

OVERVIEW OF URBAN AGRICULTURE: A UGANDAN CASE STUDY

By

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

The views advanced for the emergence of Urban Agriculture are varied. The Marxian view propounds that Urban Agriculture is a survival strategy of the urban poor as a means through which they are forced to bear the social cost of capitalistic development. City managers on the other hand have suggested that Urban Agriculture is a rural cultural artefact of a recently urbanised population-a remnant of bush life (Savio 1993). These views are however inconsistent with informal sector advocates who recognise Urban Agriculture as a form of market rationale-micro entrepreneurship responding to economic incentives in the local economy.

The foregoing views on Urban Agriculture can be classified in two major categories. These include; 'adaptive strategy by city dwellers as a response to the survival threatening economic circumstances. This view seems to perceive Urban Agriculture as a progressive coping mechanism and possibly an indicator of growth.' Yet the city planners view seems to perceive Urban Agriculture not as a sign of resourcefulness but decay (Maxwell 1993). It is these two opposing dimensions of conceptualisation of urban agriculture that have shaped the response to the growth of Urban Agriculture in most African cities in general and Uganda in particular. To the mainstream and traditional Urban Economist and Planner, Urban Agriculture presents a contradiction of the common image of the city. In this view, Urban Agriculture detracts from the ideal and hence it has been viewed negatively.

Notwithstanding these views, urban farming is becoming an omnipresent, complex and dynamic feature of urban landscape and socio-economic reality in Africa, Asia and Latin America. It constitutes both cultivation and rearing of animals. It is being carried out in back yards, roadsides utility-rights-of-way, vacant plots, institutional estates and flood plains (Mougeot 1993). In Uganda, urban farming started in early 1970's. This period was characterised by political turmoil and the concomitant economic crisis (Nuwagaba and Mwesigwa 1997, Maxwell 1995, Nuwagaba and Kisamba-Mugerwa 1993). The period was dominated by civil strife, political intrigues orchestrated by the rise to power by the military junta led by Idi Amin in 1971. In 1972, Amin declared what he called 'the economic war' a phenomenon that was meant to 'Africanise' the economy. This constituted the expulsion of Ugandans of Asian origin. This group included industrialists and other commercial entrepreneurs.

The immediate implication of this 'Africanisation' process was the appropriation of the previous industrial and commercial properties and establishments to indigenous Ugandans who had neither any knowledge

of industrial production nor any experience in entrepreneurship. The result was that most of these industrial concerns and commercial establishments had collapsed by 1975. By 1976, the Ugandan economy had virtually atrophied (Halfani 1995). There was total collapse of the economic infrastructure with GDP Per capita having plummeted from the previous US \$ 470 to US \$ 120. Similarly, there was virtual dearth of the institutional structure including the collapse of local urban service delivery (Nuwagaba and Mwesigwa 1997).

Meanwhile, urban population growth remained on course. For instance during the period 1970-1980, the population of Kampala grew at an average 3.14 % per annum (Background to budget 1987, Nuwagaba 1999). The major implication of such galloping urban population amidst dwindling capacity of the urban economy was the growth of both open and disguised unemployment. This culminated into urban poverty of the majority of the urban population (Onibokun 1993). It is amidst this euphoria of looming urban population crisis that the urban poor population devised means of survival through engaging in various activities, mainly as survival strategies. These activities included; petty commodity trade, artisanship including carpentry, metal fabrication and urban farming. However, urban farming has been viewed negatively as it has been misconstrued to mean detraction from the ideal image of the City.

Several researchers who have studied various aspects of urban agriculture in Kampala in the past two decades attribute a number of factors to this scenario namely; increase in rural-urban migration, poverty and changes in the socio-economic welfare of the urban population (Maxwell 1993, Maxwell and Zziwa 1995, Nuwagaba 1997). Urban agriculture increased markedly during 1990s due to the economic hardships brought about by the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). This included introduction of user charges in health and education sectors, removal of subsidies on food commodities and retrenchment of employees in the civil service. These in turn resulted in falling real incomes for households and poverty in urban areas. In many instances, it is these hardships that have resulted in vulnerable households turning to urban cultivation as an alternative source of food, to save on food expenditure and to raise cash income. Throughout Kampala city, food crop production, horticulture and livestock keeping on open public and undeveloped lands have become significant activities, becoming sources of food security and sources of household income generation. Urban agriculture is characterized by two main activities namely; the raising of crops and rearing of animals. There are two main forms of urban agriculture. These are; intra-urban [on-plot or off-plot] and peri-urban [fringe]. Off-plot cultivation and livestock grazing take

place along railway lines, open areas, on the periphery of parks and undeveloped plots.

1.2 Status and trends of Urban Farming in Kampala City

Since 1994, a section known as Urban Agriculture unit was established within Kampala City Council's (KCC) Production and Marketing Department. Formerly, before decentralization of Kampala District, it was directly under the Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF). The broad objective of the section is to support and guide the communities in urban agriculture and to ensure household nutrition and food security. According to the review of the section's activities (Kampala City Council 2001), a number of achievements have been made though with some financial setbacks. The achievements include:

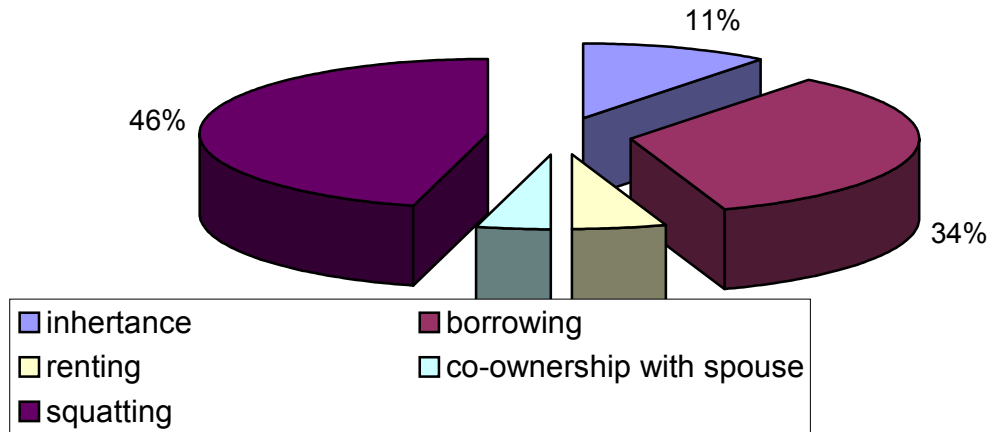
- ◆ Training farmers in various crop and animal husbandry skills.
- ◆ Domestic garbage management and re-use in urban agriculture.
- ◆ Training and extension services

According to Kampala district strategic plan KCC (2000) financial support by KCC is still small (covering about 4% of the annual budget).

2.0 Land Tenure and Urban Agriculture

Land tenure is the mode of landholding, together with the terms and conditions of occupancy. It is about the "bundle of rights" held and enjoyed in the land resource. The bundle of rights are relative in terms of the degree of their enjoyment, and they translate into the manner of use of land, the duration of use or occupancy, as well as relocation of the rights (transfer, lease, sublease, licensing, bequeath, etc.). Tenure is characterized by a multiplicity of influences: legal; socio-cultural; ecological/climatic; socio-economic; the formal, semi-informal and informal institutional arrangements, etc. The essence of a tenure system are the ways in which the rights, restrictions and responsibilities that people have with respect to the land (and property) are held. In a study by Nuwagaba et al (2003) done in Kampala City to assess access to land for urban agriculture, it has been found that land is accessed in many different ways. These include inter-alia; inheritance, borrowing, renting, co-ownership with spouses and squatting. Fig 1 shows the mode of accessing land for urban farming.

Chart 1: Mode of accessing land for Urban Agriculture in Kampala City

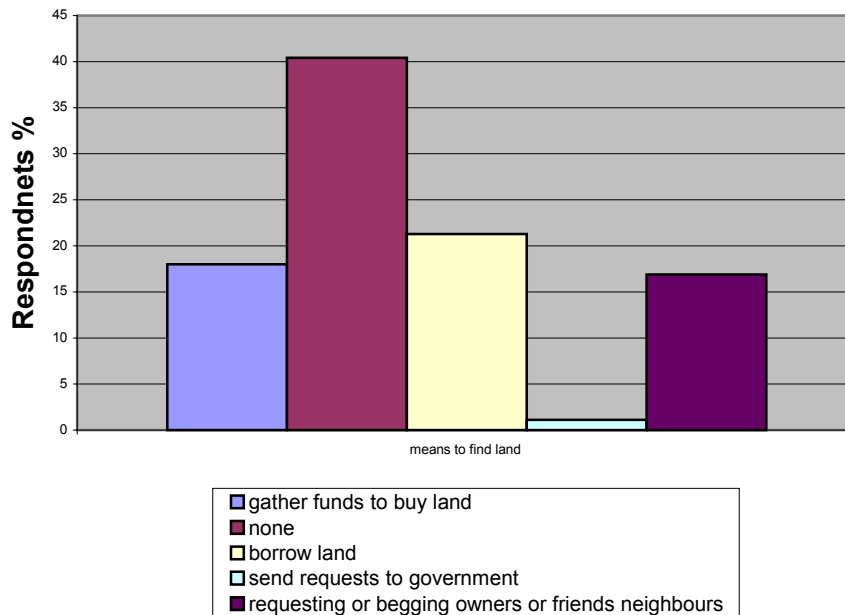


Source: Nuwagaba et al 2003 pg 54.

It is apparent that majority (46%) of the urban farmers are squatters on land, while another big significant proportion of farmers (34%) borrow the land on which they farm. Only a paltry (4%) is able to own land with their spouses. However, this land is normally marginal and of low value, since the urban farmers are in most cases low-income earners. It is important to note that co-ownership means a situation where the spouse has the same stake in the land held by the partner. It is pertinent to note that even those who squat, rent and borrow could be having spouses who own land. Currently in Uganda, the co-ownership of land is a contentious issue particularly among gender activists who contend that women have for long been left out from benefiting from family resources. Therefore, co-ownership comes out as a strong advocacy issue.

Many urban farmers in Kampala have indicated that one of the hindrances to viable urban agriculture is access to land. Those carrying out farming have argued that if land were readily accessed, then urban agriculture would be more beneficial to their households. Many urban farmers have been engaged in searching for land in order to ascertain their livelihood entitlements. Fig.2 below shows the various strategies employed to find land for urban agriculture in Kampala city.

Fig.2: Means employed to find land for urban agriculture in Kampala City



Source: Nuwagaba et al 2003 41.

It is evident that most farmers (40%) do not have any means of accessing more land. The reason is that most households that carry out farming are poor. The most popular means of accessing land is borrowing (22%)

3.0 Local experiences in Urban farming in Kampala City

The benefits of urban farming do not accrue to the urban poor households alone but to the whole urban economy (UNDP 1996:14). While urban farming started as a survival strategy for the urban poor population, it has been found to function as a 'double edged sword' with both nutritional and health as well as economic benefits to the farming as well as other urban households. However, what remains ironic is that despite this significant contribution, there is no substantive provision in the law that aims at streamlining informal sector activities such as farming in urban areas. It is a very important and interesting lacuna. The case studies below present the status and trends of urban farming in Kampala city.

Case study –1 Land tenure problems in urban farming

Name of case: Female aged 40, Bataka Zone, Makerere 1, Kawempe Division

Naluwembe is a single mother, with three children. She inherited a piece of land with a few dilapidated houses from her paternal aunt. Before the aunt passed away, no one challenged the ownership of the land. When her aunt passed away, a neighbour started claiming that she was the owner of her land. The neighbour stopped her from farming on that land. One time Naluwembe had planted sweet potatoes the neighbour stopped Naluwembe and she could not continue with agriculture. 'I went to legal Aid for help, the legal officers interviewed me, but still I am not allowed to farm, as they have not yet taken action. Prior to that I had contacted Local Council officials who did not do anything.' Narrates Naluwembe. She subsequently got permission to cultivate land that belongs to Stanbic Bank. However, she was as well stopped from farming on this land where a lot of her maize, potatoes and yams were cut down. Here again, she did not have any right or security of tenure.

Case study 2: Mode of land acquisition for the poor urban farmers Makindye Division -Wabigalo project zone- Respondent: male aged 47 years

'I had been working with my wife on the same piece of land. But of late, my wife has been able to 'buy'¹ her own land next to mine. She has started a small business of making pancakes and subsequently joined a women' savings credit scheme where Shs. 1,000/- (US\$0.5) is saved per day. Within a period of 3 months my wife had saved approximately 100,000/- (US\$50), which she used to 'buy' this piece of land. The size of the land is approximately 1/10th of an acre. She is currently growing yams. She anticipates getting sales of about 50,000/- (US\$30) per season.' This case has been proven true for other women in the area. When her husband was asked about the land, he retorted that 'it is a very welcome thing for their family.'

3.1 Changing Character of urban Agriculture

Urban Agriculture has been undergoing serious change. While the 1970s had viewed Urban Agriculture as a survival strategy of the poorest of the urban poor, the 1980s and 1990s have experienced drastic change in character of urban farming. The farming activities have increasingly gained importance not only among the urban poor but also by a significant proportion including both the low and medium income

¹ Buying here is used to mean good will for user rights and access. One sells ones rights to use the particular piece of land.

earners. Table 3.1 shows the reasons for carrying out their farming activities.

Table 2 Classification of urban farmers according to reasons for farming (n=150)

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
Needed food	137	91.3
Needed income	44	29.3
Needed to diversify income	16	10.7
Had unused land	11	7.3
Hobby/custom	10	6.7
Unemployed	9	6.0
Other	3	2.0
Total	230*	153.3**

**Respondents gave more than one response hence total n>150 and total % is >100*

Source: Maxwell and Zziwa 1992 Pg. 48

It is apparent from the table that the need for food was the major (91.3%) cause for urban farming. However, of significant importance is the need for income as revealed by 29.3% who needed to improve the level of household earnings and 10.7% who carried out Urban farming purposely to diversify their household sources of income. It is crucial to reiterate that as inflation soars amidst increasing chances of unemployment and declining real wages, it becomes imperative to provide the household with a buffer against the high rate of inflation. The aim is to close the void between real wages paid in formal and informal sectors and the cost of living in the city. It is from the foregoing analysis that the current view of Urban Agriculture has increasingly assumed a progressive stance from various stakeholders. City planners and national policy makers have of recent recognised the central role of urban agriculture in the wider urban economy. There has been a growing tendency to legitimize urban farming activities in Kampala. The city enforcement officers have ceased harassment of local people who cultivate around the city (Nuwagaba and Mwesigwa 1997).

4.0 Institutional Framework for Urban Farming

Urban authorities view urban agriculture as demanding a significant proportion of cities' land whilst the farmers feel it is worth while for improving food security and saving on expenditure. There is a need to conduct research to identify institutional arrangements that can be put in place for conflict management, negotiation, prevention and resolution between urban farmers and authorities, and also between farming

households. The institutional framework governing the practice of urban agriculture in Kampala is very complex. Such complexity has led to institutional inefficiencies and lack of policy cohesion in the management of development. The existing procedures for accessing land in Kampala city are highly bureaucratic, time consuming and complex, which makes it very intimidating for urban farmers, who generally lack the knowledge, information and contacts to file an application for acquiring land. Urban farmers in their quest for farming land have often violated and contravened regulatory measures for allocation, utilisation, use and plot layouts. All this has been attributed to lack of policy responsiveness in view of the need for planning with urban farming in context.

4.1 The evolving legal and institutional framework for urban Agriculture

The only legal instrument that relates to urban farming is the 1964 Town Planning Act that mandates the Local Urban authorities to enforce regulations for ‘development control’ in their areas of jurisdiction. It is in the same vein that Kampala City enforcement officials initially harassed those who carry out urban farming in the city. The following shows one case example;

A Case Example of Harassment of Urban Farmers

“ An old man grew maize and beans in Kampala in 1993 on a small plot where a building had been bombed during the 1979 war. In a few weeks, the crops matured but one day, a group of fierce enforcement officers from Kampala City Council appeared and without a warning slashed down the whole garden ostensibly as a means of keeping rules and regulations. This act enraged the passers by who decided to counteract the city enforcement officers by throwing stones (Maxwell D. 1995: 4)

The poor man was attempting to eke out a living on what he viewed as a redundant piece of land. On the other hand, the city enforcement agents viewed farming as an illegitimate activity, which is at odds with the required city aesthetics and prescribed standards. The policy pursued by local urban authorities to harass the urban poor in the economic activities does not represent a realistic policy effort but reveals the significant degree of ‘*mea culpa*’ among city authorities in regard to the reality of the urban poverty phenomenon. Informal sector activities (urban farming inclusive) provide 66% of employment and 60% urban food requirements in Kampala (Maxwell 1995). It is these factors that have influenced the urban poor to persist in the so-called ‘illegal activities’, which have metamorphosed into a vibrant informal sector economy. However recently, city planners and policy makers have recognized the central role of urban agriculture in the wider urban economy. Since 1990, there has been a growing tendency to tolerate urban farming activities in Kampala. The city enforcement officers have

ceased harassment of local people who cultivate around the city (Nuwagaba and Mwesigwa 1997). This progressive tendency is best described in the pronouncement of the Resident District Commissioner, Kampala who retorted;

'It is very important that government has planned to modernize agriculture in the country...it will be an opportunity for all Ugandans not to suffer from food insecurity...I appeal to city residents to start practicing urban farming and for those who already started to improve on their gardens' (The Monitor News Paper, Wednesday 17, 2001 Pg. 14).

Under the local government Act (1997), Sections 39 and 41 the local authorities are empowered to enact byelaws to regulate all activities within their areas of jurisdiction. Kampala City Council has accordingly legislated the Kampala City (urban agriculture ordinance 2001) in regard to urban agriculture practices within its confines. The ordinance provides for the licensing, control and regulation of urban agriculture and provides for other related matters. The following excerpts from the urban agriculture ordinance show the norms and regulations regarding access to land for urban agriculture.

The urban agriculture ordinance (2001). In 2001 Kampala City Council enacted an urban agriculture ordinance which provides for growing crops and raising of animals in the city. However, one major weakness of the ordinance is the provision that urban farming should not take place in 'high density areas'. The conceptualisation of the concept 'high density' is unrealistic. The mere definition of a high-density area as one, which accommodates more than two households per acre of land borders on the illusion. In most farming neighbourhoods in Kampala city, there can be as many as 40 households on an acre of land. Therefore, the theoretical basis for assuming where agriculture is outlawed seems to have had a false start in itself. A more pragmatic approach would be necessary to determine where urban farming can be outlawed.

One critical issue spelt out in the ordinance is the urban agriculture permit. The permit states that;

A person shall not engage in urban agriculture without an urban agriculture permit issued by the Council.

As the facts on the ground reveal, urban agriculture is carried out without any restrictions, regulation or authorisation. The pervasiveness of urban agriculture does not intimate any form of permission granted by authorities to urban agriculture practitioners. The issuance of permits is a means to provide guidance and harmony and not mere hindrances that are spartan. In this case, the applicants of permits are agro-business entrepreneurs who for instance deal in poultry and its products. The

essence here is on commercial terms (such an operating licence for revenue purposes) than on the strict adherence to agriculture regulation. As has been argued, the progression of urban agriculture has multiple sources; in the case of poor urban dwellers, it is not known to them that they need licensing. This calls for multi-sectoral approaches to transforming urban farming from an illicit practice to a buttressed activity that is forward in outlook.

The urban farming ordinance prohibits farming in certain areas. The ordinance states that;

A person shall not engage in commercial agriculture in any of the following places;

- a) A road reserve
- b) A wetland
- c) A green belt
- d) A park
- e) An abandoned landfill; or
- f) An area less than 10 feet away from an open drainage channel

Probably with the exception of parks, urban farmers have encroached all the other areas. This points to the current inadequacy of planning, enforcement, and need to zone out areas for carrying out urban farming. Many urban farmers do not comply with these regulations but for some reason they continue to operate. At least the halting of urban farming only delivered partial results. The more informed thinking emphasises an approach that is based on; poverty reduction, capacity building, partnering with farmer organisations, civil society organisations, environmentalists, planners and community management specialists.

5.0 Conclusions and Emerging Issues

- Urban agriculture is a practice that has emerged to fill the void created by lack of means of livelihood in the towns. The pervasive urban poverty has meant the need for livelihood systems that can sustain urban households.
- The legal framework regarding urban farming is not fully supportive. The city authorities have made attempts to recognise urban farming but do not provide for the planning or zoning of such activities. The enactment of a specific and clear framework can go a long way in making urban agriculture sustainable and productive.

- Land tenure is an important factor that influence outputs and sustainability of urban agriculture. The forms of land tenure and access have a big role in either improving or constraining households from accessing land for farming.
- The majority of the poor in Kampala are women. They lack land and hence have encroached on marginal areas comprising wetlands and lagoons for survival. This has generated negative effects on the urban ecosystem.
- There is need to re-orient and ensure that while planning for urban development the poor who derive livelihood from urban agriculture are not excluded. This is because urban farming is not a mere safety net - cum- temporary livelihood system but a springboard for generating urban economic productivity.

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