



Tropentag, September 17-19, 2013, Stuttgart-Hohenheim
“Agricultural development within the rural-urban continuum”

The Socio-Economic Impact of Urban Agriculture

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Abstract

In recent years, food security has become an increasingly urgent concern in national and international policy debates. High and volatile global food prices and their effect on food access by low-income groups has been an important catalyst for this renewed attention.

Most of the projected increase in the world's population over the next several decades is expected to occur in urban centres of low-income regions, hence poverty in this century will become increasingly urban in nature, and so will food insecurity. Urban food security is about much more than the production of food, and requires policy frameworks that encourage rural-urban-linked development approaches.

Cities in developing countries are confronted with enormous challenges and their resources are often rather limited (especially so in sub-Saharan Africa). The growing interest for urban and peri-urban agriculture was and is triggered by recognition of its (potential) multiple co-benefits and contributions to not only improving food security and nutrition, but also to community organisation, city greening, waste management, income and employment generation and —more recently- city resilience and climate change adaptation (including flood mitigation and reduction of urban temperatures).

The effects of UPA on poverty alleviation vary with the type of participants involved, the products produced and degree of market orientation, amongst other things, but in developing countries, the proportion of the urban population that is involved in UPA or UPA-related activities is often quite substantial. These households benefit from UPA in various ways, such as savings, income and improved access to nutritious food.

A general overview of the impact of UPA on food security will be given, as well as main lessons from a RUAF/UN-HABITAT/IDRC study in five cities (Accra, Bogota, Colombo, Kitwe and Rosario) on food and nutrition security and the impact of a crisis.

Lessons include the need for interventions in low-income areas that show the possibilities to reduce the costs of food without reducing its nutritional content, which need to be part of broader policies on urban food systems including urban agriculture.

Keywords: Food security, income generation, multi-functionality, urban and peri-urban agriculture, urban planning