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Urban Agriculture Uptake in African Cities: Bottom-up Approach Perspectives from the Cape Flats in Cape Town, South Africa

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Abstract

It is widely accepted that urban agriculture is an important food security coping strategy amongst the poorest urban households in African cities.Urban agriculture is a common feature across most cities in Southern Africa. The practice continues to generate significant interest across the African continent due to its capacity to promote household food and nutrition security, incomes, better physical health and greener cities.Rapid urbanisation and climate change-induced extreme weather events have increased the demand for sustainable ways of achieving food nutrition and security in urban areas. In this context, urban agriculture is one crucial way of mitigating the effects of climate changes. It is also encouraged due to its multi-dimensional capacity to contribute towards the fulfilment of sustainable urban centres. For example, urban agriculture possesses the capacity to contribute towards Sustainable Developmental Goals 2, 11 and 13 which are food security, sustainable cities and climate action respectively. However, the practice of urban agriculture is largely characterised by limited engagement by low-income households and its contribution to food security is limited partly due to low uptake by urban residents. A number of studies have provided studies which show the challenges that urban agriculture is faced with, for example, poor policy environments and land tenure insecurity. Therefore, this article addresses this gap, by providing a bottom-up perspective on how the uptake of urban agriculture activities could be increased. This paper presents results from a case-study examining various perspectives on the uptake of urban agriculture activities among the urban gardeners of Mitchells Plain, Cape Town, South Africa. A mixed-methods approach, combining a questionnaire survey and qualitative interviews with urban gardeners, as well as interviews with officials was exploited. Key results show that although climate and soil conditions remain major deterrents, urban agriculture needs to be driven alongside its associated social and environmental benefits. The findings provide support for future interventions to promote sustainable urban agriculture in low-income neighbourhoods in Cape Town and other African cities.

Keywords: Cape Flats, South Africa, sustainable cities, sustainable Development Goals, uptake, urban agriculture

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