

Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture

Report of the E-Conference

on the Policy Agenda

Director of Food and Agriculture, Accra, handing



over an award to a fisherman, at the Farmer's Day Celebration

A virtual conference on "Urban and peri-urban agriculture on the policy agenda" was jointly organised by FAO and ETC-RUAF, from August 21 - September 30, 2000. The conference was divided into three main themes: Household Food Security & Nutrition; Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture (UPA), Health & Environment; and UPA and Urban Planning. The conference attracted 720 participants from around the world (45 countries). This short article will revisit some issues regarding the nature of planning, the diverse opportunities for intervention and potential UPA enhancement tools.

Min. of Information, Accra

Although it is difficult to capture the rich information generated in the discussions, any interpretation should capture/recognise both political as well as technical/procedural elements of urban planning. Many contributions stressed that differences between local contexts and cultures should underpin the understanding of the nature of planning and of the opportunities for integrating UPA into planning. This requires not only a grasp of agricultural production issues but also of a range of interrelated matters, like urbanisation, social change, culture, planning, governance and gender.

It was noted that, to a large extent, planning represents and reflects a given society's social contours of power, resource mobilisation and distribution. In both political and technical terms, urban planning endeavours to reduce or manage conflicts associated with different users or competing uses of limited space. Integration of UPA into urban planning will require adap-

tive conflict resolution skills and approaches within which the poor can organise for enhanced political power.

THE LAND QUESTION AND ITS MANAGEMENT

Consensus was observed in the central importance of land resources, specifically of open spaces, the soil, water, forests; and in the conclusion, that the integration of urban agriculture

into policies should be approached from the context of conflicts relating to the use of these resources. The participants emphasised that land access, ownership and tenure make a big difference in the profitability of UPA.

PARTICIPATION

The need for the participation of all involved in planning and subsequent activities was also

Recommendations for action by the participants:

- ❖ Strengthen the organisation of UPA practitioners (farmers' groups, farmers' associations, clubs, etc.).
- ❖ Connect UPA to ongoing urban programmes (Sustainable City Programme, Urban Management Programme, Local Agenda 21).
- ❖ Strengthen institutional capacity at the local level.
- ❖ Develop guidelines for land-use regulations that protect urban agriculture uses, encourage investment in UPA and make credit use viable.
- ❖ Assess land and water tenure / access conditions - develop policy reform proposals and tools.
- ❖ Develop training materials related to planning for UPA (including use of GIS and remote sensing for urban planning).
- ❖ Organise regional workshops on the integration of UPA into urban planning with the broad approach of considering food security, health, environment issues, and sustainable city development.

FAO/ETC joint

Electronic Conference

August 21 - September 30,
2000

Reflections on the Discussion
Group on Urban and
Peri-Urban Agriculture and
Urban Planning

A.W. Drescher

✉ drescher@uni-freiburg.de

emphasised. However, in practice, an exclusionary status quo reality prevails. The reality of inequities between North versus South, men versus women, elites (including researchers, donors, technocrats) versus the poor were among those pointed out. An example is the need for planning tools that are anchored in local contexts.

Focus on process rather than product

Indeed local contexts, history and culture may dictate that “urban agriculture is not necessarily a desired activity by the poor”. In the context of the collaborative city planning model (e.g. the cases of the Philippines and Tanzania in this issue), efforts have been made to enhance participation of the poor. But in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, results show that these efforts seem not to have made much difference.

THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

It was seen that UPA needs to be a more “official” or “formal” activity in and around cities, in order to be integrated into urban planning processes. However, little was said on the role of institutions with respect to UPA, a topic, which could be an important entry point into the discussion. As historical experience from Europe proves, institutionalisation of UPA has been one precondition to achieving greater land security, higher participation of farmers in policy decision-making and the stimulation of the

democratisation process. Approaches are needed that focus on process rather than product so that participation by the poor is enhanced. Participants noted that for that participation to be meaningful, some political organisation would be required.

The creation of urban farmers’ associations might be an important step into a more participatory process of urban planning. One lesson learned from this conference is the need to claim these rights, and that urban agriculture has to be negotiated just as any other city development issue. To “sell” the idea of UPA to policy-makers and planners, appropriate arguments must be used, such as its contribution to the welfare of people in small cities (thereby reducing migration); urban habitat improvement and biocultural diversity; the creation of markets for local produce or the recycling of “green wastes” into compost.

INTEGRATION OPPORTUNITIES

Within the matrix of linkages that UPA has with other citywide processes, diverse opportunities exist for integration. A single blueprint cannot be prescribed for this, as future activities would have to select a spatial and sectoral focus relevant to the local context.

The role of education and information is underestimated. School gardens, garden exhibitions, educational materials (books, videos, press releases, etc.) are important means to creating awareness of UPA in the public and among policy-makers. Changes in the extension approaches are

essential to assure safe food production in urban and peri-urban environments. Another window of opportunity was seen in sustainability and waste management. In order to contribute to sustainable city development, UPA needs to be more than just agriculture that happens to be in or next to built-up areas. Embedding UPA into the greater context of sustainable urban development forces urban administrators to review their anti-UPA planning principles. Thus in the Philippines, solid waste had been served as one entry point to UPA and over time created the chance “to modify efficiently the traditional hierarchical system of city management.” Linking UPA to Sustainable City Development Programmes is a major issue for integration of agriculture into educational, recreational and environmental issues.

PLANNING APPROACHES AND PLANNING TOOLS

In procedural and technical terms, Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing were identified as tools potentially useful for integrating UPA into planning. The use of GIS could also act as an obstacle, because of high purchasing costs and difficult maintenance. However, it is necessary to say that costs of simple GIS applications are reasonable today. The advantages of such systems are the avoidance of double work, allowing integrated planning, and the establishment of an urban database that would otherwise have to be placed on other computers.

The process of integration also requires other tools for problem analysis and diagnosis. Examples like Participatory Technology Development (PTD) or Sustainable Livelihoods Analysis (SLA) were given. Furthermore, tools for conflict management, communication information exchange, impact assessments (such as Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA)) were suggested.

The introductory and final papers, and the discussion of the e-conference can be found on the FAO website:

www.FAO.org/urbanag

or on the RUAF website

www.ruaf.org/news_and_agenda_fr.htm



Magaret Armar-Klemese

Discussing the future of the neighbourhood