

Nairobi, Kenya

growing cities – growing food

Background information:

Location: South Kenya

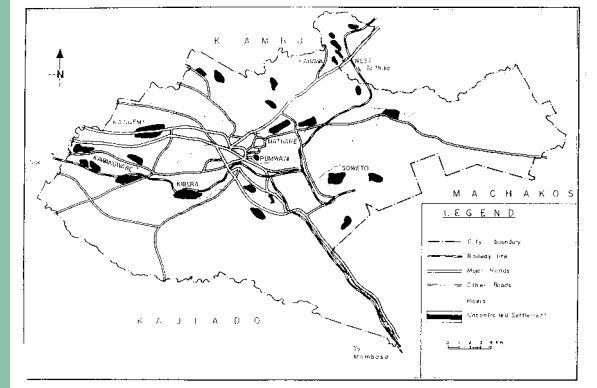
Climate:
mean annual temperature: 17° C
annual rainfall: 800 - 1,500 mm

Total Population: 2 million

Population Density: 2,900 pers/km²

Size of the city: 693 km²

Authors:
Dick Foeken & Alice M. Mwangi



Small-scale subsistence crop of spinach and sukuma wiki in a roundabout near Kibera (Southwest Nairobi, low income area).



Small-scale livestock production: goats in Kariobangi (Northeast Nairobi, low income area). The fodder (usually urban waste) is brought to the animals, that spend the night under one roof with the owner until ready for sale.



Small-scale market-oriented crop cultivation: vegetable seedlings for sale (Northeast Nairobi, middle-income area). The plot belongs to a self-help group of young men from neighbouring Mathare (low-income area).

The main urban agricultural systems

Small-scale subsistence crop cultivation:

By far the dominant type of farming. Farmers always plant a variety of crops on their shambas. Tree crops are absent. The work is mainly performed by women, with very limited use of modern inputs. Many farmers till land that does not belong to them. The main purpose is to raise the level of the household's food security. Part of the production is sold.

Small-scale livestock production:

Quite common, especially in the open spaces in the outskirts of the city and often combined with crop cultivation. Poultry is kept everywhere, but modern practices are not very common.

There are also a few cases of small-scale market-oriented crop cultivation, e.g. the cultivation of ornamental crops and the production of vegetable seedlings, and large-scale commercial farming in the south-western part of the city (Karen, Langata) where some big farms remain from the colonial period.

The Importance of UA for the Food Security and Nutrition of the Poor Nairobi, Kenya

UA is promoted in Nairobi primarily to help the poor to feed themselves and improve their nutritional status. However, whether this really works has, so far, hardly been investigated. One of the very few examples is a study carried out in 1994 in the Nairobi slum of Korogocho. A group of farmers was compared to a group of non-farmers (with comparable household income levels) on several issues related to food security, actual food intake and nutri-

tional status. In general, the farmers tend to regard their food situation as better than the non-farmers (Table 1). This is confirmed by a somewhat higher energy intake (100 kcal/consumer unit/day) originating entirely from their own production (Table 2). Although this does not lead to a better average nutritional status of the children, the percentage of children being stunted, wasted or severely malnourished is lower among the farmers (Table 3).

Sukuma wiki, spinach and chili on a small open space inside Umoja Estate.



Table 2
Origin of energy intake (kcal/consumer unit/day)

	farmers (N=)	non-farmers (67)
- from own urban production	263	96
- donated by others	102	1707
- purchased	1532	1804
Total	1904	1804

Source: Mwangi 1995

Table 1
General food security issues (%)

	farmers (48)	non-farmers (67)
- "Always or most of the time enough to eat"	35	25
- "Do not require any improvement in food situation"	13	6
- "Go for food donations or hawking during food shortage"	31	66
- "Most important food source during past 3 years":		
- purchased food	67	82
- own urban production	25	-

Source: Mwangi 1995

Table 3
Nutritional condition of children 6-60 months

	farmers (N=35)	non-farmers (N=84)
height-for-age (HA)		
average (+s.d.)	92.5 (5.5)	92.6 (7.8)
% stunted (HA < 90%)	31	38
weight-for-height (WH)		
average (+ s.d.)	96.3 (10.6)	94.0 (8.3)
% wasted (WH < 80%)	2.9	8.3
weight-for-age (WA)		
average (+ s.d.)	85.7 (14.5)	83.7 (14.9)
% malnourished (WA < 80%)	37	42
% severely malnourished (WA < 60%)	0	4.8

Source: Mwangi 1995

Lessons Learned with Relevance to Other Cities

- Poor urban households in Nairobi practising UA are better off (food security, energy intake and nutritional condition), though the higher performance should not be exaggerated on these indicators.
- Poor urban households benefit in two ways from UA: 1 a greater energy and protein intake, 2 less money spent on food purchases.
- The very low level of farming techniques means there is considerable scope for higher yields by using modern inputs.
- Since most of the poor urban farmers use land belonging to someone else, they tend not to invest in their farm production. A greater certainty of access to land would undoubtedly lead to higher yields. Here lies a special responsibility for the local authorities.