

# URBAN CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



The developing world's population is increasingly urban and the locus of world poverty is shifting to cities. Already 62% of the total poor in Latin America are city dwellers, with higher costs and poorer nutrition. Urban ecosystems are also deteriorating under this population pressure.

In some cities in the South, agriculture is practiced by 35 to 40% of the population to confront these urban challenges. It offers a way to better meet food and nutrition needs and supplement income through accessing high-value food markets. Using nutrient-rich urban solid and liquid wastes means lowering production costs.

## Rural-urban linkages and metropolitan food systems

Cities are not isolated, but connected with their hinterland through many agriculture-related linkages, both positive and negative:

- **Water** flow enables agricultural as well as ornamental urban greening
- **Organic nutrients** for crop growth move in multiple directions but so do **biological and chemical contaminants**, including **agro-chemicals**
- **Food** flows from different producer areas to urban markets, sometimes carrying contaminants
- **People** move between rural and urban areas as agricultural commuters or migrants
- **Financial capital** flows from cities as remittances; income spreads across regional space through multi-locational households
- **Social networks** provide support, security and knowledge across rural-urban space

Analysis of these linkages helps us to understand:

- **Metropolitan Regions**, through spatial integration of large urban cores and their surroundings
- **Patterns of growth and/or stagnation** of metropolitan regions

- **Environmental and health impacts** on populations of these regions
- **Actions** that need to be taken

## Research framework

The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), a strategic alliance of donors and International Agricultural Research Centers, established Urban Harvest in late 1999. It seeks to enhance the contribution of urban and peri-urban agriculture to development in three ways:

- integrating agriculture into regional planning and policy through **stakeholder and policy dialogue**
- strengthening **urban ecosystem health**, through resource recycling and risk mitigation
- contributing to more resilient **urban livelihoods** through better food security and marketing.

Urban Harvest currently works in five countries in Africa and Latin America.

## A dialogue model for stakeholders

Multiple interests and resource competition in cities means agriculture is often subject to complex, unpredictably applied regulations. A stakeholder and policy dialogue model based on experiences in Kampala, Uganda, helps build understanding, collaboration and safer, more sustainable urban agriculture through policy and institutional change. Results include:

- Participatory review and revision of Agriculture Ordinances leading to greater transparency and food safety
- Establishment/functioning of urban agriculture offices
- Insertion of urban agriculture and organic waste management into local and national policy

- Revision of city planning through multi-stakeholder consultations and use of GIS-generated evidence of land use change

## Healthy households and healthy cities

Agricultural production and marketing can pose major health risks in metropolitan regions by introducing chemical and biological contaminants into food systems. Changes in policies and practices are needed to mitigate these risks. Results:

- Evidence about health impacts of agriculture, including effects of contaminants on crops and risks from livestock, used for safety messages and participatory policy review
- Risks and benefits of use of liquid and solid organic wastes assessed and options tested for improving quality
- High-risk production areas for vegetable as food converted into seed lots

## Urban livelihoods and markets

Though women play a key role in many urban/peri-urban production systems, the impact on household nutrition and other aspects of livelihoods has not been well documented. Also, weak producer organizations make effective marketing difficult. Results include:

- New market opportunities for urban and peri-urban producers, including high-value organic production
- Contribution of agriculture to nutrition and food security of women and children through research and capacity building
- Strengthening technical, organizational and entrepreneurial skills of urban producers through adaption of farmer field schools to urban setting

URBAN HARVEST, the CGIAR global initiative on urban and peri-urban agriculture  
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