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Informal Advise Network of Urban Farmers in Kampala / Uganda — A Network Analysis of Social Relations

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Abstract

Peri-urban and urban Farmers in Kampala/Uganda play a vital part for the food supply of the capital. In general they are small-scale farmers but they have to face distinct challenges. Phytopathological problems, labour intensive cultures or poor ways of marketing are evident, most of farmers are excluded of affordable credits for necessary investments or for inputs in production. In the context of previous structural adjustment programs and an insolvent state or capital district extension services could not reach most of the urban farmers. In this situation farmers have to develop their agriculture by their own. Farmers have to find appropriate solutions for these challenges by their own possibilities and demands. Informal and formal networks could give an answer at an organisational dimension to allocate resources or as a medium for the exchange of ideas, for planning and acting commonly. As a term a network is defined as a specific set of linkages among a defined set of actors, with the additional property that the characteristics of these linkages as a whole may be used to interpret the social behaviour of the actors involved. The concept of network analysis could work in this case study as a method to analyse existing social relations and structures in urban agriculture to identify and describe cohesive and dense groups, the degree of reciprocity between the farmers or different positions in the structure of the network. The research project took place in 2002 to analyse existing network relationships between farmers. Different networks of farmers had been identified and relevant relationships like the “network of phytomedicine advise between farmers” has been analysed. It has been compared with the “neighbourhood network” of the same defined set of farmers. Apart from the formally network analysis attributes of farmers like age, gender, types of problems in agriculture or the availability of resources have been compared and discussed with the characteristics of the networks on individual, sub-group and network level.

Keywords: Agriculture, horticulture, network analysis, peri-urban, social relations, social structure, urban