Trade Fair is an annual event hosted by the Kenyan government. NEFSALF has taken part in the Fair for the past two years as a collaborator with the Nairobi Provincial Extension Service Office of the Ministry of Livestock Fisheries Development. Members of the NEFSALF Farmers Network represent the Forum. Their role is to explain the functioning and activities of NEFSALF and to register new members. The farmers say that they learn a lot through the exchange of information and by seeing new developments at the Fair.

*Networking with other organisations in Kenya*
Two other cities in Kenya, Nakuru and Kisumu, have replicated the NEFSALF approach. The Mazingira Institute participated in several meetings held in Nakuru and Kisumu. The Nakuru initiative "Local Participatory Research and Development on Urban Agriculture and Livestock Keeping", was undertaken by Urban Harvest, Kenya Green Towns Partnership Association, the Municipal Council of Nakuru and the Department of Soil Science, University of Nairobi. Several multi-stakeholder forums have already been held in the two towns.

*NALEP*
NEFSALF has been actively involved in the National Agriculture and Livestock Extension Programme (NALEP) of the Ministry of Agriculture, which is in its second phase. Its mission is "to provide and facilitate pluralistic and efficient extension services for increased production, food security, higher incomes and improved environment". The long-term objective is overall empowerment of farmers, sustainability of service delivery and a bigger role for the private sector. The implementation process follows a bottom-up approach.

Realisation of NALEP Phase II objectives are dependent on effective partnerships with other government ministries, the private sector, and other collaborators. When NALEP began its second phase (2006-2010), the Ministry of Agriculture realised that in order to fulfil its objective of pursuing a pluralistic approach, it was important that NEFSALF be involved, as it had already set up a Farmers' Network, had a strong relationship with other stakeholders and had built up networks in other cities in Kenya besides Nairobi. The Ministry formed a Provincial Stakeholders Forum, and an interim Steering Committee was elected with Zarina Ishani of Mazingira Institute as its vice-chairperson.

## TOWARDS A POLICY FOR URBAN AND PERIURBAN AGRICULTURE IN NAIROBI

In the next phase, beginning January 2007, NEFSALF intends to collaborate with relevant institutions involved in the formulation of policies for urban agriculture and livestock keeping. The policies and bye-laws currently in practice are outdated and disjointed. The process began in July 2004, when a stakeholders' meeting on "Urban and periurban agriculture policy prospects in Kenya" was held at the Kenya Agriculture Research Institute, which was attended by some NEFSALF members. At the meeting, it was resolved that the Ministry of Agriculture would be the most apt institution to carry forward the process of developing a policy for urban and periurban agriculture.

In March 2006, the Nairobi Provincial Agriculture Board hosted a two-day "Stakeholders' workshop on urban and periurban agriculture". The meeting adopted a road map for the development, regulation and enabling of a legal framework for urban and periurban agriculture. It concluded that the PAB would appoint a Steering Committee on urban and periurban agriculture to spearhead the roadmap. A technical committee would be formed to guide and implement the recommendations. NEFSALF members are keen to push the matter forward and are working on the modalities for doing so.

Mazingira Institute has been campaigning for just reform and against land grabbing and corruption since 1996 in its "Operation Firimbi" (Blow the Whistle) Campaign. The campaign has a national support base, with over 165 local chapters in Kenya. The Institute also advocates for women's equal right to land and property, particularly at the regional and international levels.

**NOTES**
1) Mazingira is a Kenyan NGO that has pioneered research, advocacy, and organising on urban and periurban agriculture for the past two decades. For further information contact: mazinst@mitsuminet.com

# Alliances Between Farmers and Other Actors in Dakar

**Urban farmers produce crops within and around cities (Mougeot, 2000). They do not form a separate group from the urban population, nor do they live self-sufficiently. They maintain diverse relations with other actors in the city. Some of these relations go beyond the sale of agricultural or non-agricultural produce and become strategies and alliances among socio-economic and political actors.**


Awa Ba

UPROVAN Farmers in Pikine


Awa Ba

Small vegetable plots in Pikine

The city of Dakar with its surrounding rural area belongs to the department of Rufisque and is the smallest region of Senegal. It covers only 550 km², or 0.3 % of the national territory, but has a population of 2.4 million inhabitants, or 24% of the national population (DPS, 2002). The population growth rate in the city is 4% per year, far higher than the national rate of 2.9%. Population density reaches about 10,500 inhabitants/km² in the district of Pikine and the commune of Dakar (ISRA, 1997). The growing population necessitates greater innovation in livelihoods and an increase of food supplies.

The city is supplied by production in the outlying rural areas, but despite its relatively easy access by road and rail, local production on agricultural areas within the city's boundaries, mainly the *Niayes* area, is also quite important[1]. Alliances between farmers and other actors in the agricultural areas of Dakar, and the influence of policy-makers will be discussed below.

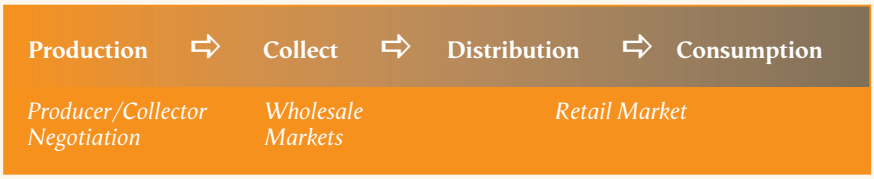
## THE STUDY

This article reports on the results of a study conducted by the author in 2005 and 2006 on six categories of actors in agriculture in Dakar. A group of 180 farmers were interviewed in 2005, and 98 of them were re-visited in 2006. In addition 60 consumers, 30 vendors, 13 elected officials at local level (mayors of Pikine Nord and Ouakam) and regional level, 8 extension officers and 6 planners were interviewed. The group of producers was composed of 34 market vegetable gardeners, 36 fruit growers, 30 flower growers, 31 micro-gardeners (mainly subsistence), 1 rice producer, 38 various breeders and 10 fishers.

## ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

The general organisation of the provision of supplies to the cities can be analysed in terms of sectors, within which actors provide the necessary functions in the chain. These elementary functions (see figure), are organised around three moments of price negotiations:

- in and around farms between producers and collectors;
- at wholesale markets when goods brought by collectors are purchased by distributors;
- at retail markets when consumers buy the commodities.




Economic functions of the agricultural produce marketing sector

In a normal situation, i.e. the negotiation of prices in the market, the economic position of an actor influences his capacity to determine the price. Production and consumption are normally separated, and actors in the wholesale market (collectors and distributors) dominate the transactions. However, other organisational forms are emerging, which will be illustrated for Dakar. New forms of negotiation get close to the concept of equitable trade, in which the economic weakness of a partner does not necessarily place him in a position of being dominated.

## DIVERSIFICATION OF JOBS AND PROFESSIONS

### *Specialisation*

The proximity of the urban market offers urban producers the opportunity to specialise and diversify their production. For instance, a former tenant farmer of the Great Niaye of Pikine has chosen to transport goods. To carry out his new profession, he has opted to remain in contact with his former colleagues. He now plays an important role in the organisation of the marketing of agricultural produce and bulky inputs such as urban livestock manure. In fact, he helps other producers relay supplies to and from the city. He transports, on demand, their crops to the urban markets and conveys the agricultural inputs to the farming fields. This is an individual enterprise at the service of community producers, traders and consumers in the vicinity. By facilitating producers' access to the urban market, this informal entrepreneur participates in maintaining their close linkage, which forms the basis of an alliance.

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*Downstream integration*
Commonly known as Bana-bana in Senegal, stockists are often specialised in the retail sale of non-agricultural produce. Thus, producers can order and receive supplies of products at their workplace, mainly agricultural inputs such as fertilisers. In the Great Niaye of Pikine, this role is often played by women. One of these women has become a market gardener while pursuing her primary commercial activity. She has rented a plot of land and hired a farmer (Sourgueu) to cultivate it.

Although individual, these strategies help strengthen the capacities of producers and their organisations, saving time that can be devoted to production. These exchanges are beneficial to the community.

## BUILDING LINKAGES

*Producer to the consumer: collective action in Pikine Nord*
In Pikine Nord, a district adjoining the Great Niaye of Pikine, a Consultation Platform (Espace de Concertation –ECO) has been set up to take action in several domains such as economic development, culture, sanitation, etc. Created in 2002 and officially recognised in February 2003, the ECO federates about 50 structures such as sports and cultural associations, grassroots community associations, women's support groups, and economic interest groups. Some of the latter have been set up by farmers operating in the Niaye. The ECO has put in place a retail stand, a sort of mini-market, to facilitate the purchase and sale of agricultural produce, but also to offer farmers in the area a marketing outlet for their products. The store for consumers located in town is important as it bypasses the long wholesale market chain and supports the local producers. This organisation thus helps strengthen producers' capacities.

*Self-consumption first: micro-garden collectives*
This type of market gardening consists of the production of all sorts of vegetables in containers. These containers can be filled with solid substrate such as groundnut husk or rice bale (used alone or mixed together), laterite or water. Both solid and liquid substrates receive micro and macro elements to boost the plants' growth. The only natural condition required for a productive micro-garden is at least six hours of sunshine per day.

Since its introduction, this technique has rapidly developed thanks to the multi-actor strategy involved. In fact, from 50 in 1999, the number of families that have adopted the technique skyrocketed to 1,440 in 2002 (Department of Horticulture, 2002). These producers contribute to their own food supply and, through local or market sales , to that of their neighbours and other city dwellers. This success can be attributed to the fact that the promoters first targeted the economic interest groups, which are often comprised of women. For example, in a sample of 31 micro-gardeners, 16 belong to an economic interest group. Some of these women had been trained already by agents of the Departmental Services for Rural Development (DSRD), first on the production process itself and later on the management of inputs (to bring them closer to users). In turn, these women have become trainers of other members and relay goods for their families, particularly their children.

## INSTITUTIONAL ALLIANCES AND FORMS OF SUPPORT

*Funding of market gardening campaigns*
Contracts for pre-funding have been developed in the district of Rufisque, where farming fields may be up to 20 ha in size and are generally wider than in the three other districts in the Dakar region[2]. This mechanism gives the market gardener the necessary funds for his production. For example, a big trader operating in the market of Thiaroye, the vegetable market of Dakar, advances money to a market gardener in the area of Conduite de Gaz on the condition that the latter guarantees him priority for the purchase of his production. This advance is not attributed at random. It is based on trust, but also the quality and quantity of the expected production. If the funds advanced by the trader happen to be higher than the value of the harvest, the market gardener reimburses the balance; otherwise the trader pays the deficit (see also Moustier et al., 2001). In some of these contracts, the land owner advances the funds necessary for the purchase of inputs and agricultural equipment, and even provides part of the tenant farmer's meals. In this case, after the sale of harvested products, the owner first retrieves his funds before the profits are shared. This mode of pre-funding entails a risk of domination and dependency.

Another form of pre-funding is based on solidarity among actors. This system is more equal and applied more often by small urban producers, such as through the Network of Savings and Credit Banks (RECEC)[3]. This network was created with the support of Enda-Graf Sahel[4] and facilitates "access to credit from the mobilisation of popular savings through solidarity". It enables the poor to finance activities of urban agricultural production (market gardening, fruit arboriculture), the breeding of small ruminants and poultry (free-range chicken) and the marketing of products. In 2001, some 5,671 credits were allotted. These credits reached 588 million CFA francs, 98% of which was granted to physical persons, while the other 2% went to grassroots organisations. Women account for 83% of the credit beneficiaries, and men 15%.

**In many districts of Dakar town councils promote micro gardening**

The credits are allotted on a short-term basis and essentially enable the beneficiaries to cover their farm's working capital (purchase of agricultural inputs, remunerations, etc.). The investment funding (acquisition of equipment) is exceptional: 20 % of the credits are deposited as guarantee savings. This solution is therefore a form of alliance that is more equitable than the first one.

## INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

In many districts of Dakar, such as those of Pikine Nord, Ouakam or Patte D'Oie, town councils promote micro-gardening. The support materialises through the provision of locations for the micro-gardens. The town council of Rufisque devoted 12 million CFA francs in 2005 to the development of micro-gardens.

As part of the Master Plan for the Development and Protection of the Niayes and Green Areas of Dakar (PDAS) and the Programme of Actions for the Protection and Urban Development of the Niayes (PASDUNE), all the local stakeholders were involved in consultations aimed at defining plans for the development of six sites, and subsequent

*Continued on page 29* ▶

# Bamako Farmers' Organisations: New alliances to protect their land rights

**Lack of security of tenure and access to urban farmland undermines the poor's capacity to practice and sustain urban agriculture. Empirical evidence from urban and periurban farmers' groups in Bamako, Mali, suggests that as urbanisation intensifies in urban cores, land scarcity and competition trigger farmers' political involvement and organisation in order to protect their livelihood and land rights.**

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Andrés Vélez-Guerra

**Dyen Te Don Farmer Group**

Poor urban farmers, organised in associations or cooperatives, are effective in obtaining formal and informal access to land (both under customary and statutory regimes) for urban agriculture. This study is based on 18 structured interviews with leaders and producers from three different farmers' organisations in Bamako. Two of the three farmers' groups studied are located inside Bamako's official boundaries, while a third group is located in what can be considered periurban land (Velez-Guerra, 2004). Further, expert interviews with customary land chiefs (3), municipal planners (4) and local politicians (2) gave insights into the policy and political environments. The following is a description of these farmers' groups and how they access land for UA and create new alliances to protect their land rights.

## YIRIWATON COOPERATIVE

Yiriwaton is a formal, well-organised, highly effective and politically active cooperative of farmers located in downtown Bamako. The group was created in 1970 with the objective of collectively saving money and redistributing it among its members. Yiriwaton was formally registered as a cooperative with the Ministry of Municipalities of Mali (MMM) in 2001. Its mandate is to promote urban agriculture, regulate agricultural activities and support farmers. Membership is open to women, men and rural-to-urban migrants, who pay registration and monthly fees. The cooperative provides its 160 members (40 women and 120 men) with access to credits for seeds and farming tools and a savings programme. It also lends them money in the event of illness or calamity.

The cooperative's most common crops include lettuce, carrots, potatoes and cabbage, which are sold at the market for income rather than used for food security (there is no livestock production). Yiriwaton members cultivate mainly on privately owned vacant lots, which they access exclusively based on informal renting agreements with landowners. Previous research in urban Bamako indicated that renting a parcel on private lands by paying fees is the second most important way of accessing farmland (Meite and Konate, 2003).

Perceptions of land tenure security among Yiriwaton members are extremely low and evictions are common. Tenure insecurity is the result of landowners building structures or selling cultivated land at any time without prior notice to farmers. A paradox lies in the formality of this cooperative and the informality of access to, and tenure of, land among its members.

The cooperative is very active in defending the land rights of its members and lobbying government offices to obtain and secure access to land. For instance, Yiriwaton takes cases of land eviction without compensation to court in order to recover the farmers' production and investment costs. It also lobbies the local government to gain access to public lands for urban agriculture and maintains close relationships with the local bureau of agriculture and local NGOs in order to benefit from potential partnerships. The cooperative does not have land of its own, nor does it have agreements with landowners in representation of its members. However, the leaders of the cooperative help producers find suitable vacant land that can be informally rented.

**Insecure land tenure is an important element for starting farmer organisations**

## DYEN TE DON ASSOCIATION

Dyen Te Don is a well-organised, fairly effective and politically active association of farmers located in suburban Bamako. It was established in 1971 with the objective of helping producers solve their land problems, assisting in the commercialisation of products and mediating conflicts. The group was formally registered as an association with the MMM in 2001 and has 114 members (64 women and 50 men). While most members of Dyen Te Don are rural-to-urban migrants, membership is open to any man or woman (who pays

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**Yiriwaton farming plots in Bamako**

monthly fees). The association provides its members with credit for seeds.

Dyen Te Don agricultural production provides members with income and food security. Most farmers cultivate beans, lettuce, onions, potatoes and beets. Millet and corn are also common during the rainy season, despite a prohibition by the municipal planning office to cultivate these crops inside the city.

The lands used by Dyen Te Don are public (margins of the Niger River), privately owned or customary. Their main means of accessing land is to borrow customary lands from the heads of traditional families or from the chief of the neighbourhood (formerly land chief). Other means of accessing land include inheriting customary lands, informally borrowing private lands, and "squatting"; Dyen Te Don's farmers rarely rent the land they use.

The members of this cooperative have higher perceptions of land tenure security than the members of Yiriwaton. Evictions are less common since they farm mostly customary and public lands with permission from customary authorities. This greatly increases the perception of security and entitlement.

Dyen Te Don is effective in protecting its members' land rights and has taken unsettled land conflicts to court in order to obtain compensation and land rights protection. However, it devotes less time than Yiriwaton to lobbying politicians and government staff.

Dyen Te Don facilitates its members' access to land. The leaders of the association indicate any vacant land availability to landless members and provide them with connections to customary landowners, the chief of the neighbourhood and other members with land. The association also searches for land with customary owners outside the city.

## BENKADI FARMERS' GROUP

Benkadi is an informal and less-effective farmers' group located in periurban Bamako. Its 65 members (12 women and 53 men) are part of the small farming village of Bananbani (15km from downtown Bamako) and are related to each other by kinship. Membership to the group is open to women and men from the community only. There are no migrants in the group and members do not pay fees. Benkadi's agricultural production provides members with income generation and food security, and their main crops include corn, millet, potatoes, tomatoes, onions and beets.

Benkadi has difficulties working as a group, since it is a young organisation, formed only in 2002. The group is neither politically active nor does it have connections in municipal offices or the regional bureau of agriculture. The members have not registered their group with any governmental institution nor are there any internal regulations or codes.

The mandate of the group is to promote agriculture and obtain access to credits and organisational training. The group's principal constraint in developing organisational skills is illiteracy. Presently, it does not provide its members with any services nor has it implemented any special initiatives. While the main concerns of the urban farmers' groups are land tenure insecurity and access to credits, Benkadi's main concerns are access to water and education, and developing organisational skills to reinforce the group.

The principal means of accessing land among Benkadi's producers is customary land allocation. Lands are either the property of the chief of the village or traditional families. Borrowing land from other members of the group (customary landowners) and the land chief was the second most common means of access.

Land transactions between farmers are made orally and security of tenure is high. Benkadi's producers expressed that land availability and access is not a concern for members of the group, which may be due to three factors. First, urbanisation has not reached the area. Second, members of the group have secure access to land through customary allocation based on kinship, and the village currently has more land than farmers can use for agriculture. Finally, there are no land transactions with people who do not belong to the community.

Nevertheless, previous research on land tenure issues in periurban Bamako has clearly indicated the land risk that periurban farming communities face as urbanisation reaches their land holdings. Further, the conversion of customary lands into statutory land regimes disproportionately benefits the urban rich and transforms the members of poorer periurban communities into wage-dependent labourers (Groupe Recherche/ Actions Pour le Développement, 2001).

## CONCLUSIONS

The means for accessing land depends on the type of land tenure regime in place and the level of urbanisation (see table). In Bamako, access to private lands is mainly through informal renting agreements. Unused public lands (i.e. margins of rivers) remain customary in people's minds and customary landowners regulate their access and tenure. Squatting is common on customary lands since customary families/chiefs do not use unproductive or distant lands. This is also the case for public vacant land since the government turns a blind eye to its use until the land is needed for housing or building infrastructure.

The differences between farmers' tenure arrangements and their related degree of organisation suggests that insecure land

tenure is an important element in instigating initiatives to form farmers' organisations and increase political involvement as a means to protect land rights in the face of competing land uses, land scarcity (urbanisation) and evictions. Security of tenure is not a prerequisite for the creation of farmers' organisations, yet it is central in providing informal and formal access to land for their members, particularly rural-to-urban migrants. Paradoxically, formal urban farmers' organisations can have informal tenure arrangements. It has also been observed that farmers' level of organisation and political involvement decreases as one moves from intra-urban private lands towards customary peripheral lands; while land security, on the other hand, increases from private lands towards customary peripheral lands.

There are also socio-economic differences amongst the studied farmers' groups depending on their spatial location. For instance, intra-urban farmers are older, more established in the business and in better economic form than farmers in the peripheries. Suburban farmers experience a constant influx of rural-to-urban migrants. who start practicing urban agriculture and reinterpret rural customary practices in an urban context. Periurban farmers generally have lower levels of literacy and are related to each other by kinship. These factors, in addition to the land constraints discussed above, may be important determinants of the organisational capacity and development of farmers' organisations.

| Group/Location | Land Regime | Main Means of Access |
|---|---|---|
| Yiriwaton (Downtown) | Statutory | Only renting |
| Dyen Te Don (Suburban) | Statutory/ Customary | Mostly borrowing, squatting, inheriting, buying, occasionally renting |
| Benkadi (Periurban) | Customary | Mostly owning, some borrowing |

**Table: Farmers' organisations' means to access land**


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▶ *From page 26*


activities were undertaken at three sites, while the other sites were involved in city level activities. Two of the objectives of this process were to promote collective reflection on the historic, environmental, economic and social aspects of the sites and establish an alliance for the protection and sustainable development of the *Niayes*.[5)]

## CONCLUSION

Whatever the angle or viewpoint, the main purpose of any linkage among farmers, whether informal or institutionalised, is to ensure agricultural production provides sufficient supplies to urban populations. Thus, the restyling of the sector and the development of producer/consumer linkages is ongoing in urban agriculture in Dakar. Despite the development of a large gap between production and consumption in the past, the presented examples show alliances that maintain or restore social linkages, thereby strengthening local solidarity and enabling these actors to counter the adverse effects of market relations.

**NOTES**

1) A *Niaye* is an inter-dune depression where the underground water is not deep.
2) The Dakar region has four districts: Dakar, Pikine, Guédiawaye and Rufisque.
3) Of the total of 21,750 members and users, there are 1,087 basic organisations. The others are individuals (80 percent women and 15 percent men).
4) Environnement Développement Afrique-Groupe de Recherche-Action-Formation, ONG.
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# The Siyazama Community Allotment Garden Association, Cape Town, South Africa

**Urban agriculture has been practiced in Cape Town for a long time and involves many different types of activities. There is currently an increasingly organised community-based organic farming and gardening movement in the city. This movement is led by associations such as the Vukuzenzela Urban Farmers Association (VUFA). Abalimi Bezekhaya (Planters of the Home), which supports VUFA, is the leading urban agriculture organisation in Cape Town.**

Rob Small

SCAGA Garden how it has changed

*Part of this article has been published as a case, by the same author and under the same title in Cities Farming for the Future: Urban agriculture for green and productive cities, 2006.*

Rob Small

SCAGA Garden: how it was before

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Abalimi Bezekhaya provides support services such as the supply of low-cost bulk compost, seed, seedlings, training and on-site project extension. Abalimi's two non-profit People's Garden Centres annually supply agriculture and horticulture inputs to, on average, 2,000-3,000 home-based survival and subsistence gardeners and approximately 200 community agriculture and greening projects. Abalimi projects are encouraged to be 100 percent organic. The economic potential for community agriculture is significant, as there is a high and ever-growing demand for organic vegetables in Cape Town. Organic markets and retailers both large and small are always under-supplied.

## VUFA

The VUFA began in 2002 as an idea when - with Abalimi Bezekhaya's assistance - 70-100 community-based urban agriculture associations began meeting to discuss common issues. Since then, a draft constitution has been accepted - see objectives listed below. At present, the VUFA comprises about 72 community-based UA associations and is organised as two main branches in the two main black township areas - VUFA Khayelitsha area and VUFA Nyanga-Gugulethu-Phillipi area.

The VUFA's objectives and activities are related to lobbying and advocacy, marketing and training on micro-enterprise development and social development. Vukuzenzela Urban Farmers Association (VUFA) is currently networking with other emerging small farmers groups provincially. Abalimi assists VUFA in enhancing its national and regional links. It is hoped that, over time, the emerging national and regional organic small and micro-farmers associations will federate to increase their leverage on behalf of the poor.

Internal and external politics and capacity issues always play a major role in organisational effectiveness among community-based social movements. The VUFA is no exception. Already in its short history, the organisation has suffered a few leadership crises, been almost destroyed by external government and political agendas which influence membership loyalty and focus, and is currently re-organising. Abalimi Bezekhaya is introducing the services of an excellent partner organisation –Community Connections- which focuses entirely on organisation building and development among community-based organisations. Although Abalimi Bezekhaya is able to rally and mobilise the

VUFA through various interventions (like horizontal learning exchanges between the VUFA members and with other farmer groups), providing structured OB/OD services is not its core business. Abalimi is thus building a partnership with Community Connections to enable the VUFA membership to build organisational capacity over time, using the inevitable crises as learning opportunities rather than experiencing them as entirely negative and unwanted events.

**SCAGA**

The Siyazama Community Allotment Garden Association (SCAGA) is a member of VUFA. Since 1997 its members have farmed 5,000 m2 in a corridor previously under power lines (low-intensity feeder lines that were later decommissioned) in Macassar, Khayelithsa. SCAGA could provide 3-4 permanent, full-time formal jobs, but decided instead to become a Livelihood Level garden, with up to 30 subsistence "jobs", on a mixture of individual and communal plots. These form the centre around which a number of other entrepreneurial and service initiatives have been or are being developed. In SCAGA's case, a small seedling nursery, a craft group, and a tea and catering service have been developed, and plans are underway for a soup kitchen and child care facilities. Adjacent land within the same corridor – some 3 hectares of sandy wasteland – has now been fenced and is being developed to accommodate another 200-300 gardeners.

**There have been positive impacts on the position and role of women as leaders**

Each SCAGA member receives a minimum cash and food income, after costs, of R50-R100 per month (USD 7-14) - a lifeline to households with no discernable income. In 2005, the project hosted its fifth group of 30 people, successfully marketing high-quality organic produce. Group savings at year end, after costs and own consumption, have varied between R2,000 and R 20,000.

This community-oriented project of SCAGA has had far-reaching impacts, both within the local community and on policy development in Cape Town. It has sparked hundreds of applications from new groups and has given planners solid proof to argue for community-managed open spaces and for self-help job creation. SCAGA is repeatedly visited by VIPs, including local government ministers and senior officials. The Western Cape Department of Agriculture (in contrast to its national counterpart) has recently begun to give some solid support to community organic agriculture projects, mainly in the form of improved infrastructure.

The most (potentially) helpful government-support programme of all was launched three years ago by the City of Cape Town - Dept of Economic and Human Development. Stanley Visser of the City of Cape Town reported on this in issue no. 16 of the UA-Magazine (Stanley Visser *et al.* 2006). This is the process by which an Urban Agriculture Policy for the City of Cape Town, plus linked support programmes, was launched and tested. The policy is now in the final stages of ratification and will provide for long-term and rational support to UA practitioners, especially among the poor.

Impacts on the local environment have also been quite substantial. Soil fertility inputs have decreased, while pests, once a large problem, are hardly mentioned now. Improved health is also becoming evident, as are the medicinal use of fresh organic food to strengthen the immune system and the awareness of the therapeutic value of organic growing. New members often show signs of malnourishment, have low energy and little money. After one season, remarks about their generally improved health are often heard.

There have also been positive impacts on the position and role of women as leaders, through, for example, Ilima - traditional mutual-help work events. These have now become a practical tool in increasing women's empowerment and mobilisation, facilitating community support and muscle power for SCAGA projects. It began with SCAGA women recruiting unemployed men to do heavy work by re-introducing a traditional rural practice of serving traditional beer and food after the work is done. These events cost very little, but more importantly the women earn wide respect and support in the community through the work they do. SCAGA is now firmly women-led, and women-run projects in VUFA are now the norm. On occasion, husbands and sons come to help female members with heavy work in the gardens, thus alleviating the women's additional responsibility of managing households. But friction arises whenever the men insist that all the food produced has to be sold. Such problems are now being minimised as female leadership is more generally accepted. It has recently been decided that men, while needed for the heavy work, should run their own gardens separately!

But women are not perfect either. Organisational dynamics are the single biggest obstacle to community-level development and are the main cause of most lapsed projects. Problems with land, water, inputs, capital and skills are all relatively easily solved in comparison. In the world of poverty alleviation and work and income creation among the poor, people cannot operate in isolation; they have to co-operate and problems always arise. After nearly falling apart many times due to personality and leadership dynamics, the SCAGA group has chosen to work only in plenary decision-making format. In other words, all decisions are taken by everyone together. No single person is mandated or permitted to take executive powers on any important issue. This approach was recommended to them by Abalimi. Independent field research has confirmed that it is more viable than attempting to build corporate structures prematurely. As a result of this way of working, SCAGA is running smoother, with fewer disagreements. However, decisions can take a long time and SCAGA, like any other group, has to evolve in order to deal with the increasingly demanding economic and legal necessities related to every aspect of running an organisation. For instance, SCAGA has applied for non-profit registration from the National Dept. of Social Services- maintaining this registration is, on its own, a sophisticated task and requires production of financial reports. Thus the pressure is always on to develop a more sophisticated organisational structure. But there are no ready-made models for grassroots cooperative organisations among the poor and SCAGA- like most of the emerging movements Abalimi services- has to evolve its own structure step by step. As already mentioned, however, Abalimi is bringing in a new partner (Community Connections) to assist with this process.

Furthermore, once commercial factors are considered, money management becomes a litmus test for organisational health. Dividing profits equitably can be problematic, as can mixing up different types of money. In SCAGA's case, all members work equally on the communal commercial section (50% of the garden) and thus share the profits from this section equally. They do as they please with the profits from their own plots. They have also separated their personal group savings bank account from their project bank account. Profits from sales of vegetables grown on their communal commercial section go into the project account, and money earned from sales of vegetables from the members' individual plots goes into their personal savings accounts. This solution sounds simple, but it is a good example of the kind of elementary management decisions that have taken much time for SCAGA (and other groups) to arrive at.

**The development continuum is a clear step-by-step pathway for the creation of sustainable community gardens among the poor**

## THE DEVELOPMENT CONTINUUM

Based on Abalimi's experience with organisations like SCAGA, a step-by-step development continuum and sustainability index for community-based agriculture has been developed. It is currently being field-tested and is almost ready for distribution. The development continuum and sustainability index evolved from actual field experience over the last 12 years. Before 1994 (when South Africa's first fully democratic elections took place) it was not possible to work developmentally among the poor, who were mostly black and involved in a vicious political struggle. The notion of a development continuum is not new, however, a clear step-by-step pathway for the creation of sustainable community gardens and micro-farming projects among the poor definitely is.

The development continuum and sustainability index was created to support urban agriculture development projects. At the moment, energy is being wasted by donor agencies attempting to enable survival-level farmers produce at a commercial level too quickly, while the beneficiaries themselves are confused about which level they would like to achieve, or even about whether they want to be farmers at all!

This continuum and measurement system (sustainability index) tracks the development of community agriculture projects through four levels: from survival, through subsistence, into livelihood and then to commercial. These levels have been identified from field experience, and sustainability measurements have been defined for each level. The continuum takes into account social dynamics such as group conflicts and the "flow-through" of members, enabling these to be seen as positive events rather than limiting factors. It is now known that new groups need about seven years to establish a relatively stable organisation for community agriculture, while sustainable-level skills and knowledge take approximately three years to acquire within each level. The physical infrastructure for community agriculture, in contrast, can be created within one year – with the exception of fertile soil. The development continuum takes the limiting factors into account and allows for a constructive and empowering "flow-through" of participants who have other aspirations and use farming or gardening only as a temporary stepping stone.

Based on this continuum, Abalimi (in partnership with the South African Institute of Entrepreneurs - SAIE) is developing a special training programme to provide community farmers and gardeners with sustainable assistance, while allowing for the "flow-through" of temporary farmers. The training enables both illiterate and literate people farming at survival level to progress to the level that suits them, or to eventually achieve the commercial level. The training model also takes account of a new type of community garden that is emerging at survival, subsistence and livelihood levels – this is the "treatment support garden", which supplies fresh organic vegetables to the chronically ill (*CSI Handbook, 2006*).

## SERVICES

To further extend the community development potential of SCAGA, Abalimi's organisation-building arm uses tried and tested interventions to build farmers' and gardeners' skills and organisational capacity (since 2000). Horizontal learning (farmer-to-farmer) exchange, action learning and savings mobilisation are key development activities. Micro-credit will be available in the near future to groups with consistent savings records through projects aimed at the livelihood and commercial levels of the development continuum. Periodic farmers' markets, tunnel greenhouses, cold-storage rooms and value-adding packing sheds will follow in subsequent years, supplying a wide range of produce for cooperative marketing and creating new livelihood and job opportunities for the poor. Bulk organic certification is now being sought by Abalimi and VUFA. This would allow association members to obtain certification more cheaply and thereby increase the external marketability of their products.

Abalimi is also determined to ensure that organic certification does not act as a deterrent to emerging players. Together with SAIE, it is developing a "Master Gardeners" training programme (now called Agriplanner 2) that, once accredited, will enable illiterate gardeners and farmers to move from survival through commercial development levels. This will also form the basis of a capacity building programme that will enable genuine organic farmers to return to abandoned Eastern Cape lands.

With its social objectives and relative economic success, SCAGA is South Africa's first example of sustainable urban community organic farming as a permanent lifestyle choice. Consistent with the best intentions of community development, there is no limit to what can be achieved by Cape Town's urban farmers once they find ways to work again on the land with trust and goodwill.

The greatest single hurdle facing sustainable farmers' organisations among the poor is the achievement of group-organisation integrity in a neo-liberal competitive world, given the usually very limited resources available to enable their development. This integrity cannot be achieved if driven from the top down. It must be built member by member and association by association at micro-level in order for meso and macro arrangements to have real effect.

# A Cooperative from the Neighbourhood serving the City

**In Havana, Cuba, in 1997, in one of the areas with a high population density, five neighbours got together in an effort to produce their own food. Today this endeavour has become a highly successful cooperative, and an example to other such initiatives.**

Mario Gonzalez Novo

**Alamar Land in East Havana**

One of the best known examples of successful urban agriculture in Cuba can be found in the municipality of East Havana. It is located in the neighbourhood of Alamar, where a complex of buildings built during the 1970s currently houses over 100,000 residents (a number that continues to grow due to the increasing need for housing in Havana). Alamar is home to the Basic Cooperative Production Unit[2] "Alamar Organoponic Nursery". The experience of this urban cooperative is significant for Cuba, given that in less than 10 years it has grown from 5 farmers to 106, the surface area that it occupies has grown from 800m2 to 3.7 hectares[3], and its social and economic benefits are substantial.

## THE BEGINNING

In 1997, five neighbours organised themselves as a group of urban farmers and began to use areas near their homes for agricultural purposes. The leader of the group, Miguel Calcines, had experience and knowledge about agriculture. As they lived in an area with poor employment opportunities located far from the city centre (where access to transportation was difficult or non-existent), this activity was appealing and it was relatively easy to find people interested in working with the cooperative.

The needs of this group of agricultural producers began to grow, and the organisational form they had adopted initially was limiting them to some extent, so they began to explore other organisational arrangements that were legal and could help them continue to develop economically and productively. Of the various forms of agricultural organisations available, the best fit was the Basic Cooperative Production Unit, which would represent a big step forward.

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At that time, the Cuban government was calling for people to participate in agriculture, and took action to facilitate these efforts. As a result, over 80% of state lands were ceded to cooperatives, and the land was granted for free use for an indefinite period of time. The initiative was supported from the beginning by the newly created Urban Agriculture Group of the city of Havana, which demonstrated the political will to encourage this kind of activity.

The group of neighbours in Alamar started with a small nursery for fruit and wood tree seedlings, as well as 800m$^2$ of intensive garden plots with a manual irrigation system for growing produce. The limited areas available were rescued from terrain that had not yet been built upon and was being used as a dump for the construction wastes from hundreds of surrounding apartments. The group began to navigate the arduous paperwork and bureaucracy needed to become a cooperative, which is a complex task for a small and inexperienced group of people. The group feels, however, that the challenges faced at the beginning and the wise decision to become a cooperative set the foundation for today's success.

Little by little, the idea of producing for the neighbourhood and selling to neighbours began to develop, which resulted in better conditions for growth in terms of land and in terms of incorporating new members into the cooperative, who would receive a much better income than in traditional jobs offered in the city.

Established as a cooperative and with the support of an international cooperation project, they began the production of seedlings with root balls. This new technology allowed them to grow seedlings that were more resistant to disease and to drying out and to maximise the yield of the limited urban space available by eliminating the seed beds, reducing losses due to the weather and reaching germination rates of over 95%. This method of growing seedlings revolutionised the production of plants and vegetables in the areas surrounding the cooperative. These investments had the crucial support of agricultural research institutes, which helped increase yields through the application of scientific know-how and organic production methods.

During the first phases of the cooperative, the drive to become sustainable was crucial, as it led to acquiring an independent water supply for irrigation. Investing in the installation of an irrigation system and protected crop growing systems allowed members to grow vegetables year-round.

## ORGANISATIONAL AND FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE

The cooperative began with 5 members. Currently it has 106, of whom 30 are women (28%). The skilled staff includes 13

professionals and 26 specialists. Over 90% of the workers live in neighbourhoods near the cooperative.

The cooperative is governed by "collective leadership". The leadership team is made up of the administrator and the administrative board, which is comprised of a chief of production, an economist and other representatives of cost centres or key areas, as well as a worker representative. This leadership team is accountable to the workers' assembly for its development proposals and its economic and operational decisions, as well as plans for production, new investments, profit levels, etc. The democratic management of the cooperative means that the workers' assembly can approve or reject any proposal. There is an internal set of rules that has been discussed and approved by the workers' assembly.

The diversification of the cooperative has made it necessary to create specialised teams within the cooperative that focus on the following areas: growing gardens and greenhouses; seedling greenhouses; fruits and ornamental plants; a centre for organic matter; a small agribusiness; commercial activities; and maintenance and services.

The cooperative's administrator has played a key role in its consolidation, thanks to his commitment as a member of the community, his agricultural knowledge, empathy for the workers, ability to create and work as a team and his capacity to delegate. He successfully brought together a management team with common objectives and insisted on a rigid work discipline. These factors, among others, have made it possible for the leader not just to administrate, but to guide, lead, and spearhead development plans and policies, as well as to fulfil the objectives of the cooperative.

The land that the cooperative occupies was granted for use, subject to payment of a small tax calculated according to the area under production. The cooperative now has a total area of 3.7 hectares, of which 0.987 hectares are used for intensive gardens and 0.55 for traditional farming. The rest of the area is occupied by a greenhouse for the production of tree seedlings, a composting unit, a nursery for ornamental plants, 4 greenhouses for protected crops, semi-protected growing areas, a centre for reproduction by cuttings, and a small agribusiness, which is basically engaged in the production of dry condiments, vinegar and vegetable conservation. In 2005, 145 tons of crops were produced as well as 2.7 million seedlings, and 133 $m^3$ of earthworm humus.

The cooperative sells directly to the public, which gives it direct contact with the residents of the community, and it puts a priority on sales to social institutions like a local maternal home. Today it is starting to produce mushrooms and introduce new technologies like the use of the pyramid power of magnetised water. Recently, the cooperative began selling small quantities to the elite market (hotels and restaurants), which has helped it increase its economic base. The cooperative is carrying out new investment processes in order to expand the area under production to 11 hectares.

Two of the cooperative's priority objectives are to train its workers and to exchange information with other urban farmers in the municipality. For these purposes it has a facility that includes a training centre. The workers can attend self-improvement courses, to learn computer skills, among others, and courses/workshops are held for nearby primary schools on cooperative property.

## A BENCHMARK FOR THE COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT IN THE CITY OF HAVANA

In Cuba, the concept of urban agriculture has gone beyond its geographic location and has become a different way of approaching agricultural production. The conditions of urban agriculture in terms of its proximity to city life normally make the jobs it offers less sought after than others offered in the city, and thus the big challenge is to make urban agriculture not seem like a last resort and to make it a competitive option for any citizen.

In the City of Havana there are 48 cooperatives (UBPCs), 41 of which are engaged in the production of vegetables and other crops, while 7 are engaged in raising animals. There are 1,610 UBPCs in the whole country.

The social impact of the cooperative is not only felt in the creation of jobs and good salaries, but it is highly regarded within the community because of the opportunities it gives to the workers and the value that it has added to the area as a result of an improved environment, as well as a more united community market with regard to prices. The workers receive free breakfast, lunch and dinner.

The high degree of ownership among the cooperative members has been a fundamental factor in the results that have been achieved. This cooperative has had a consistent policy of serving people, based primarily on good working conditions, possibilities for self-improvement, regular economic information, transparent accounting, a better quality of life through better incomes, systematic consultations with the assembly of cooperative members, collective leadership, labour discipline and technology, diversification of production, the application of science and new techniques, the social character of the production, appropriate commercialisation policies based on marketing and market studies. The cooperative thoroughly and constantly analyses the economics of its production practices, which has allowed it to form a collective development strategy.

*"The greatest achievement of the cooperative is to have on a small scale an example of bringing dignity to urban agriculture employment."*
*Miguel Salcines, Cooperative President*

The cooperative continues to innovate. It has gone beyond the model of neighbourhood agricultural production and has become an example of work, effort and triumphs for the entire city and country, demonstrating that the system of intensive organic and urban production is possible wherever the political will and the determination of men and women in search of a better life for themselves and their neighbours can come together.

**NOTES**

1) This article is based on a conversation with and input from Miguel Salcines, President of the organoponic UBPC Vivero Alamar, and Aurelia Castellanos Quintero.
2) UBPCs, Basic Cooperative Production Units, were created by Law 142/93, allowing the use of state land indefinitely by a group of people. Such a group has its own legal identity. Its members own the production and resources, and have other rights, such as the ability to create funds for new investments from the profits made on sales of their products.
3) 1 hectare equals 10,000 square meters.

# Different types of Agricultural Cooperatives with Periurban Farmers in China: two cases

**In 1978, China started to dismantle the commune system and the so-called "eating from the same big pot" that existed for decades, i.e. absolute egalitarianism whereby everyone gets the same benefits irrespective of his/her performance. Village land began to be contracted to peasant families on a 30-year basis in most cases and a system of "household contract responsibility" was introduced that set farm output quotas for each household and linked remuneration to output.**

Hong Yuan

**Cooperative chairperson Ms. Zan explains the history of the cooperative to visitors**

This mobilised the peasants' enthusiasm for agricultural production. But as the market economy developed, the "household contract responsibility" system became less adequate, since it did not sufficiently stimulate modernisation of the farming systems and left small-scale farmers in a weak position on the markets. Hence, agricultural cooperatives were created that facilitate capacity building and joint marketing, often closely linked to (party-led) village-level management. There are currently about 150,000 farmer cooperatives in the country, 1,000 of which are located in periurban Beijing.

Privately owned land does not exist in China; all land is owned by the state (in urban areas) or by village collectives (in rural areas). This fact determines the way cooperatives are organised. Two main forms of agricultural cooperatives can be distinguished:

**Bottom-up cooperatives** (in which farmers themselves play a key role): In some villages (like in the outer parts of the periurban region of Beijing), land is allocated according to land-use rights and managed by the villagers individually. In this situation farmer cooperatives can be built from the bottom up with the small-scale farmers. In this type of cooperative the small farmers establish a contract with the cooperative to which they supply their products and from which they receive training, marketing and other services. Such cooperatives are often relatively loosely organised and their formation might be hampered by the scattered location of the small farmers in the village area. In addition, the bottom-up cooperatives often lack sufficient capital, technology and management skills.

**Top-down cooperatives** (in which governmental organisations and/or large agro-entreprises play a dominant role): In some villages, villagers hold land-use rights, but the land is managed collectively rather than individually, and the village committee will periodically allot dividends to the villagers according to their land-use rights. This situation can often be encountered closer to the cities where land prices are rising quickly as well as new production, processing and marketing opportunities. Since the land is not distributed, the village management may make arrangements for large-scale production (or other land use e.g. agritourism parks) in cooperation with one or more agro-enterprises and/or a (local, district, provincial) government, if the villagers holding land-use rights agree to participate.

In such a top-down cooperative, the villagers may become shareholders by contributing their land use rights while the external partners bring in capital and/or technology.

Below we present two cases, one of a top-down cooperative and one of a bottom-up cooperative of periurban farmers, to illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of both models in the actual Chinese context.

## THE DINGXIANG COUNTY GREEN FOOD ASSOCIATION IN DINGXIANG: A TOP-DOWN PROCESS

*With a contribution by Mr Xishan Gong, Engineer General in Dingxiang Agriculture Bureau*

Dingxiang is a county located in the periurban area of Xinzhou, a small city of about 150,000 inhabitants in Shanxi province. Dingxiang county used to be

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called a "National Commodity Grains Production Base". However, due to booming industrial development, many farmers started to spend most of their time on non-agricultural activities, since this brings them much more money. They consequently paid less attention to their farmland, which – despite good natural conditions – has a low level of productivity due in part to outdated agricultural technologies and lack of adequate marketing.

To promote agricultural development in this area and meet the urban residents' demand for healthy food, Xinzhou municipality together with some agro-enterprises in Dingxiang County (e.g. Huarun Steam Meat Company, Wutai Mountain Seeds Company), the Agricultural Techniques Promotion Center (ATPC), and farmers, jointly established the Green Food Association (GFA) in 1994. This was the first agricultural cooperative in Dingxiang county. In that year, 432 small-scale farmers joined the association; membership increased to 1,216 in 2003. GFA's main products were millet, corn, sorghum, and all kinds of vegetables, mainly capsicums.

## The bottom-up farmer cooperative has broken new ground

### INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF GFA

The highest authority in the GFA was the members' representative assembly (46 elected members), which approved the annual report and development plan prepared by the GFA council, the executive agency of the GFA. The chairman of the council was nominated by ATPC (and usually was an ATPC official) after approval by the representative assembly. The ten members of the council (including ATPC-staff and farmers) were appointed by the chairman. The monitoring committee had five members (all farmers), selected by the representative assembly.

GFA had six departments. The Administrative Office, Financial Department and Sales Department were operated by the GFA council, and the Information Department, Technical Department and Agricultural Inputs Department were operated by the ATPC. The operational costs of these departments were entirely covered by the government.

The Dingxiang Green Food Association was sub-divided into three professional branch organisations: capsicum association, vegetable association and miscellaneous association. Members were also organised into fifteen groups according to the distances between the villages in the county and the number of members per village, in order to facilitate the collection of the agriculture products, provision of agricultural inputs and the dissemination of information and techniques.

### OPERATION AND MANAGEMENT OF GFA

ATPC, enterprises and small-scale farmers were required to sign contracts with the association and each had to fulfill the corresponding obligations and rights.

The agro-enterprises were contracted to supply the farmers with the required agricultural inputs (seed, fertilisers, etc.) and to take care of the processing and marketing. Their contract included a condition that they carry the market risks (quantity and the minimum price of the products to be sold that year).

Once these contracts were established, the GFA contracted ATPC to provide technical guidance and supervise farmers' planting (the contract contained the condition that ATPC had to compensate the farmers' loss if their products did not meet the technical requirements of the agro-enterprises) and the interested farmers had to deliver certain amounts of agricultural produce (and they carry the natural risks).

In this way, the farmers could pay full attention to planting without worrying about the marketing of the products.

### BREAK UP OF GFA; NEW FUTURE FOR THE COOPERATIVES IN DINGXIANG

Agriculture in Dingxiang was greatly stimulated by the establishment of the GFA, which proved that the establishment of agricultural cooperatives is important and that difficulties experienced by farmers in gaining access to information, technology, capital and markets can be solved in this way. The establishment of such an association also enhanced the scale of production and reduced the risk for both enterprises and farmers.

Unfortunately, the association broke up in March 2006 when ATPC had to withdraw from the association because a new provincial policy determined that a government organisation cannot be part of any commercial organisation. The new policy seeks to reduce the fiscal burden of the provincial government and to encourage farmers to pay for the technical services they receive.

The new policy led to the breakdown of GFA. Without financial support from the government and technical support from ATPC, the farmers' production process could not be supervised and subsequently the association could no longer guarantee the quality of products when signing contracts with agro-enterprises. Obviously, GFA depended too much on the government and ATPC to sustain itself without them.

Thanks to the farmers' experiences in the period between 1994 and 2006, which demonstrated to them the important role an agricultural cooperative plays in the development of agriculture and in increasing farmers' incomes, various agriculture cooperatives have been established since GFA broke down (e.g. a Vegetables Cooperative and a Corn Seeds Corporation). However, so far the experiences of these cooperatives have not been very satisfactory, due in part to the low technical credibility of their leaders (compared to the ATPC officials). Many farmers still hope that GFA will be re-established, since they believe such a top-down organisation will function better in this less-developed region than a self-managed organisation.

In any case, a more appropriate type of agricultural cooperative has to be developed in which farmers and agro-enterprises play a more important role than governmental departments. That is why Dingxiang authorities are interested in exchanging information on bottom-up approaches to the organisation of urban and periurban farmers with other RUAF partners.

### HUAIROU GRAPE COOPERATIVE

*With a contribution by Ms Xiaojing Zan, Chairperson of Huairou Grape Cooperative*

The Huairou Grape Cooperative is located in Huairou district, a mountainous periurban region of greater Beijing with an agreeable climate for certain crops and attractive scenery for urban tourists.

René van Veenhuizen

**Improved rainwater harvesting for grape production by migrants in Huairou**

## HISTORY OF THE COOPERATIVE

After completing a two-year study programme organised by the China Grape Association Beijing Branch, Mr Qingzhong Zhao, together with his wife Ms Xiaojing Zan, rented in 1998 a piece of land of 20 mu[1] from the Angezhuang village commission and built up 5 greenhouses to grow 17 new varieties of grapes. The business was so successful that in 2000 they rented another 50 mu of land from Liyuanzhuang village to expand their activities.

The success of their grape farm stimulated local farmers to start initiatives of their own. They came to the couple asking for planting materials (which were initially given for free), technical guidance and marketing support. When more and more producers started to consult the young couple, it became too much of a burden and they could no longer afford to give away seedlings for free.

By then, the couple had begun considering the idea of establishing a supply-production-marketing cooperative. The cooperative would take care of the marketing of their products, including cold storage facilities to store grapes that cannot be sold directly to the markets.

The initial phase of setting up this cooperative was not easy due to the lack of launching capital. Ms Zan persuaded her family to sell their home and gathered in this way 20,000 YUAN to initiate the cooperative with a dozen farm households as members. Standards for growing grapes and regulations for operating the cooperative were defined. By 2004, the cooperative was officially registered as "Huairou Fruit and Vegetable Production and Marketing Cooperative", although currently its production is still focused only on grape growing. Ms Zan was elected as chairperson for the first term of five years, mainly because she had demonstrated her skills as a marketing manager for the cooperative.

After two years of operation, the cooperative proved to be quite successful and the number of members increased to 1,108 households. In 2006, the gross output of grapes reached 3.1 million kg, with average income per mu up to 15,000 yuan (more than 40 times that of traditional grape growing). It is obvious that the members of the cooperative have increased their incomes substantially.

## TRAINING SERVICES SUPPLIED BY THE COOPERATIVE

The cooperative not only supplies high-quality young plants at low prices to its members, but also provides training and technical advice. Mr. Zhao provides technical assistance to farmers under the condition that they buy their young plants from him. Every Monday is consultation day for grape farmers. Since 2002, the cooperative has been gathering information about grape production, including the latest developments about grape growing from the internet, and makes this information available to the farmers. Technicians from the China Agricultural University, Beijing Agricultural College and China Grape Society are invited (and paid) by the cooperative to provide advise when more complicated problems are encountered and to provide training on the latest grape growing technologies. So far, the cooperative has organised 8 training workshops for more than 3,800 participants, and more than 20 domestic and foreign grape varieties have been introduced in this way.

The cooperative has also adopted a programme of "learning new things by going outside" and has organised ten study trips to Hebei, Shandong and Tianjin for a total of 640 participants. This activity broadens not only the farmers' knowledge but also their production and marketing channels.

## MARKETING SERVICES

The cooperative applies three main marketing strategies. The first is to establish contracts with supermarkets. Subsequently the cooperative makes contracts with its members to pre-book the growers' products. Members sell about 30% of their grapes in this way. The second strategy is to sell grapes to tourists ("pick your own fruits"). Since Huairou is located in a scenic mountainous area, thousands of tourists from Beijing visit the region each year, many of whom enjoy picking grapes at local farms. Members sell some 20% of their products in this way. The third strategy is to sell cold-stored grapes in the off season for much higher prices. The cooperative was able to build a 100 $m^2$ low-temperature storage facility thanks to a 100,000 yuan grant from the Huairou scientific commission. This prolonged the selling period by eight months and allowed the cooperative to obtain the trust required for long-term relationships with big traders.

## CHALLENGES AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

This bottom-up farmer cooperative has broken new ground. Its success demonstrates the effectiveness of this new type of organisation. However, based on the experience of Huairou Grape Cooperative, some challenges can still be identified:

- The cooperative is still highly dependent on its founders, Ms Zan, the chairperson and able marketing manager, and her husband Mr Zhao, who is very skilled in grape growing. This couple still does an excellent job and they complement each other very well. However, the cooperative needs to train more persons to take on various specialised technical and management tasks and to take over from the actual leaders when the need arises.
- Small bottom-up cooperatives like the Hairou Grape Cooperative encounter problems in obtaining sufficient government support and generating the capital needed for required investments (cold storage, drip irrigation).
- The most urgent task of the cooperative is to register and advertise its own brand and develop its own high-level green food certificate for its supermarket channel.
- Agritourism (sightseeing, fruit picking) is a good approach for raising the value of the agricultural products, since urban tourists show a strong interest in eating or buying local food and experiencing the production and harvesting process. More research on agritourism and the taste preferences of urban citizens is needed.

**NOTE**

1) 1 mu equals about 667 $m^2$.

# Gyinyase Organic Vegetable Growers' Association in Kumasi, Ghana

**Kumasi has about 10 main market-oriented vegetable farming sites. Many of these farming sites are linked to farmers' associations. Gyinyase Organic Vegetable Growers' Association (GOVGA) is a large urban vegetable farmers' association in Kumasi that was formed through the merger of smaller associations in three of the main farming sites in Kumasi.**

IWMI-Ghana

One of the GOVGA meetings

Irrigated urban vegetable farming is a common practice in and around Kumasi, as in many other sub-Saharan African cities. It has many positive impacts on the community, such as improved household food security, better nutrition, increased household incomes, increased urban vegetable supplies and employment. In Kumasi, two out of three households grow vegetables in their backyards for home consumption, while market-oriented vegetable production is mostly found in the lowlands along streams, where year-round production is possible. It has contributed remarkably to the urban vegetable supply and is a source of livelihood not only for the farmers but also for vegetables sellers and others in the post-harvest chain. Detailed descriptions of irrigated urban vegetable farming in Kumasi have been well documented in Obuobie *et al.* (2006) and Keraita *et al.* (2002).

## PROFILE OF GOVGA

GOVGA's three farming sites are located around Gyinyase, a suburb of Kumasi about 10 km from the city centre. The organisation was formed in June this year. It already has 36 registered members, all of whom are full-time commercial vegetable farmers. Farming sites represented by GOVGA cover half of the area available for producing market-oriented vegetables in Kumasi. Almost all lettuce, which is the most commonly grown vegetable in irrigated urban vegetable farming in Kumasi, comes from these sites. The other sites not represented by GOVGA mainly grow spring onions and cabbage.

GOVGA was formed by merging farmers organisations from three irrigated farming sites, i.e. Farmwell Organic Vegetable Growers' Association, Progressive Vegetable Growers' Association and Quarters Vegetable Growers' Association. These organisations were originally initiated by the farmers themselves. They started as social support groups, which is a common phenomenon in many informal establishments in Ghana. Increasing numbers of farmers at farming sites raised the need for more regulations and better organisation especially on the use of resources like land, water, etc. Once the farmers in the three associations realised that they could address common challenges, like marketing and the need for financial and technical assistance, better as a united group, they merged and formed GOVGA.

The organisation has an established constitution and its core objective is to ensure that every member produces vegetables based on organic farming principles. It also aims to:

- foster unity among members
- enhance vegetable production
- provide financial and technical assistance to aid members in vegetable production and marketing
- cater for the social needs of its members

The organisation has eight well-defined leadership positions, and those who fulfill these roles serve three-year terms. Members meet weekly and incur fines for any absenteeism or lateness. Members' contributions are deposited into a special bank account, from which loans are granted at a 10% interest rate. GOVGA also caters for the social welfare of its members, by financing funerals and weddings, for example.

## WHY ORGANIC VEGETABLE FARMING?

The aim of organic vegetable farming is to create agricultural systems that are ecologically stable and reasonably productive without toxic interventions. For example, GOVGA members use poultry manure instead of inorganic fertilisers and the use of pesticides is very minimal. Urban vegetable farming in Ghana is very intensive as each farmer holds an average of only 0.1 ha. In many areas, a lot of inputs like fertilisers and pesticides are used to maximise output, but vegetable consumers are becoming increasingly concerned with high levels of

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pesticides in food. For this reason GOVGA opted for integrated pest management (IPM), which emphasises the use of cultural practices instead of synthetic insecticides. Farmers at GOVGA also prefer to use manure rather than artificial fertilisers because they believe manure can sustain vegetable production better and fertilisers are in any case more costly.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GOVGA

*Enhancing vegetable production*

According to a survey we conducted in 2006, GOVGA has a good blend of farmers from different backgrounds. Some have extensive farming experience, sometimes spanning more than 30 years, while others have enjoyed a formal education even up to tertiary level. During member meetings, GOVGA leaders give farmers who have extensive and well-developed knowledge on farming practices the opportunity to share their experiences in order to improve the vegetable production of all members. In group discussions with farmers, we learned that GOVGA members jointly buy most inputs like seeds and poultry manure in bulk and share them at their farming sites, thereby reducing production costs. They also share farming and irrigation equipment like water pumps, sprayers, etc. Mutual agreements within the association enable farmers to share water sources, thus allowing them to maintain production even in times of scarcity. Pest attacks are also controlled with ease by conducting joint control exercises, which is necessary for these small open-field farms.

*Training and capacity building*

The farmers indicated that through their association they are now benefiting from extension services provided by the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) and training conducted by NGOs and other research institutions. Several projects on urban vegetable farming in Kumasi are being conducted at GOVGA farming sites. This year alone, the farmers have received training on integrated pest management from Ghana Institute of Horticulturalists (GhIH), on reducing fecal contamination of vegetables and other vegetable safety issues from the CGIAR-Challenge Program on Water and Food, on improving marketing from MOFA, etc. Through a research project involving GOVGA, a manual well fitted with two treadle pumps costing USD 2,000 was constructed at one farming site (Karikari) to provide better-quality irrigation water for the farmers. In addition, members have also been trained in organic farming methods by Ghana Organic Agriculture Network (GOAN), a local NGO. GOVGA representatives now participate as key stakeholders in a number of policy platforms, training workshops, and research and development projects. The GOVGA secretary for instance represented all urban vegetable farmers in Kumasi during the development of Ghana Irrigation Policy and was also in Benin during the launch of a new variety of pesticides.

*Marketing*

Marketing has been a consistent problem in urban vegetable production mainly because vegetable marketing is done by middlemen. i.e. market women, who also control market prices. Up until now each farmer has sold his own produce to market women who come to the farms. Farmers often don't know how much these women sell the vegetables for, but they strongly suspect that they are not being paid a fair price. The farmers, most of whom are men, have not been able to sell their own produce because the market women control vegetable markets and because vegetable trading is culturally the women's domain. However, farmers now see a potential opportunity for GOVGA to market their produce and for them to thus gain more control over market prices. As one farmer put it, *"if we all decide to say no to their low prices, they will be forced to give us more, because they also live from trading. With our association, we can now collect all our lettuce, put it into one lorry and sell it at Kumasi".* This has led to some success stories in Kumasi, such as in Akumadan and Mampong where farmers have strong associations for marketing their produce.

**Strengthening farmer associations is an important way forward in solving marketing problems**

*Access to credit and financial assistance*

According to its leaders, GOVGA was formed primarily to help its members gain access to credit and financial assistance. Market women often fund farming activities, leaving farmers dependent on them. GOVGA has already initiated a loan scheme for members funded by their contributions, which enables them to reduce their dependence on market women. The association strongly believes that farmers will have a better chance of gaining access to credit from micro-finance enterprises if they approach the institutions as an organisation rather than as individuals. In Ghana, many micro-finance institutions support small-scale enterprises, but they are often skeptical about supporting farming activities due to the high risk involved. The government now also supports organised groups in agriculture and GOVGA feels its members stand a better chance of getting such funding thanks to their organisation.

*Land tenure security*

Farming at Gyinyase is done in valleys on land belonging to individuals, the traditional council or the local university (KNUST). GOVGA has been pushing for better tenure security especially on land belonging to the traditional council or the university, as this land is located in a marshy area and cannot be used for many purposes anyway. As a group, farmers have more say in such negotiations than if they were acting as individuals. The traditional council has basically allowed the farmers to use the land since one of their tasks is to support people engaged in income-generating activities. On university land, scientists conduct research together with the farmers, so negotiations are still ongoing to allow the farmers to continue farming under a special agreement. Zoning of agricultural land for urban farming for organised farmers is one of the policies being pursued by the Directorate of Urban Agriculture under the new land policy being developed in Ghana.

## CHALLENGES FACING GOVGA AND SUGGESTED MEASURES TO ADDRESS THEM

*Cooperation among farmers*

Some farmers at the three sites are not registered with GOVGA, which is a disadvantage for the joint activities of the association. As the association is just getting started, some members are indifferent to its activities. Most members said that meetings are poorly organised with no particular agenda and attending them is therefore a waste of time. Also, members do not alyways pay their monthly contributions on time and

consistently. After talking to both leaders and members, we feel that members are not actively involved in the decision making process. For example, if meetings are held weekly with no specific agenda, they will likely become boring and too frequent. We have recommended that GOVGA leaders review the contributions, and possibly establish different categories of membership to take account of different types of members. In addition, to improve attendance, they should hold monthly rather than weekly meetings, or call meetings only when specific agendas have been set. After this review takes place, we will together assess the outcome.

*Leadership problems*

In the survey, members of GOVGA questioned the ability, transparency and accountability of their leaders. They stated categorically that their leaders must be truthful, open and fair in the discharge of their duties towards members. In response, GOVGA leaders said that they have not received any training on the management of farmers' groups and although they would like to, GOVGA has limited resources and therefore needs external help. Farmers also complained that representatives who attend various meetings outside the association do not share the knowledge attained in these meetings. Some leaders said that this is often the case when investments are needed to transfer the knowledge, and sometimes not all farmers attend briefing meetings even when they are organised. We suggest that a platform be created for knowledge sharing to all farmers.

*Support from policy makers*

There has often been friction between local authorities and farmers as the practice of urban farming is seen as unsafe and informal. For this reason, farmers have not been receiving extension services. However, this is now changing as the benefits of urban vegetable farming are become more documented and with the involvement of research institutions to reduce health risks. In Kumasi, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture is now increasingly extending its extension services to GOVGA. The Directorate of the MOFA in Kumasi is now also involved in many projects at GOVGA farming sites. The Director said *"we encourage and even facilitate formation of farmers' organisations. It makes it much easier for us to give them technical services and even seek financial assistance for them".*

*Production and marketing of organic vegetables*

Organic vegetable farming is a relatively new practice in Ghana. Generally there are no support mechanisms and appropriate technologies available for production of organic vegetables. Although farmers would prefer to use organic inputs like manure, these are often scarce making it necessary for farmers to use inorganic fertilisers. Yields from organically produced crops are also lower than from inorganically produced vegetables. To enhance organic vegetable production, more investment in the production of inputs is therefore needed, as well as more research and knowledge sharing of tested best practices.

With respect to marketing, GOVGA should explore other supply channels like selling directly to restaurants, groceries, supermarkets, etc. Currently, its produce gets mixed with inorganically produced vegetables, making the farmers' efforts to produce organically futile. Ghana has no specific markets or counters in supermarkets for organic vegetables as some other countries do. Public awareness of the benefits of organically produced vegetables is generally low (Danso et al., 2002), so more coordinated awareness campaigns need to be initiated to increase consumer demand and hence achieve higher prices. In addition, appropriate frameworks need to be developed to regulate the sector. This could be done by all stakeholders in the sector like researchers, NGOs and policy makers. GOVGA does not have the capacity to do this alone.

## CONCLUSION

Strengthening farmers' associations in urban vegetable production systems will go a long way towards enhancing productivity and making the systems more viable. This is seen as one of the ways forward in solving the sector's marketing problems, which are a major concern. We recommend that farmers' organisations be formed in other localities to address the specific challenges facing each area, but these new associations will have to learn from GOVGA's experiences. These location-specific organisations can then become building blocks for larger umbrella organisations at city and even national levels. However, due to the informal nature of these farming practices, more should be done to ensure that these associations have sound leadership and recognition from policy makers.


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**Visiting scientists interacting with GOVGA members**

IWMI-Ghana

# Agricultural Business Associations in Urban and Periurban Areas in Lima, Peru

CIP/Urban Harvest

Farmer group members harvesting organic products

**The large urban market of Lima provides an opportunity for periurban and urban farmers in the east of Lima to sell their products. However, studies by the Urban Harvest Programme of CIP in Lima reveal that the current system for commercialisation of urban agricultural products is underdeveloped. In addition there is a lack of trust, insecurity and a lack of capacity among urban farmers to organise and improve through social learning processes and coordinated business management efforts. This article describes an effort to improve this situation.**

The "Farmers in the City" Project, coordinated by the Urban Harvest[1] programme in Lima, Peru, together with other research and development organisations, is strengthening the organisational capabilities of urban farmers from the lower Rimac River basin in Lima, Peru. (See for more background the article on Lima in UA-Magazine 16.) The project includes 924 families who make up the irrigation association called the Rimac User Board, and another group of families (around 10,000) located in urban communities whose primary activity is raising animals. The agricultural production system currently in place integrates the growing of crops and raising of animals. The main crops are beets, lettuce, turnips, and other produce and aromatic plants. The raising of pigs, birds, guinea pigs, sheep and other animals is a source of savings and food for the farmers. Raising birds and guinea pigs is a traditional practice among some migrant families from rural areas. The economic potential of these activities has been developed energetically. Raising pigs is mainly done in areas without cropland and that tend to be undeveloped.

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## ORGANISATION OF FARMERS

The first phase of the project included a baseline assessment, focus group discussions and training workshops. The researchers found a high use of chemical products, like pesticides and fertilisers, and improper animal-raising practices. They also identified a high degree of individualism, mistrust and a lack of communication. as primary obstacles to the formation of social capital. Qualitative tools were employed, such as participatory information-sharing workshops, training on topics such as agro-ecology and animal raising, and field visits to individual farms. There was a definite need for more training in new production practices that could help farmers increase production and obtain fair prices. In the second phase, the project adopted the Farmer Field School methodology (*Escuela de Campo para Agricultores,* ECA) and adapted to the urban ecosystem. The initial process of inviting people to participate took three months, which was longer than originally planned, due to the complexity of urban agriculture.

*Farmer Field Schools*

This methodology calls for gathering together large groups of agricultural producers, both men and women, to address issues related to Integrated Pest Management (IPM) for the main traditional crops of the region. Two 'schools' were created, one on IPM for beets with farmers from the Carapongo subsector and another on IPM for lettuce with farmers from Huachipa. Similarly, the ECA methodology was adapted for participatory workshops on raising guinea pigs with farmers from the Ñaña subsector. Through this process, the farmers developed an interest in organising themselves in order to apply all of the knowledge acquired, produce healthy and clean (organic) products, access good markets with fair prices, and improve their quality of life. Urban Harvest supported these Urban Farmers Schools (*Escuelas de Agricultores Urbanos*, EAUs). With additional support from the municipality and the farmers themselves, two EAUs began to function in Huachipa and

Carapongo. In both cases, pilot agricultural production centres were established to experiment, validate, demonstrate and replicate different techniques in the fields of participating farmers.

The production of crops in each of the centres allowed participants to begin selling products to new markets on a small scale. Management of the pilot centres by the farmers strengthened the bonds of trust among participants. In addition, the joint search for new markets for the benefit of all group members consolidated the organisations. This created the need to seek formal status in order to access larger-scale markets.

*The search for formalisation*

Consolidation of organisations by achieving a formal status can generate local development through an increase of competitiveness and productivity (De Soto, 2000). Two agribusiness associations were formed: the Association of Organic Farmers of Huachipa (APAOH) and the Healthy Harvest Carapongo SAC (COSANACA). The latter was constituted as a micro-enterprise, with help from the Self-Employment and Micro-enterprise Program (PRODAME), a state entity under the Ministry of Work and Employment Promotion (MTPE). The costs associated with the legalisation process were 700 and 900 new sols (USD 217 and USD 281 USD), respectively, and were carried by the two associations themselves with income obtained through the sale of produce (Huachipa), contributions from partners and fund-raising activities (Carapongo). The guinea pig farmers of Ñaña also received assistance from PRODAME in order to begin their own legalisation process.

The main contribution of this methodology is that it recognises that the organisation of small producers – in any form – is the indispensable element in sustaining productive micro-enterprises over time. In other words, small farmers have to be organised in order to access financing for their activities. They need to formalise some sort of association in order to pursue the development of micro-enterprises (De Soto, 2000).

To reach consolidation and formalisation of organisations of small agribusinesses, it is necessary to develop a function infrastructure with clearly defined roles for members in the management of production and sales. The legalisation process, therefore, contributed in the cases described above to the institutionalisation of both associations.

## ACCESS TO FAIR MARKETS

The key factor in the consolidation of organisations of small agribusinesses is obtaining access to alternative markets, without the interference of third parties. In that respect, the project has sought, together with the farmers, a commercialisation system that is more direct and profitable. According to the farmers, direct sales to consumers is very beneficial, given the good prices attained, the constancy and variety of the orders, and the farmers' physical proximity to customers.

At the moment, APAOH and COSANACA are gaining access to larger-scale markets, thanks to the formalisation of their status, and support from the project and governmental entities like the MTPE. In this way, both groups have a greater chance to become sustainable and develop further in the future.

*Strengths and weaknesses in urban farmers' organisations*

The key components contributing to the consolidation and strengthening of these organisations are *trust*, which is won through the training and follow-up process; *capacity* to produce and market organic products; and *teamwork*. However, the cohesion of the different agro-enterprise organisations' members may be undermined by a number of issues. The diversity in other occupations of some members may hamper their active participation in the organisation. In addition, due to substantial differences in the application of agricultural techniques, production quality may be too diverse. Finally, there may be insufficient capital for the productive development of agricultural activities.

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

During the process of working with these groups of urban farmers, their social capital has increased. Through participatory learning methodologies the farmers have strengthened their technical-productive, organisational, business and commercial capacities. The formation and formalisation of agro-enterprise associations has also facilitated their access to new, more profitable and more just markets for organic products.

The main reason members of the groups began growing organic products on their farms was to improve access to local markets (farmers' markets, restaurants, clinics and homes) and commercial markets (fixed intermediaries, supermarkets and restaurants). Thus the farmers have also learned to develop crop planting plans in a coordinated fashion in order to supply the markets that have opened up to them.

Local and national entities have also been involved in supporting and promoting the newly formed organisations. The municipalities and national government (through the MTPE) have helped promote, formalise and provide access to new markets for the organisations.

Nevertheless, small organisations in developing countries face immense challenges, especially in urban agriculture, where there are constant threats stemming from the rapid growth of the cities. In the last 4 years, the amount of agricultural land in the study area has been reduced by 22%, due to increased housing developments and unplanned urban growth. This rate of urbanisation is a threat to urban agriculture and should be confronted in a consensual way by local and national authorities and the farmers. Due to the excessive use of fertilisers, chemical pesticides and the drainage of wastewater from households and factories there is also an increase in water, soil and air pollution. This directly affects the ability of urban farmers to produce healthy, clean products.

**NOTES**

1) Urban Harvest (Cosecha Urbana-CU) is an institutional initiative of the International Agricultural Research Advisory Group coordinated by the International Potato Center (CIP).


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# Creating Market Opportunities for Poor Women Farmers in Kenya

**African leafy vegetables (ALVs) are traditionally an important element in the diet of many Africans, but the market has remained underdeveloped due to the lack of any successful efforts to commercialise the crop. The sources of a few bunches of vegetables in a Nairobi market were traced back mostly to wild harvesting by small-scale women farmers in western Kenya – 400 km from Nairobi. It appeared that brokers and traders packed the vegetables in sacks that were transported to the city in night buses. This drastically reduced the quality of the vegetables. Interventions initiated in 2002 by FCI and its partners have dramatically reversed this trend.**

CIP/Urban Harvest

**Discussions with a periurban farmer**

The intervention programme seeks to help farmers achieve a reliable source of income and improve nutrition. The programme aims at increasing the commercialisation of ALVs through improved production, enhanced collective marketing systems, increased value chain efficiency, increased demand, increased consumption, improved image of leafy vegetables and new consumption linkages. It operates in several villages in Kiambu, Kenya, and works towards satisfying the ever-increasing market demand for ALV in Nairobi.

FCI is a market development agency that develops marketing models and strategic alliances to enhance economic growth among poor communities. It implements market-oriented programmes across Eastern Africa and offers technical backstopping to several development projects in Sub-Saharan Africa.

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Urban Harvest is a system-wide initiative launched by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research to direct and coordinate the collective knowledge and technologies of the Future Harvest Centers with the aim of strengthening urban and periurban agriculture (UPA).

The programme is co-funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, USAID Horticulture Development Programme and IDRC for three years, and it is being implemented by Farm Concern International (FCI) in collaboration with IPGRI-SSA, AVRDC-World Vegetable Centre, CIP, Urban Harvest, the Kenyan Ministry of Agriculture, Kenya Agricultural Research Institute, and value chain players.

Before the programme began in 2002, most of the farmers growing vegetables were not organised, which hampered access to any technology, credit, information, markets or extension services from the government. Their farms were weakly developed and they produced mainly for subsistence. They were selling to informal markets but only in small volumes. Most of the poor farmers were surviving on less than a dollar per day. Intermediaries were not interested in trading African indigenous vegetables, because there were no (identified) consumers willing to buy them.

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Enhancing market access for ALVs has produced enormous market growth, as ALVs have evolved from an underutilised crop to a commercial crop, with monthly market turnover increasing from 31 tonnes in 2003 to 600 tonnes in mid 2006. This amounts to 10 tonnes of seed valued at USD 430,000 annually (Nekesa and Meso, 1994).

ALVs are largely referred to as women's crops, because approximately 60% of the producers in the commercial villages are women. A study conducted by FCI in collaboration with Urban Harvest also revealed that ALV informal trading is dominated by women, who account for 75% of all the value chain players. ALV-based transactions targeting the supermarkets and local markets are an enormous source of income to large numbers of households in the rural, urban and periurban areas. ALV smallholder commercial farming currently generates USD 2 million in rural incomes annually.

This is by far one of the most promising crops for poverty eradication owing to its large demand (a gap of demand over available crops of over 40%), the large role played by women in the ALV trade, the plants' relatively high resistance to diseases and pests and the lower cost of production compared to many other crops. Most of the farmers in the FCI programme have shifted cultivating cut flowers to cultivating ALVs.

In addition to continuing growth, the interventions aimed at improving health, nutrition and the incomes of vulnerable groups, including those infected with and affected by HIV/Aids, through stimulation of production from home gardens and commercial farming systems. The programme focuses on progressive economic development, enterprise promotion related to the mainstream activities of the target group and an improved socio-economic environment conducive to the needs of poor women.

*FCI and CGIAR partners and their respective roles and contributions*
FCI works together with Urban Harvest for market research of urban vegetable trading systems; with AVRDC and IPGRI for multiplication and distribution of clean base seeds of selected micro-nutrient-rich ALVs; with the Ministry of Agriculture and KARI for farmer training; with value chain players for market entry; and with over 100 producers' groups to enhance commercialisation of ALV seeds and products. The research organisations AVRDC and KARI have been building the capacity of farmers through training on seed multiplication and agronomic practices. The Ministry of Agriculture offers extension services to farmers. Urban Harvest has been crucial in mobilising and empowering farmers through training on all husbandry practices for these vegetables.

## APPROACHES, METHODOLOGIES AND INNOVATIONS

Market research was conducted using the 'Value Networks and Marketing Systems' tool, which is a hybrid private sector and pro-poor development research tool developed by FCI for identifying production practices, the size of the market and market dynamics. The research identified an enormous potential market demand for over ten species of African leafy vegetables.

The VNMS has six steps, but FCI used only the following five in its research on ALVs:

CIP/Urban Harvest


**ALVs for transport to a supermarket**

- analysis of the size of the market demand;
- analysis of consumer and market behaviour;
- identification of market segments and selection of target markets;
- analysis of value networks and marketing channels (including value chain analysis, supply chain analysis and marketing channel analysis);
- integration of the target group in value network profiling, business viability analysis and product value analysis.

Since low product awareness and the image of ALV as a 'poor man's food' greatly inhibited market growth, FCI began mobilising the communities in the various target sites to adopt the ALVs. Most of the communities were new to the production and marketing of ALVS.

*Production technology dissemination*
The producers' groups had very little knowledge on general agronomic practices related to the production of ALVS. FCI therefore disseminated information on production technologies through on-farm training, on-station training, distribution of ALV production manuals, dissemination of leaflets on specific vegetables, training of trainers, and Multifaceted Technology Dissemination Forums (a technology dissemination tool developed by FCI). It engaged trained and practicing farmers through exchange visits, field days and farmers' forums to train other farmers and demonstrate the adopted technologies. Over 3,000 farmers received technology training directly, while by using Radio FM station and a local national radio broadcasting station, it is estimated that over one million households have accessed information about ALVs' production technologies.

One of the challenges highlighted by the farmers was lack of enough quality seeds, so FCI designed seed distribution channels that reached the smallholder urban and periurban farmers. FCI identified seed stockists and linked them to seed companies and other seed-multiplying farmers to supply seeds via rural – urban linkages. Farmers were trained on seed-multiplication techniques, which turned out to be an excellent business opportunity for two medium-scale farmers and over 300 smallholder farmers, who eventually sold over 10 tonnes of seeds since the project started in 2002.

Smallholder farmers' simultaneous production and supply to markets has been a major drawback to negotiating prices along the value chains and at the marketplace. A production strategy was designed to ensure that a consistent supply of vegetables to the market could be achieved, which is paramount to sustained demand in the markets. The schedules and production calendars are made in tandem with market demands and every farmers' group has the members plant over the same period. Production schedules and calendars are developed by production sub-committees in a participatory manner.

*Commercial village approach*
A commercialisation phase set up

according to the Commercial Villages Approach (CVA) helped FCI and its collaborating partners organise 1,700 smallholder farmers into four commercial villages in Kiambu District, 50 Kilometres from Nairobi. The CVA is a concept that involves commercialisation of various farmers' groups clustered in a village to ensure that the highest numbers of members are practicing commercial farming. Farmers from similar social backgrounds are organised into Market Support Units (MSUs) and their capacity built as a commercial unit which can effectively and sustainably market their produce as a group. The MSU designs production schedules which ensure that they are able to sell ALVs consistently to both formal and informal markets. This model of organising farmers into groups is vital for a collective approach to markets for the urban smallholders whose volumes are too low to meet orders from big chain stores and institutions.

*Market channel systems and value network development*

Market access was achieved through a systematic approach to Value Networks Development, which included informal and formal value chains and Business Development Services (BDS) like transportation, seed supply, and distribution networks to various consumer segments. FCI identified many players including high value markets, supermarkets, institutions, grocery stores and informal market traders, who were linked to the MSUs whose schedules allowed them to consistently meet market demand. Market entry for ALVs has been extremely high, with supermarkets offering prices for ALVs that are 20% higher than other conventional vegetables. MSUs were linked to supermarkets and given transaction documents, such as invoice and receipt books, and taken through the transaction process on the market. FCI holds contracts with supermarkets and farmers, which ensures favourable prices throughout the year.

*Market Access Financial Services*

Formal buyers generally purchase produce on a 30-60 days' credit, which excludes smallholders from supply systems since they cannot afford to sustain the credit period. FCI developed Market Access Financial Services (MacFis), which acts as a catalytic fund available only until the MSU builds enough capital from sales to stop using the system and is selling collectively. The groups are required to deposit 10% of their earnings. This approach has allowed over 50% of the initial groups to finance the process. They receive support in the form of a transport van hire payment, local authority levies, input discounts and invoice discounts.

*Capacity building*

FCI has designed training packages and training modules to enhance capacity, create cohesiveness among members and make the MSUs competitive. FCI has used 15 of the 30 training modules for ALV farmers.

*Creating demand*

Consumer preferences and demand for ALVs have been enhanced through a systematic promotional strategy targeting all consumer classes. The strategy includes a series of ALV in-store and outdoor promotional campaigns, distribution of leaflets, flyers and booklets, live radio and television talks, exhibitions and trade fairs. Promotional approaches are benchmarked to the private sector approach, raising more awareness across various target markets of the nutritive and medicinal benefits of ALVs. A Rapid Market Appraisal conducted by FCI in collaboration with value chain players revealed the current supply level is only meeting 60% of the demand.

## SCALING UP AND SUSTAINABILITY

The farmers are being encouraged to save up to 10% of their sales to wean them off of MacFIS funds. MSUs are being introduced to the market where they are identifying market opportunities and their capacities are being built to maintain established linkages and identify other markets.

To scale up the intervention, FCI has combined resources from various sponsors to empower more farmers in urban centres of Kenya and Eastern Africa to commercialise vegetables and other products. One of these products is orange fleshed sweet potatoes. An impact study will be conducted to determine the gains achieved so far and engage in further intervention. Groups are being formed and registered by the Ministry of Culture and Social Services in Kenya and can continue until dissolved by two thirds of their members. Over 90%of the groups that have passed through the commercialisation process have been growing and marketing African leafy vegetables collectively for the last four years, driven by the existing demand gap of over 40%.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Sustainable access to the market for smallholders requires products for which there is a high to intermediate demand growth. Large-scale farmers, companies and medium-scale farmers are known to shut smallholder farmers out of the market more often than not. Any strategy aimed at reinforcing the smallholders' chances of remaining in business ought to further integrate products that offer competitive advantages, such as lower production costs. ALVs, for example, are easily grown with no inorganic chemicals.

A collective approach plays a vital role in increasing the participation of the poor. In order for smallholder farmers to compete effectively in all market segements, their capacities to access markets have to be built, they have to become organised into MSUs and linked to markets. Before their products can penetrate market, the products' image and value have to be built through a private sector approach in awareness creation. Credit as a stand-alone product may not necessarily increase incomes, but micro-credit embedded in a market access programme increases rural incomes and thereby contributes to increased rural savings and reduced poverty levels.

Poor farmers in urban and periurban Africa are earnestly longing to get market support through such interventions, which can create a quantifiable income for them and emancipate them from poverty. A lot of technology has been disseminated, but it can only help if it increases their incomes.

**References**
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# Books / Web sites

***State of the World 2007: Our Urban Future***

The World Watch Institute recently published its "State of the World 2007" report, which deals predominantly with urbanisation. In 2008, half of the Earth's population will live in urban areas, "marking humans as urban species" and explores the ways urbanisation is affecting our lives and the global environment. It includes a chapter on urban agriculture by Brian Halweil and Danielle Nierenberg and a case study of, amongst others, Freetown in Sierra Leone.
To order and for more information visit: http://www.worldwatch.org/node/4752

***State of the World's Cities, 2006/7. The Millennium***

Development Goals and Urban Sustainability, 30 years of shaping the Habitat Agenda. Published by Earthscan for UN Habitat.
This report underlines the increasing severity of urban poverty: soon one in every three city residents will live in inadequate housing. Taking stock of the millennium development goals, it has to be acknowledged that despite some progress much more has to be done, and increasingly so in urban areas. This report still pays little attention to urban agriculture, despite a one-page box on Rosario's kitchen gardens.

***Knowledge Cities: Approaches, experiences, and perspectives***

Carrillo, F.J., 2006, Butterworth-Heinemann Ltd. ISBN 978-0750679411, 312 p.
Knowledge cities are cities in which both the private and the public sectors value knowledge, nurture knowledge, and spend money on supporting knowledge dissemination and discovery to create products and services that add value and create wealth. Currently, there are 65 urban development programmes worldwide formally designated as knowledge cities. This book brings together contributions on theory, development, and realities of knowledge cities.

***A Guide to Supporting Producer Organisations***

Chris Penrose-Buckley. Oxfam Skills and Practice Series. Oxfam.
This book opens with an explanation of why collective action in the form of producers' organisations is a key strategy for increasing their access to and power in markets. Based on eight case studies from around the world, the book describes different types of producers' organisations and draws out learning points and key factors affecting their success. The book provides step-by-step guidance for development practitioners, managers, and all those interested in how development organisations can help small-scale producers build effective collective businesses. For more information visit: http://www.oxfam.org.uk

***Empowering Small Producers: Manuals on producer organizations and group development***

This multi-language CD-ROM offers the complete set of FAO training manuals. The guidelines and manuals are intended for use by government policy-makers, non-governmental organisations and field workers interested or engaged in the promotion of sustainable rural producer groups and cooperatives in developing countries. They cover a wide range of topics including self-help group formation, enterprise management, agricultural cooperative development and incorporating group-based approaches in large-scale rural investment projects. For more information visit: http://www.fao.org/sd

***Agricultural Producer Organizations: Their Contribution to Rural Capacity Building and Poverty Reduction - Report of a Workshop***

This publication presents findings of an international workshop on rural producers' organisations, and contains important lessons for the discussion on urban producers' organisations. Available at: http://web.worldbank.org/

***DVD "Food for the Cities"***

This DVD presents experiences and issues related to food supply and distribution in Addis Ababa, Amman, Lahore, Luanda and Mexico City. It is supported by the FAO Food for The Cities Initiative: "Food Supply and Distribution to Cities", Agricultural Management, Marketing and Finance Service, FAO. E-mail: sada@fao.org.

***www.agriterra.org***

Agriterra was founded in 1997 by Dutch rural people's organisations. Agriterra cooperates with rural people's organisations in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe to promote, facilitate and support direct and lasting cooperation linkages between rural people's organisations in the Netherlands and in developing countries.

***www.farmingsolutions.org***

Farming Solutions, the Future of Agriculture, is a site supported by ILEIA, OXFAM and Greenpeace that seeks to share examples of successful, environmentally responsible farming systems from all over the world that illustrate how farmers can protect the environment while at the same time increasing the food supply where it is most needed.

***www.icsc.ca***

The International Centre for Sustainable Cities (ICSC) was created to bring the idea of urban sustainability into practical action. ICSC is a "do tank," rather than a think tank, and serves as a broker, bringing together the business community, civil society organisations and various levels of government to tackle urban issues.

***www.ipes.org/au/osaup***

This is the website of the project entitled "Social Organisations of Urban and Peri-Urban farmers: management models and innovative alliances for influencing policy" (see also page 5). The website includes case studies, local agendas, photos and documents about the eight producers' organisations.

***www.ruaf.org***

Since its launch in 2006, the RUAF website has grown to over 1100 pages and had over 500,000 visitors. The thematic subdivision and various databases simplifies searches. Parts of the RUAF video have been uploaded as well as all Englisg, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic and Turkish versions of the UA-Magazine (and links to the French and Chinese versions).

***UPE7: World Class Cities: Environmental Impacts and Planning Opportunities? (Bangkok, Thailand)***
*3 - 5 January 2007*
UPE7 aims to be a forum for discussing urban and environmental issues among professionals, academics and policy makers. The 2007 conference was organised by the Faculty of Architecture at Kasetsart University in Bangkok, Thailand, and aimed to widen its audience by looking outside the planning disciplines. For more information visit: http://www.upebangkok.org/index.php?menu=home

***FAO/IDRC Project "Urban and Periurban Agriculture: towards a better understanding of low-income producers' organizations***
***Final Workshop (FAO Rome)***
*29-31 January 2007*
The workshop convened Study Coordinators from ten developing country cities (Antananarivo, Accra, Cairo, Caracas, Dakar, Kinshasa, Harare, Hyderabad, Nairobi, Pnhom Penh), international experts of the Advisory Group and the Project Coordination Team to analyse the project results, finalise and validate guidelines for developing and strengthening fair, effective and sustainable organisations of urban and periurban producers and provide recommendations for follow-up in the cities.

***Financing Latin American Cities with Urban Land (E-course)***
*29 January – 20 April 2007*
This 12-week distance education course called "Financiamiento de Ciudades Latinoamericanas con Suelo Urbano" examines policies and instruments for financing the urban infrastructure and services, especially for low-income groups, with experience from various parts of the world and a focus on Latin America.
For more information visit: http://www.lincolninst.edu/education/education-coursedetail.asp?id=417, or contact Rosario Casanova: rosario.casanova@gmail.com

***Graywater Stock-taking Meeting (Aqaba, Jordan)***
*11-15 February 2007*
This meeting will gather a small group of experts from public and private sector organisations with experience in the MENA region to present and discuss the latest research and applications of graywater treatment and reuse, make recommendations, discuss experiences with promotion and acceptance of reuse of graywater, and seek to develop a network in the region. For more information visit: http://www.csbe.org

***NIFI's Inaugural National Conference (Las Cruces, New Mexico, USA)***
*12-14 February 2007*
The National Immigrant Farming Initiatve (NIFI) is rooted in diverse immigrant farmer experiences (among others in cities in the USA). NIFI strengthens the capacity of immigrants to farm successfully and to advance sustainable farming and food systems. For more information visit http://www.regonline.com/nifi2007

***The 3rd National Farm to Cafeteria and Food Policy Conference (Maryland, USA)***
*16-19 March 2007*
Under the title "From Cafeterias to Capitol Hill: Growing Healthy Kids, Farms and Communities", this conference will gather many experiences and stimulate a focused discussion on the Farm Bill. More information will be available at www.foodsecurity.org

***4th Annual Community Gardens & City Farms Conference (Melbourne, Australia)***
*20-25 March 2007*
Cities Feeding People- 'Grow it where you live!' is the fourth annual conference of the Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network. This conference is extending the scope of past gatherings to include Food Security, School Gardens and Seed Saving alongside the City Farms and Community Gardening key themes.
The Conference seeks to facilitate links between the education, environment, health and government sectors, showcase successful projects in Victoria and promote discussion on future projects. For more information visit: http://www.ceres.org.au or reception@ceres.org.au

***5th European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns (Sevilla, Spain)***
*21-24 March 2007*
Together with many other European partners, the city of Sevilla, ICLEI, and the Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign will jointly hold this conference to discuss ongoing efforts to mainstream sustainability practices in implementing the Aalborg Charter and Commitments on local sustainable development. The Strategic Plan Sevilla 2007 will be presented as an example. For more information visit http://www.sevilla2007.org or http://www.sustainable-cities.eu

***Meda Water: International Conference on Sustainable Water Management (Tunis, Tunisia)***
*21 - 24 March 2007*
This conference, organised by several institutions in Tunisia, discusses several water-related topics like water use, household-centred water management, rainwater capture technologies, industrial water management, risk assessment, policies and socio-economic instruments. For more information visit: http://www.zer0-m.org/medawaterconf/

***Agriculture at the Metropolitan Edge (San Francisco, USA)***
*5-6 April 2007*
Under the title "New Ruralism and Other Strategies For Sustainable Development", the UC Berkeley Center for Global Metropolitan Studies will present the programme Agriculture at the Metropolitan Edge (AME) at this conference. AME projects investigate agriculture as an integral system for sustaining metropolitan regions. For more information visit: http://newruralism.pbwiki.com/

***13th International Conference on Rainwater Catchment Systems (Australia)***
*August 2007*
The International Rainwater Catchment Systems Association (IRCSA) will hold its 13th bi-annual international conference on rainwater catchment systems in Australia this year. For more information visit: http://www.ircsa.org/conference_next.html

# Urban Agriculture Magazine

We invite your contributions to the next two issues of UA-Magazine:

**NO. 18: COMMUNITY-BASED URBAN AGRICULTURE**
**MAY 2007**
**DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS: 1 MARCH 2007**

In cities around the world urban agriculture builds urban food security, but also makes important contributions to poverty alleviation and other urban development issues. Community-based urban agriculture initiatives are frequently started by the communities themselves or by NGOs. Typically these activities focus on producing food, but the value of urban agriculture as a means of achieving several other community objectives is of equal significance. The economic, ecological and social impacts of urban agriculture are increasingly documented and acknowledged by city authorities.

This issue will seek to discuss experiences related to the *social inclusion* of recent migrants, youth and marginalised groups brought about through urban agriculture; experiences with urban agriculture and HIV/Aids projects; *revitalisation of neighbourhoods*; and *development of social and political capital* through community-based urban agriculture. Experiences from both the South and the North will be discussed.

**NO. 19: SUPPORTING INNOVATIVENESS IN URBAN FARMING SYSTEMS**
**NOVEMBER 2007**
**DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS: 1 AUGUST 2007**

Urban farming systems are in a continuous process of development and innovation is continuously taking place. Urban farming systems may not always be well adapted to the urban conditions. Urban farmers need technical support to upgrade their knowledge and improve their farming practices. Since urban agriculture often falls outside the mandate of conventional agricultural research institutes, little research into the development of adequate urban farming systems has been undertaken. Agricultural extension organisations also give little attention to the urban areas. In addition, the degree of farmer organisation is low in the city and urban NGOs often lack agricultural expertise.

This issue of UA-Magazine will be a first stock-taking effort. We seek to present and discuss a broad range of experiences involving:

- participatory methodologies for promoting innovation in urban farming systems, such as participatory technology development, farmer field schools, farmer-innovators, exchange visits, the use of ICT (radio, etc.)
- new technologies in urban farming developed in response to specific urban conditions(confined space, reuse of urban wastes/wastewater, etc.).

We are particularly interested in experiences showing the process of adapting certain methodologies and technologies to the urban setting and indicating in what ways the innovation of urban farming systems can be supported most effectively.

Please share the following aspects of your experience (if applicable) in your article:

- general details (main goal, location, actors, target group, activities)
- methods applied (how, why this method, why does it work well, with whom – links with NGOs, farmers' organisations, municipalities, etc.)
- impacts achieved (in which areas, extent, gender, unexpected impacts)
- problems/challenges faced, solutions found, and major lessons learned
- the way forward (future plans, new partners, support required from whom, etc.)

*Articles on urban agriculture submitted to UA-Magazine should consist of approximately 2,300 words (for three-page articles), 1,600 words (for two-page articles), or 700 words (for one–page articles), preferably accompanied by an abstract, references (maximum of 5), figures and good-quality digital images or photographs. The articles should be written in a manner that can be readily understood by a wide variety of stakeholders all over the world. We also invite you to submit information on recent publications, journals, videos, photographs, cartoons, letters, technology descriptions and assessments, workshops, training courses, conferences, networks, web-links, etc.*



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