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"Solidarity in a competing world — fair use of resources"

Alternative Food Sources When Living in the City: Coping with Rising Food Prices in Kampala

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Abstract

With some of the highest urbanisation rates in the world, sub-Saharan Africa is facing serious challenges in providing sufficient and healthy foods for its growing urban populations. Fresh fruits and vegetables at urban markets are often too expensive for the poor. Alternative food sources can provide solutions to a rising urban demand for healthy, nutrient-dense foods, but only if recognised and treated as a fair alternative practice. In many countries urban agriculture is still considered controversial and non-metropolitan. Additionally, collection of edible wild species as an alternative food source in urban and peri-urban areas has only received scant attention in natural resource studies and development projects. Consequently, data on the importance of these alternative food sources for food security of urban communities are largely missing. This study aimed at assessing the extent and importance of urban agriculture and wild food sources for poor residents in Kampala, Uganda. A total of 98 urban and peri-urban households with gardens were purposively selected, food plants in the gardens inventoried and respondents interviewed on socio-economic data, household food security levels, plant uses and food sources. In addition, respondents were asked about wild collection behaviour, in both urban and rural areas, as well as dependency on rural connections. Kampala's gardens can be considered highly diverse, with 75 edible plant species found, including 24 vegetable, 24 fruit, 14 condiment, eight root/tuber, four legume and one sugar/syrup species. At least a third of the identified species can be considered indigenous, species that are often underutilised yet can have important nutritional properties to enhance food and nutrition security. Furthermore, 25 % of the respondents reported collecting edible species from the urban environment, 23 % reported collecting in rural areas, and 33 % reported being sent farm produce from relatives in rural areas within the six months preceding the interview. These findings indicate that wild and farm plant resources play an important role in the lives of Kampala's residents, which means that in order to ensure fair access to alternative food sources policy makers and urban planners need to be aware of diverse land use types and incorporate them in future development plans.

Keywords: Food security, natural resource management, nutrition, Uganda, urban agriculture, wild food plants

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