

GUIDELINES FOR MUNICIPAL POLICYMAKING ON URBAN AGRICULTURE

Urban Agriculture and Food Sovereignty



Four Reasons Why Urban Agriculture Matters

Hunger is growing

In less than 30 years, the number of people who go to bed hungry in Latin America has increased by 20%: as many as 65 million people are now affected. Feeding the entire population is a challenge that cities must meet.

Natural medicines for all

The poor spend between 40 and 60% of their scarce incomes on food and almost 15% on health care and medicine. The production of medicinal plants and derived products — infusions, extracts, and essences, — facilitates access to health care for the very poor and marginalized.

Recycling wastes and wastewater can help ensure food security in cities

Only 2% of the waste produced in our cities is treated properly. Thousands of cubic meters of wastewaters are not being used or are treated at a high cost. These can be transformed, however, into excellent sources of natural fertilizer, irrigation water, and nutritional supplements for animals.

Creating low-cost employment and generating income

Urban agriculture (UA) generates employment at a low cost in relation to the estimated costs of other productive sectors. Creating on job in UA costs less than US \$ 500, an investment that can be recovered through micro-credits.

The benefits in terms of food, health, the environment, and job creation explain why an increasing number of municipalities want to develop and modernize their urban agriculture programs.

This series of guidelines is based on current scientific and technological research and reflects innovative practices in cities in the region. These practices are a source of inspiration: we invite you to share them and, in turn, enrich the experience.

Happy urban harvesting!

Y.C.



Challenges

A growing number of people suffer from hunger and malnutrition in municipalities throughout the region.

Many municipalities aspire to achieve food sovereignty by increasing their ability to produce essential food supplies for their citizens. They also seek to provide low-income groups with access to safe and healthy food, of sufficient quality and quantity, while respecting productive and cultural diversity.

Policies that stimulate agricultural production and food sovereignty are usually scattered among a number of different departments (health, education, social assistance, agriculture, food security, etc.) and different levels of government (local, regional, national).

Although actions at the regional and national levels are important, it is at the municipal level that innovative policies can be implemented to guarantee the production and the equitable distribution of food in a way that meets local needs. Municipal policy concerning food sovereignty can foster activities and initiatives that promote social equity and inclusion.

"Food sovereignty is the people's right to define their own viable policies and strategies for sustainable food production, distribution, and consumption of food; to guarantee the right to food for the entire population, based on small and medium-size production and respecting their own culture and diversity...and in which women play a fundamental role."

Declaration of the World Forum on Food Sovereignty, Cuba, 2001.



Five Guiding Principles for Policymaking

In support of urban agriculture's potential for achieving food sovereignty

1. Defining a place for food sovereignty within the municipal administration

Establishing the position of a food program or unit within the municipal administrative structure is important. Units that report directly to City Hall and have their own budgets and infrastructure (such as a municipal department or secretariat) reflect the municipality's greater commitment to a policy that includes food sovereignty in real terms. Moreover, food sovereignty projects and programs should be included in other sectoral policies, such as environmental management, market management, or social and economic development. Linking the food program to nongovernmental or private initiatives is also important and should be considered when designing public policies in order to maximize the impact of joint actions and avoid the duplication of efforts and waste of resources.

In Belo Horizonte (Brazil) a Municipal Supply Secretariat (Secretaría Municipal de Abastecimiento – SMAB) was created in 1993, directly linked to the Mayor's office. Its goal is to centralize the planning, coordination, and implementation of food supply and security policies. The SMAB coordinates 19 programs that cover issues of food production, marketing, and consumption. It is funded with resources from the federal government's Food Program for Schools (40%) and the municipal budget (60%).

2. Promoting and regulating local production of food

A family's food security improves with its ability to produce and/or obtain an adequate quantity of food to meet its ongoing needs. In addition to providing food for home consumption, family farming allows excess production to be sold, thereby providing an income and increasing the family's purchasing power. Local governments

and civil society actors play an important role in promoting local production, either by individuals or community groups, by providing technical assistance, facilitating access to inputs, microcredits, and arable land. (See Guidelines 3 and 4.) Special consideration should be given to such issues as production diversification, culture, nutrition, and health.

Ecologically sound production and promotion of traditional varieties

The provincial government of Havana (Cuba) promotes organic urban agriculture by restricting the use of agrochemicals and promoting a higher level of awareness concerning ecologically and environmentally sound agricultural practices. For instance, in some communities in the city, the cultivation of Sagú (*Maranta arundinacea L.*) is promoted. This plant has a long tradition in the Cuban diet, but is no longer cultivated in rural areas. Because it is easy to digest, Sagú is used as a weaning food for infants, and for the elderly or those with digestive problems.

Producing medicinal plants

The municipality of Rosario (Argentina) promotes the cultivation of medicinal plants among other foods grown by families. Cultivating medicinal plants, used for infusions, oils, etc., helps to safeguard traditional knowledge and helps families offset the cost of purchasing medicines.

3. Facilitating and improving access to food

The agro-food market should be regulated by direct or indirect intervention in the following:

Market price control

The SMAB is implementing two programs in Belo Horizonte (Brazil), "ABasteCer" and "O Comboio do Trabalhador," as tools for regulating the price of food products, particularly fresh vegetables, fruits, and meat and its byproducts.



Feeding vulnerable groups, Belo Horizonte – Brazil



Medicinal plant plots, Montevideo – Uruguay

Small businesses buy the products from the State Supply Centre (Central de Abastecimiento Estadual) with the commitment to sell those products at a price not exceeding the maximum price established by the SMAB. This arrangement benefits the 138,000 families that shop in 34 sales outlets.

Increasing the supply and quality of services

It is necessary to set out operating rules for sanitary conditions, such as bathrooms, waste management, personal hygiene, consumer care, the provision of equipment, inputs and products.

Creating commercial spaces for urban agriculture production

Opening new marketing spaces, channels, or circuits allows UA producers, either individually or as a group, to have direct access to an urban market (without brokering) and to offer their products at a better price, under better marketing conditions. (See Guideline 9.)

4. Strengthening spaces for a caring economy

Together with the formal marketing systems, several cities in the region have developed innovative alternatives for “caring marketing,” such as the following:

Support for the neediest

The local government or other organizations should provide food supplements, preferably UA products, to the most vulnerable groups and social institutions (schools, health centres, etc.).

The Municipality of **Camilo Aldao (Argentina)** promoted the national credit program for family farming: “Programa Agropecuario Social,” through which microcredits provided to supply local schools and health centres could be paid back in kind (fresh vegetables, candies, fruits, etc.).

Direct link between producers and consumers

Mechanisms should be established to directly link producers to consumers, thereby facilitating the marketing of healthy and high-quality products, at a good price.

The **Tribuna Ecuatoriana de Consumidores y Usuarios**, a consumers’ NGO in **Quito (Ecuador)**, has successfully brought together different consumer groups interested in responsible, equitable, and sustainable consumption practices. Consumers obtain the products they need directly from organic producers.

Creating bartering clubs

In **Fortaleza (Brazil)**, the **Feria de Produtores de Banco Palmas** was created to provide UA producers with a place where they can show their products every week. The social exchange currency is called “Palmares” and is used to facilitate the exchange or bartering of products, thereby promoting a caring consumption that strengthens local distribution chains.

5. Promoting food diversity and products with high nutritional value

An inadequate and unbalanced food intake is not necessarily the result of food scarcity. It may also be due to a lack of knowledge of nutrition principles. It is extremely important to know the nutritional value of food, the best way of preparing food, and the most nutritious combinations. Also important is knowledge of hygienic handling and proper food distribution among family members, particularly children and pregnant women.

Improving eating habits

Eating habits can be improved through the dissemination of published material and education about food options, nutritional values, and diets.

In **Teresina (Brazil)**, City Hall provides support for the **Community Farm Program**, especially targeting large, low-income families. By delivering information brochures and providing training, the program promotes the inclusion of fresh vegetables, fruits, and small animals (for protein) in farming systems and diet.



Creating spaces for marketing, Cuenca – Ecuador



Animal protein as a dietary complement, Lima – Peru

"Small and medium-size municipalities should pay more attention to the link between food supply and local agricultural production. Several municipal initiatives can be used to provide incentives for programs such as farmer's markets, home delivery of fresh products, training courses for family farming, assignment of vacant lots to food production, and the use of differential taxes for land under production".

Project "Fome Zero" (Zero Hunger), a proposal for a food security policy for Brazil. Administration of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva

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Contacts:

Eugenio Fuster. Delegate of the Ministry of Agriculture for Havana, Cuba. Tel.: (53 7) 454287 / (53 7) 451646; Email: aurbana@ip.etecsa.cu

Moisés Machado. Consultant for the Municipal Secretariat of Supply (SMAB), City Hall of Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Email: mmoises@pbh.gov.br

Sandra María Magalhães. AGORA XXI / Banco Palmas. Tel.: (55 85) 2 196 100 (AGORA XXI), (55 85) 2 693 800 (Banco Palmas); Email: agoraxxi@fortalnet.com.br (AGORA XXI), bancopalmas@uol.com.br (Banco Palmas)

Isabel Muñoz. Technical Advisor on food security. Tribuna Ecuatoriana de Consumidores y Usuarios, Quito, Ecuador. Tel.: (593 2) 2509510/520; Email: tribuna@hoy.net

Teresa Sunde. Coordinator of the Urban Agriculture Program, City Hall of Camilo Aldao, Córdoba, Argentina. Tel.: (54 3468) 461 260 / 461 649; Email: munca@futurnet.com.ar / teresund@cbsur.com.ar

Paulo Okamoto. President of the Instituto Cidadania. Ipiranga-SP, Brazil. Tel.: (55 11) 69157022; Email: ic.fome@uol.com.br

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This document was written by Marielle Dubbeling and Alain Santandreu (IPES/PGU-ALC).

Text copy-edited by Mónica Rhon D.

Advice on Communication and Design: Roberto Valencia (Zonacuاريو)

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1. Urban agriculture: A tool for sustainable municipal development
2. Urban agriculture and citizen involvement
3. Urban agriculture: Land use management and physical planning
4. Micro-credit and investment for urban agriculture
5. Recycling organic wastes in urban agriculture
6. Treatment and use of wastewaters in urban agriculture
7. Urban agriculture: Fostering equity between men and women
8. Urban agriculture and food sovereignty
9. Processing and marketing urban agriculture products

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IDRC  CRDI

International Development Research Centre
250 Albert St, PO Box 8500
Ottawa, ON, Canada K1G 3H9
Tel.: (613) 236-6163, ext. 2310
Email: blwilson@idrc.ca
www.idrc.ca

IPES

Promotion of Sustainable Development

Jorge Price,
Executive Director
Calle Audiencia Nº 194, San Isidro
Apartado Postal 41-0200
Tel.: (51 1) 440-6099/ 421-6684.
Email: ipes@ipes.org.pe



Yves Cabannes, Regional coordinator
García Moreno 751 entre Sucre y Bolívar
Fax: 593-258 39 61 / 228 23 61
Email: pgu@pgu-ecu.org
www.pgualc.org

Canada 

...the farmer's market, S. de los Caballeros - Dominican Republic

