

Impact of Urban Agriculture

reduced prices in Havana

Urban agriculture emerged in Cuba, and specifically in Havana, from the critical economic crisis of 1989, as a response to food insecurity. Today, it has become one of the largest sources of employment in Havana, improving the supply of fresh produce and ensuring greater stability and availability of, especially, leafy vegetables. Until the emergence of urban agriculture, the agricultural markets (numbering 58 in April 2000) were the only option for unregulated agricultural produce, gradually becoming a reference point for prices in the domestic economy.

elsewhere in Cuba since 1994, at which time the provincial group for urban agriculture was established in Havana. The reasons for this impact are related to the direct communication between producers and consumers, which avoids the involvement of intermediaries and the costs involved; and selling the produce directly where it is grown, which also helps to cut costs and transportation losses.

The shift from producing primarily for personal consumption and subsistence needs to a market-oriented agricultural sector fostered the amendment of city legislation. This allowed for marketing to happen both at the production sites and at specific locations where groups of horticulturists, cooperatives, and intensive and “organoponic” garden growers came to

sell their produce. In the year 2000, more than 550 of these marketing sites were scattered throughout the capital.

Intensive urban production methods and direct marketing have influenced the prices of agricultural products in Havana. Figure 1 illustrates how prices of four products have dropped at the large agricultural markets in the city and

Although food prices continue to be high for a large majority of residents, and food is still a major concern for the consumers and the authorities, the drop in prices has led to a situation in which more people can afford products that are of better quality.



Figure: Price differentials of four agricultural products between 1994 and 1999

[Source: Charts are based on information provided by the National Statistics Office (2000)]

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