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“Global food security and food safety:
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Urban Gardening: Opportunities for Food Security and Institutional Barriers During Expo 2015

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Abstract

The expansion of urban areas on a global scale has been consuming the agricultural land, while the production of fresh food has been pushed towards the rural areas only. The costs of transport, packaging and refrigeration has been affecting prices and the availability of fruit and vegetables on urban markets.

According to FAO, by 2025 most of the population in every region will be settled down in urban areas. ‘Greener cities’ could thus represent a possibility to ensure healthy food and means of sustainable subsistence, as well as a new face for community and biodiversity in urban areas.

The main objective of this study is the understanding of institutional barriers that may take place when it comes to urban gardening and agriculture.

A specific focus has been given to the case of Moving Forest — the 300.000 m² of urban forest, Mediterranean Hill and Horti realised in Milan during Expo 2015. In line with the general theme of Expo 2015 (‘Feeding the Planet, Energy for life’), the Moving Forest did bring back to life the concept of urban landscape as a source of livelihood.

However, research results show that barriers to urban gardening still exist, linked to the governance structures that shape and regulate urban gardening efforts. Interviews with stakeholder involved in the planning and realisation of the Moving Forest revealed a lack of institutions (therefore norms, instruments and values capable of enabling new greener infrastructures), barriers emerging from bureaucracy (thus regulatory bounds and structural/operational constraints), and issues linked to the administrative structure in place. The overall regulatory and institutional arrangement proved to be an obstacle to the implementation of measures such as the Moving Forest.

Against this background, options for institutional change are explored and their implications carefully discussed.

Keywords: Climate change, food security, institutional barriers, urban forest, urban gardening