The Beijing Urban Agriculture Policy Guidelines: A milestone

This paper presents the main points of the draft policy guidelines for development of urban agriculture in Beijing. These guidelines are currently awaiting final approval by the Beijing People’s Congress and will be an important milestone in the development of urban and periurban agriculture in the city of Beijing in the coming decades.

Covering an area of 16,808 sq. km, the municipality of Beijing is divided into 16 districts and 2 counties. In 2004, the registered population numbered over 14.5 million, of which 3.2 million were living in the periurban areas. Millions of people have migrated to Beijing in search of jobs and economic security. At present there are more than 4 million migrants in the city (who lack the status of a registered citizen of Beijing).

New and expanding businesses and residential areas have pushed the urban boundaries far into the areas surrounding the city, leading to a large loss of farmland in the periurban areas (about 40,600 hectares in the period 1986-1995 alone).

CHANGING VIEWS ON THE FUNCTIONS OF (PERI)URBAN AGRICULTURE IN BEIJING

Until recently, the Beijing policy on agricultural land use was focused entirely on the production of grains (especially rice). In the late eighties and early nineties various measures were adopted to slow down the loss of farmland (especially prime agricultural land) in the Beijing municipal area, including the "Regulations on the protection of Basic Farmland" issued in 1994 and the establishment of the Bureau of Land Management in 1995. Tree growing (e.g. along highways) and the creation of urban and periurban zones with an ecological function also received more attention.

The Beijing municipal government adopted sustainable development as its main strategy after 1995. It also unofficially included (multi-functional) urban agriculture in its land use policy, since all land in Beijing was zoned and given a specific function, such as grain production, agro-tourism, ecological protection, food processing, and so on. The 1995 Land Use Policy is based on the conviction that agricultural land in and around the city cannot be effectively protected by the local government, unless its economic return is comparable and competitive to other types of urban land use. The enhancement of the value of agricultural land use in urban and periurban Beijing, therefore, became a key objective of the municipal and district governments of Beijing, both by stimulating changes in the agricultural production structure as well as by promoting other functions of periurban agriculture like agro-tourism and ecological management.

A key element in the city’s efforts to develop periurban agriculture is the “2-2-1 Action Programme on Urban Agriculture”, a comprehensive programme initiated by the Beijing municipal government in April 2004 that:

- analyses market demand
- strengthens development and management of agricultural resources
- mobilises investment in agriculture and credit provision to farmers
- strengthens cooperation among farmers
- stimulates agricultural technology development and maintains an information centre as a platform for sharing agro-technologies and experiences
- supports key agro-enterprises and builds up agro-product brands, marketing and certification
- supports greenhouse agriculture and introduces new seeds.

As a result, the productivity of agricultural land in periurban Beijing has increased and traditional farming (mainly grains) has gradually given way to more intensive production systems often linked with agro-enterprises that...
undertake the processing and marketing (herbs, vegetables, animal products, flowers, tree seedlings, pot plants, etc.).

Other functions of the periurban areas of Beijing have also become more important. For instance, agro-tourism in periurban Beijing has made great progress in the last decade and generates new income opportunities for the farmers. Agriculture also increasingly plays a role in environmental improvement (urban greening, dust and heat reduction by tree growing, water management, recycling of organic wastes, etc.). More recently, the role of periurban agriculture in enhancing social security and income/employment generation, especially for the poor migrants, has also received increasing attention.

The RUAF programme, through its regional partner IGSNRR, supported the design and implementation of the 2-2-1 programme, through training, a situation analysis, multi-stakeholder action planning and monitoring activities. A number of lessons have been learned through this programme in the past two years:

- Urban agriculture needs to be fully integrated into city planning.
- Public participation is important and needs to be enhanced. Many decisions require public involvement, because so far the farmers’ interests alone are not considered enough.
- There is a lack of investment in urban agriculture. This is the most common complaint from the urban agricultural stakeholders.
- More research is needed on the impacts of urban agriculture and its development needs to be more closely monitored.

There is too much duplication of projects, e.g. redundancy of agro-tourism facilities in the same area. Collaboration between agro-based enterprises and farmers (including migrants) needs to be stimulated.

THE (DRAFT) BEIJING URBAN AGRICULTURE POLICY GUIDELINES (2006)

Based on the experiences gained in the 2-2-1 programme, the Beijing Agricultural Bureau, assisted by the international RUAF-programme through its regional partner IGSNRR and the Beijing Agro-Tourism Association, drafted the Beijing Urban Agriculture Policy Guidelines, which were recently submitted for approval as a Municipal Bye law. These guidelines contain the views of the

Urban agriculture has proven to be a powerful development force in Beijing

Beijing municipal government on the comprehensive development of agriculture in the periurban areas of Beijing, addressing its multi-functional character. Through the development of urban agriculture, the policy seeks to enhance the urban and periurban economy, improve urban farmers’ income, generate employment, enhance social security and improve the environment. All of these factors will contribute to the goal of creating a sustainable city.

The municipal government is proposing a two-step plan. The first step is to modernise local agriculture in the coming 3-5 years, by diversifying different types of specialised production, modernising facilities, improving production processes, and modernising management (and labelling of products). The second step, in the subsequent 5-10 years, is to strive for an urban agriculture system that is integrated in the city’s sustainable development.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

The principles of the new urban agriculture development policy can be summarised as follows:

- Linking local conditions to the Beijing master plan. The development of urban agriculture in each district or county of Beijing should comply with the requirements of the Beijing master plan as well as take the specific characteristics of the local situation into consideration.
- Market orientation. Agricultural production and management and agro-industry production will more strongly follow market demand for agricultural products and other services (regional, national and international markets).
- Efficient use of resources. Introduction and use of new agricultural technologies will be oriented towards a more efficient use of available resources, particularly land and water.

- Integration of agricultural production with ecological and social services. The social and ecological benefits of urban agriculture are just as valuable as the economic gains of urban agriculture for sustainable city development. The development of the agricultural production function has to be combined with the development of the ecological and social functions of urban agriculture for Beijing city development.
- Cooperation and diversity at different levels. Cooperation is needed and will be facilitated at district, city and regional level, and differences in agricultural assets and social economic conditions between the various locations will be taken into account.

Implementation of the policy guidelines on urban agriculture will mainly focus on three aspects: spatial allocation, implementation of support programmes and financing for urban agriculture.

Cherry picking in Sijiqing gardens, Haidian district, Beijing

SPATIAL ALLOCATION

The spatial structure of Beijing has a concentric configuration. Various belts (i.e. the inner city belt, the inner suburban belt, the outer suburban belt, the mountainous area, and surrounding rural areas) have different agricultural assets, such as land and water, which has led to the development of different types of agriculture and other activities. The Beijing Urban Agricultural Policy identifies a specific strategy for the development of urban agriculture in each zone.

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMMES

Furthermore, a number of programmes will be undertaken in each belt (see table) that link the development of urban agriculture with the various objectives of integrated city development.
The modernisation of the agricultural sector will be stimulated by improving the basic infrastructure, building agricultural facilities, and human capacity building, including building greenhouses, irrigation systems and promoting new types of energy, such as wind and bio-energy. The presence of the city’s infrastructure and markets are important and the urban agricultural enterprises in Beijing will be stimulated to fully exploit the existing and future markets, establish agro-logistic systems, and add output value by using new agricultural technologies.

Key sectors will be given priority, like seed production and distribution, the production of local specialised products, agro-processing and agro-ecotourism.

The multiple functions of urban agriculture will be fully exploited. Activities to enhance the ecological functions include tree planting in the inner city, construction of green zones in the inner suburban areas, recovery of degraded and waste lands, reduction of agricultural contamination, and preservation of vegetation in the mountainous areas. The development of regulations for environmental protection of vulnerable areas should protect areas that are of special ecological importance.

Social functions will be stimulated by providing training and mutual learning in periurban communities and participation of citizens in decision making.

Agricultural associations are seen as an important means to enhance the inclusion of migrants and small farmers in this process and to link them with agro-enterprises, NGOs and local governments.

### Table 1 Implementation programmes and related policy objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective level</th>
<th>Programmes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural growth</td>
<td>Adjusting the agricultural industrial structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Construction of agricultural facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improvement of food security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improvement of industrial management and operation of agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Broadening the agricultural market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural construction</td>
<td>Establishing an agro-technology service system and improving public services in periurban areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improving the ICT infrastructure in periurban areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City development</td>
<td>Enhancing the social functions of urban agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strengthening the ecological function of urban agriculture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FINANCING

Beijing will adopt the following policies for financing the development of urban agriculture:

- Various sources of possible investment will be explored and stimulated, like fiscal budgets of municipal and local governments, enterprise investments, various types of bank loans, and foreign investment.
- Local governments will facilitate the availability and implementation of critical and advanced agricultural technologies.
- Governments should guarantee basic infrastructure and agro-facilities, such as water, electricity and transport.

PLANNING AND MONITORING

In order to implement and monitor these policy guidelines the following measures will be taken:

- Acceleration of the planning process on urban agriculture will be the main task for governmental agencies. In order to achieve this aim, close collaboration and coordination between various departments and officials will be necessary.
- A facilitative environment will be created for further development of urban agriculture, involving farmers and consumers in the planning process by applying a multi-stakeholder approach to project planning and implementation.
- Local governments will strengthen monitoring and management of the implementation of these activities and an impact evaluation system will be established. Participatory and self-evaluation is a necessary part of this system.

CONCLUSIONS

Urban agriculture has proven to be a powerful development force in Beijing. It has improved the living standards of its inhabitants by generating employment and income for resident and migrant urban farmers. It promotes social cohesion by engaging citizens in the urban-planning process. It maintains urban green spaces and limits urban sprawl. It encourages proper management and recycling of urban water resources.

The new policy guidelines will foster the further development of urban and periurban agriculture in Beijing as an integral part of its sustainable city development strategy. Approval of these guidelines will be an important milestone in the development of urban agriculture in Beijing.

### References

- Beijing Bureau of Land and Housing Management, 1997, Land resources in Beijing
- Beijing Urban Agriculture Development Policy Guidelines (Draft), 2006