

One principal factor for the slow development of the urban and peri-urban agricultural sector in Zimbabwe is the inadequate, or in some cases total absence of financing arrangements, especially from the formal sector. There are two explanations for this state of affairs, first that the rapid rise in urban agriculture is a fairly new phenomenon, and second, that it has also retained the tag of an illegal activity in most urban settlements. As such, funds that have been available to other sectors from especially non-governmental organisations and international development agencies have not been extended to urban and peri-urban agriculture.



Demonstration plot for Musikavanhu Project in Mabvuku

Different Kinds of Investment

Kintyre Lake County and Musikavanhu Project experiences in Urban Agriculture

Zimbabwe has an agro-based economy with a well-developed agriculture sector. This sector is categorised into five levels: large-, medium- and small-scale commercial farming, communal farming and more recently the category of resettled farmers [which can also be categorised

for agricultural purposes in Zimbabwe has been classified as 'on-plot' and 'off-plot' types. The on-plot type is usually practised on the residential stand itself and is usually limited to the production of vegetables. There are three main types of residential plots in urban Zimbabwe, based on size as follows: high density (150 – 300 m²); medium density (300 – 1,000 m²), and low density (1000 m² and above). The off-plot agricultural activities on the other hand take place on open spaces reserved for future uses, and along riverbanks, dams and catchment areas, along roadsides, railway reserves and hills. These types of activities can either be legal or illegal depending on whether permission from the local authority has been granted or not. Until recently, local authorities have viewed urban agriculture as demanding a large portion of urban land and having negative environmental and health impacts. The authorities therefore tried to deter or stop agricultural activities from continuing, though this attitude has since changed. Now, urban local authorities, with the help of non-governmental organisations

like the Municipal Development Programme (MDP) and Fambidzanai Permaculture Centre are seeking ways to work together productively with urban farmers to promote sustainable and environment-friendly urban agriculture.

Commercial farmers practise high value intensive peri-urban agriculture on farms surrounding the city. Peri-urban communal production is also practised in satellite areas to Harare, such as Seke and Domboshawa, from which tomatoes and other vegetables are drawn.

This article draws on the experiences of two schemes in Harare – Musikavanhu Project and the Kintyre Lake Country (KLC) Development. The former is a fairly well established co-operative scheme for the urban resource-poor that has been in existence since 1998 while the latter is a land development scheme implemented by the private sector since 1999. The two provide useful information on which to evaluate the prospects for financing urban and peri-urban agriculture for the different income groups.

There is a need for a tier of local institutions to emerge

into large, medium and small scale]. Urban agriculture can be considered to be a recent addition to these categories, although it is not exactly a new phenomenon. The areas under cultivation have increased by over 100% since independence in 1980. The last increase is attributed to the impact of the economic structural adjustment programme (ESAP) introduced in the early 1990s. Under ESAP, urban agriculture has become an important coping strategy for resource-poor families. The use of the urban space

KINTYRE LAKE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT

Kintyre Lake County Development (KLC), formerly Kintyre Estates, is a land development project that integrates urban agriculture and other traditional urban land uses. The project is situated 27 km from central Harare along the Bulawayo road. It is a multi-faceted peri-urban development project valued in excess of Z \$2.4 billion⁽¹⁾. When the project is complete, it will have 50 intensive agricultural plots and 86 mountainside residential units for executive homes, a holiday resort centre comprising an upmarket hotel and casino, a business centre with food courts and retail shops, and an on-site Export Processing Zone, among others.

There is a demand for peri-urban plots by the urban elites and KLC is filling in the gap for this niche market. The purpose of the project is to provide land and other development opportunities to high-income earners. The project was conceived as a direct call by the Government of Zimbabwe to intensify the export drive and facilitate economic empowerment. The plots are on freehold tenure.

Although the project is in its infancy, it has generated substantial interest from local, regional and international investors. Investors regard the project as an opportunity to increase their portfolio.

Several institutional and private sector investors supported the project's infra-

The co-operative has had no major investors

structural development. The development of residential and commercial properties will be financed from savings or mortgage financing from building societies. KLC is an economic venture that aims in the first instance at enterprise development in agriculture. The area has 50 plots, with a minimum of 10 hectares, which can be utilised for agricultural purposes. The agricultural component will specialise in intensive horticulture and floriculture, some within greenhouses. Marketing is facilitated by the establishment or conferring of export-processing-zone status, meaning that the small-scale agricultural concerns in the area will be able to enjoy incentives to export their produce. Furthermore, the area has easy access to the main road.

The impact of this project is both at city and regional level. When fully developed, the project shall increase food security for the towns in the vicinity; generate employment; and revenue through taxes. The agricultural component of the project shall create employment for thousands of Zimbabweans in the production, marketing and manufacturing of agricultural products. The Export Processing Zone will benefit the Zimbabwean economy by increasing foreign currency earnings from the production of flowers of which Zimbabwe is the second largest exporter

in Africa after Kenya. The owners of plots shall be the direct beneficiaries as they will earn income realised from the production. The EPZ is set to earn Zimbabwe US\$50 million in foreign currency annually from the proceeds of the exports.

MUSIKAVANHU PROJECT

Residents from a low-income suburb of Budiriro in Harare initiated the Musikavanhu Project in 1999, with the aim of improving the living standards of the urban resource-poor from urban farming. The project was a direct response to a call by the city authorities for urban farmers to be organised so that the Harare City Council could engage with them on issues of urban farming. Some of the objectives of the project are to lobby for land, mobilise other resources and inputs, and facilitate networking with key stakeholders in order to improve food security and incomes and empowerment of its members.

During its formation, the project engaged in a land and membership mobilisation exercise. By promising urban farmers that they would retain the use of their plots if they joined, and that they would benefit from its wide network of supporters, including the government, it attracted urban farmers in the suburbs targeted to join in. The Project's activities have spread to other low-income suburbs of Harare that include Glen Norah, Tafara, Mabvuku, Mufakose and Kuwadzana. The group has an acclaimed membership of twenty thousand in Harare alone. The project practises both on-plot and off-plot cultivation, and specialises in staple and cash crop production using both mechanical and manual methods. There are also plans to launch the project in other cities in the country.

The project members are organised in groups of thirty families each, called phases. Committees, whose chairpersons are members of the project's overall executive body, run these groups. Free inputs for demonstration purposes are mobilised from well-wishers and provided to all groups. Each group has a demonstration plot, and in total the project has an estimated 10 acres of demonstration plots

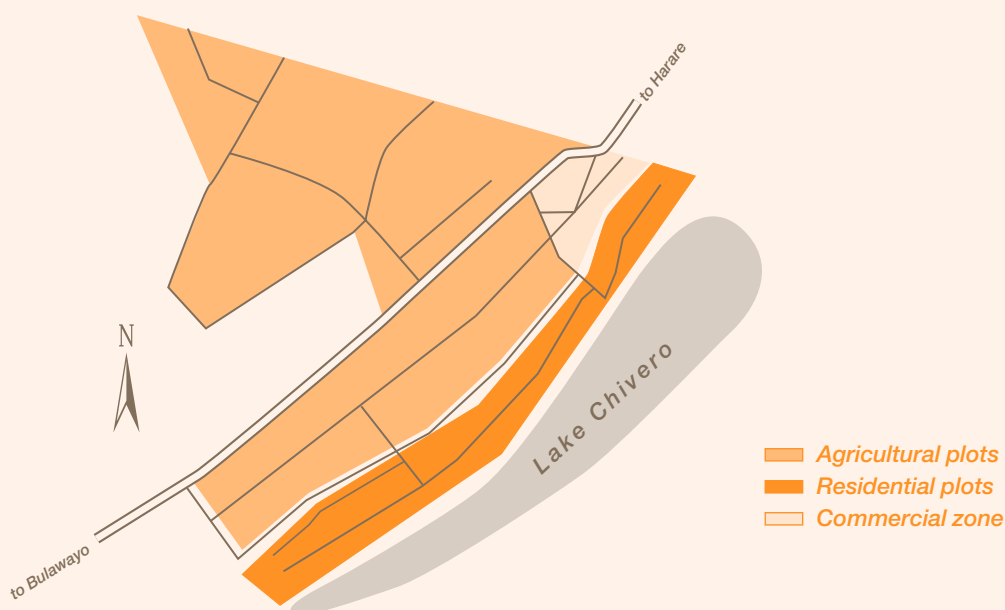


Figure 1: Lay out of Kintyre Lake County

around the city. Project members have to date received extension services from the Department of Agriculture's Technical and Extension Services, Seed Company [SEEDCO] and Agricura and Monsanto Zimbabwe

Each household has a plot allocated to it for growing vegetables during the dry season and maize production during the rainy season. During the 2001/2 farming season, members of the co-operative individually benefited from the government-sponsored input credit scheme.

The project has had no major investors. Currently, it draws income from member-

that formal jobs will be difficult to come by, some men have joined the project. However, the effective participation of women is still limited by their other domestic duties. Whilst women form a very large majority of the members of Musikavanhu, the leadership is largely made up of men.

The project has succeeded in demonstrating that it is possible to practise organised and sustainable urban agriculture with the support of the local authority. The project beneficiaries are the urban poor and unemployed. There are approximately 20,000 people who benefit directly as members in the form of income and food

The project was initially dominated by women

s' subscription fees. Each member pays an initial membership fee of Z\$300⁽¹⁾ and thereafter an annual subscription fee of Z\$150. However, most members are not up-to-date with their payments, a result of the economic hardships. Many members stopped paying once they were allocated the plots. Only about 20% of the members pay their subscription fees each year. This has been tolerated because the bulk of the membership is unemployed.

The leadership of the project has approached many organisations for financial and material support. The sole agricultural bank in Zimbabwe, Agribank, was approached for financial assistance in March 2001 but has to date not responded. Most sponsors are reluctant to support the project because urban agriculture is still perceived as an illegal practice and not as an alternative form of urban land use. Input suppliers provide assistance as a marketing strategy. Recently, Environment Africa and Nico Orgo, a organic fertiliser manufacturing company have committed themselves to support the project.

The Musikavanhu project covers several thematic areas. These range from poverty alleviation, social services and environmental management. The project was initially dominated by women as men felt that urban agriculture was not a lucrative activity for them. However, with the demonstrated results and the realisation

supplies. The average size of a family in Zimbabwe is six, which means that there are about 100,000 more people who benefit indirectly from the activities. Family income is increased and the food security situation in the member households is improved.

The impacts of the project are diverse. The objectives of ensuring food security, income, good nutrition and providing employment for the urban poor are slowly but surely being achieved. Urban agriculture stakeholders have been conscientised on the importance of this activity in poverty alleviation. This has seen input supply companies, government, AGRITEX, the Department of Natural Resources, the city council and the police beginning to appreciate that urban agriculture is an alternative way of using idle urban land. Women have also been empowered and can now make decisions on using and contributing to the family income.

The work of Musikavanhu Project was greatly enhanced by the prevailing harsh economic conditions in the country. The high retrenchments meant that most people lost their jobs and had to engage in alternative production systems, especially in the informal sector. The project offered hope in giving them a chance to produce their own food and so reduce their household budgets on this item and meet other basic needs.

CONCLUSIONS

The indications from the KLC Development case study are that high value, intensive urban agriculture in periurban areas and on large plots will attract sufficient funding for development and growth, especially from the private savings and traditional agribusiness finance institutions. The freehold tenure that it enjoys, or in some cases long lease, the potential for high returns and the long established tradition of financing such projects are fundamental for facilitating availability of financial support services. Investors view the project as low risk and thus are prepared to invest large sums of money. The project even has approval from the government seen by the issuing of an agricultural subdivision permit from the Ministry of Local Government and National Housing.

Unlike KLC, Musikavanhu Project's contribution to the city's local economy is still ignored. The fact that City of Harare has not yet reviewed its by-laws to make urban agriculture a legal urban land use does not provide incentives to, especially institutional actors to invest in it because of the perceived high risk involved. However, the project has managed to attract a large membership and growing support from a some institutions.

Traditionally, household savings have financed on-plot urban agriculture activities in Zimbabwe. On fairly large plots where external resources are required, informal networks have been very useful. In the case of high-density residential suburbs, the availability of on-plot land is very limited, to the extent that no significant investment for on-plot urban agriculture is required. It is on the open spaces that urban agriculture that can benefit the urban poor requires significant investments. The key question that needs an answer is how open space cultivation can be supported and financed in order to benefit the urban poor.

There is a need for a tier of local institutions to emerge and provide support services, including financing mechanisms for open space cultivation in Zimbabwe.

Notes

1) The current official exchange rate for the Zimbabwe dollar against the US dollar is 1:55. However, on the thriving parallel market, the rate is 1:550.