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“Solidarity in a competing world —
fair use of resources”

Increasing Food Sovereignty with Urban Agriculture in Cuba

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Abstract

Urban agriculture in Cuba has played an important role for citizens' food supply since the collapse of the Eastern Block. Through the land reform of 2008 and the Lineamientos of 2011, the Cuban government has aimed to support agriculture in order to increase national food production and reduce imports. However, the implementation of the designed measures faced obstacles. Therefore, the research objective was to display how the government's measures aiming to support domestic food production influenced urban agriculture. The qualitative research comprised semi-structured interviews with 15 urban farmers in Havana and revealed the respondents' experiences with the land reform and the Lineamientos and the potential of the reforms to implement food sovereignty. Findings show that the land reform has facilitated access to land for newcomer and existing farmers. However, availability of agricultural inputs has been limited and they were often expensive. Thus, urban farmers frequently produced farm inputs at their plots and applied sustainable farming practices to minimise their dependence on external inputs. The reforms have generated private marketing opportunities and have stimulated urban farmers to increase production. At the same time, subsidies have been reduced and consumers have faced increasing food prices. In conclusion, the land reform and the Lineamientos have created framework conditions for food sovereignty. However, the challenge is to increase the coherence of the theoretic aim and the practical implementation of the reforms. Cuba is known for its urban agriculture but additional measures related to governance and policy could help amplifying the already existing achievements in social, economic and ecological terms.

Keywords: Food sovereignty, governance, urban agriculture, urban farming, urban gardening