

PREFACE

For the past decades development policy has sought to eliminate poverty at its roots in rural areas, creating a livelihood attractive enough to keep the youth in place and control migration. The dynamics of real life economics, however, were only gradually affected by these efforts. Young people go for jobs – jobs are where the money is – and capital continues concentrating in cities, thus turning them into the driving forces of national economies. In addition, ecological, climatical and political crisis create new waves of migration to the cities. In 2025 the world's urban population is expected to reach 5.5 billion, 80% of which will live in urban centres of developing countries. Many of those who migrate to cities, however, fail to obtain the desired occupation, being forced to organize their survival at subsistence levels in slums, mushrooming at the outskirts. An increasing proportion of the target group for poverty alleviation in developing countries is now found in urban centers.

Many find employment in commercial urban agriculture in open spaces or improve the quality of their families daily diet by a range of urban agriculture activities like e.g. homegarden production or livestock keeping. Some even, once established in the city, obtain access to the necessary resources and selfemploy in urban agriculture.

Developing cities that suffered from recent economic crisis, have seen a sudden upsurge of urban agriculture activities and reoriented their initially discriminating or prohibitive policy in favour of urban agriculture to sustain a better livelihood for the mostly affected population groups, thus accepting its function as a risk-reducing strategy in time of crisis.

While the western world has already gone through the hot phase of urbanization, with enough time to structurally adjust and build smaller and medium sized centers, many developing countries shortcut this period facing accelerated urbanization at rates that absorb rural population into megacities much faster than organized growth and infrastructural development can cope with. Rural-urban linkage is greatly affected by the lack of balance in this trend, which presents a challenge to sustainable urban and peri-urban development, with a perspective to adapt and integrate concepts of rural development like food security, income generation and sustainability.

Developed countries dispose of the entire infrastructure to import whatever they need within a few hours time in cool chains, airplanes, trains and trucks. Due to poor transport infrastructure and related high cost many fast-growing cities in developing countries lack the necessary hinterland to satisfy their demand for basic but highly perishable agricultural products like vegetables, milk or meat. The relative proximity to the consumer gives intensive production in and near the city along the major transport veins a comparative advantage over up-country production, thus favouring market-oriented commercial urban and peri-urban agriculture.

The consumption of enormous quantities of organic materials, like i.e. food, brought into cities results in a correspondingly high production of organic waste, which accounts for 2/3 of the total urban waste. Recycling of urban organic waste in urban and peri-urban agricultural activities closes these nutrient cycles, reduces the cost of waste disposal and serves as an environment-friendly solution to some of the negative ecological impact of cities. At the same time urban agriculture can serve as a tool to maintain green open spaces in urban areas.

The positions of policy makers regarding urban agriculture range from strong support by official policy (e.g. some socialist countries like China, Cuba, etc.) to ignorance of its importance for the informal sector or discrimination reducing it to an illegal activity.

The dispute over urban agriculture as a valid concept for sustainable urban development has recently gained momentum and draws the attention of a growing number of municipalities, bi- and multilateral organizations, NGO's and universities to the subject.

This reader is a joint effort of 6 development organizations (bi-lateral, multi-lateral and NGO) to broaden the resource base for this discussion. It emerged from case studies and thematic articles funded by **BMZ** through **GTZ**, coordinated and edited by ETC, and the results of an international workshop in Havana, Cuba (October 10–15, 1999) organized by **DSE**, **CTA**, **Sida** and **ACPA**, with technical support of **ETC** and **WHH**.

Its two major parts: the thematic articles that highlight specific aspects of urban agriculture and the case studies from selected cities in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe, pursue a systems-oriented approach to

understand urban agriculture under different political, economic, demographic and ecological conditions.

The individual chapters have usually been written by teams of authors. In particular the case studies were either entirely by, or with the participation of local authors to ensure the intimate knowledge of the given situation. The Reader allows for reading the chapters in order of particular personal interest. The sequence of the thematic articles however, intends to gradually build up knowledge of and understanding for the function and role of urban agriculture as an integral component of sustainable urban and peri-urban development.

DSE

Dr. Hans Pfeifer
Director
Food and Agriculture
Development Centre

CTA

Carl B. Greenidge
Director

Sida

Dr. Berit Olsson
Director
Dept. for Research
Cooperation

GTZ

Dr. Ulrich Sabel-Koschella
Senior Advisor
Rural Development and
Agriculture