

Agriculture in Kampala is practised mainly in valley slums where the poor live in informal settlements.

Although urban agriculture offers easy access to services and markets, gaining access to land to grow food and rear animals is a challenge for the urban poor.



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Many poor people lack land ownership

Access to Land for Urban Agriculture in Kampala

Urban farming is becoming an ever-present, complex and dynamic feature of the urban landscape and socio-economic reality in Uganda and the rest of Africa. Whereas urban agriculture in some African cities is a matter of a thriving livelihood culture, in Kampala it is an initiative to lessen the growing poverty. However, it is also an activity that puts pressure on resources and the cohabitation of town-dwellers, vegetable growers and livestock farmers can lead to conflict.

THE EMERGENCE OF URBAN FARMING

In Uganda, urban farming started in the early 1970s. Since then the urban population has grown considerably and an increasing number of vulnerable households have turned to urban cultivation as an alternative source of food, as a means of saving on food expenditure, and as a way of generating cash income. Initially urban agriculture was mainly a survival strategy of the poorest of the urban poor, but increasingly farming activities have gained importance among the urban poor, and among a significant proportion of low- and medium-income earners.

Kampala city has a population of about 1.5 million inhabitants, nearly 14% of the total Ugandan population. Of the Kampala

inhabitants, 40% consume either a crop or animal product produced in the city, while 70% of all poultry products consumed are produced within the city (Ssebaana 2002). Women and children are primarily involved in urban agriculture in Kampala, which includes farm chores like weeding, planting and harvesting. In contrast, men prefer quick income generating projects. A small proportion of urban agricultural produce is intended for sale, while the majority of it is for home consumption.

Urban migrants often settle in informal, low-income areas with limited opportunities for income generation. Their major cash crop is the cocoyam. Other crops grown include *Amaranthus* (pigweed), finger millet, cowpea, green pepper, and sugarcane. The urban poor cannot afford fertilisers and resort to other means such as bio-fertilisers (*Tithonia diversifolia* or Mexican sunflower). In the urban areas, high-value crops such as vegetables are in demand. Selling the surplus vegetables may lead to substantial income savings and subsequently the ability to purchase or rent land. Often, the poor people form income-generating groups or projects to meet their basic needs and to offer assistance to the community. These groups comprise mainly of women and have cultural names like “*Tweyambe*” meaning “self-help”. Urban farming is a survival strategy for many of the urban poor, yet their farming systems are poorly understood and supported by extension services.

ACCESS TO LAND BY THE URBAN POOR

Land in Kampala is held and administered in a complex web of management regimes,

which constrains access and ownership. The British administrators introduced a system of land tenure in 1900, under which land was divided into *mailo* (from the English word mile) as private land belonging to the Ganda King and chiefs and public (crown) land owned by the Queen of England. Most urban poor settlements and activities are on *Mailo*, a form of freehold where individuals control access, irrespective of their capacity to develop the land. The majority of the poor, gain their access to land as customary tenants on privately owned land in periurban areas, a form of land tenure unique to Buganda known as *bibanja* (plots) on mailoland.

Annual crops are commonly grown by many poor people as they lack land ownership rights and gain access to land in poor areas like wetlands, road and railway reservations or waste disposal sites. Others utilise their backyards or encroach on undeveloped land left to fallow by landowners. Despite being squatters, the poor have usufruct on the plots they farm. Landlords and city authorities do not allow squatters to grow perennial crops, yet the poor squatters stand to be evicted at any time if the occupied land is going to be “developed”. Security personnel, i.e. policemen, claim that crops such as bananas and maize grow tall and create hideouts for thieves. Therefore, Kampala City Council personnel often slash such crops grown by poor people. This means that the poor lose their livelihood, their continued income and food security for their families. Other government authorities such as the Electricity Board often slash crops that are found growing in places where the electricity lines run.

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ACCESS TO LAND FOR URBAN AGRICULTURE

Land for urban agriculture is accessed in many different ways (Nuwagaba et al, 2003): squatting (46%), borrowing (34%), inheriting (11%), renting (5%), co-owning with spouses (4%). Currently in Uganda, the spouse co-ownership of land is a contentious issue particularly among gender activists who contend that women have for long been left out from the benefits of family resources. The majority of urban farmers in Kampala (60%) indicate that they are actively searching for land, and mention to have plans to borrow from government or relatives, or seek funds to buy.

Land in Kampala is administered in a complex web of management regimes

The existing institutional procedures for accessing land in Kampala city are highly bureaucratic, time-consuming and complex. They intimidate urban farmers, who generally lack the knowledge, information and contacts to file an application for acquiring land. Urban farmers in their quest for farming land have often violated and contravened regulatory measures for allocation, utilisation and plot layouts. All this has been attributed to lack of policy responsiveness to the need for planning with urban farming in context.

URBAN POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

Urban farming has been found to function nowadays as a 'double-edged sword' with both nutritional and health as well as economic benefits. Despite this significant contribution, there is no substantive provision in the law that aims at streamlining informal sector activities such as farming in urban areas. Underlying the practice of urban agriculture in Kampala is the fact that it is technically illegal. The by-laws banning the practice are enforced erratically, and have little impact on urban farming.

Urban farming is also prohibited in 'high-density areas'. 'High density' is unrealistically defined as an area with more than two households per acre of land, whereas in most Kampala neighbourhoods there can be as many as 40 households on an acre of land. The 1964

Town Planning Act mandates the Local Urban authorities to enforce regulations for 'development control' in their areas of jurisdiction. In earlier years this Act provided the basis for Kampala City enforcement officials to harass those who carried out urban farming in the city, since the Act views farming as an activity at odds with the urban standards. In Uganda, the Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA) focuses solely on rural agriculture. However, the government lacks resources to provide enough extension services for this programme.

Although urban agriculture has no legal status in Uganda, city planners and national policy makers have recently recognised the central role of urban agriculture in the wider urban economy. In 1994, a section known as the Urban Agriculture Unit was established within Kampala City Council's (KCC) Production and Marketing Department. Formerly, before decentralisation of Kampala District, it was directly under the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF). The broad objective of this Unit is to support and guide the communities in urban agriculture and to ensure household nutrition and food security. A number of achievements have been made, like training of farmers in various crop and animal husbandry skills, and in domestic garbage management and re-use in urban agriculture. Financial support to this Unit by KCC is still relatively small.

Since November 2000, Kampala city authorities, researchers and donors have been working together to address the challenges of urban agriculture under the Urban Harvest programme, led by the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA), which investigates urban agriculture in the livelihood strategies of the urban poor. A related Health Impact Assessment of urban agriculture in Kampala has been undertaken by a Health Coordinating Committee (HCC), established in June 2002, with active involvement of Kampala City Council (KCC). There is an active link between research and policy making. KCC has accordingly legislated urban agriculture in Kampala City (Urban Agriculture Ordinance 2001). The ordinance provides for the licensing, control and regulation of crop farming and animal rearing in the city.

SUPPORTING URBAN FARMING

The present legal framework regarding urban farming is still far from supportive. The city authorities have made attempts to recognise urban farming but do not provide for the planning or zoning of such activities. Neither the former "harassment" approach nor the current "permissive" approach functions well. Up to date, the City Council needs to issue a permit for people to engage in urban agriculture. The urban poor are not aware of this, while the City prefers to provide licenses to agro-business entrepreneurs (e.g. large poultry farms). This simply means that urban agriculture is carried out without any regulation or authorisation. However, a specific and clear



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framework is needed to make urban agriculture sustainable and productive.

A more pragmatic, multi-sectoral and integrated approach would include building partnerships with farmer organisations and other civil society organisations, capacity building, and the identification of zones where urban farming is permitted. Also linkages with programmes that focus on poverty reduction through urban agriculture including planners, agriculture specialists, environmentalists, and community development specialists are necessary. This approach would transform urban farming from an illicit practice to a much-appreciated and highly beneficial activity.

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