any households in Accra have small backyard gardens where they cultivate food (particularly vegetables) or raise small animals for household food consumption. Up to 80 percent of the perishable vegetables (especially lettuce and spring onions) consumed by the city’s residents are produced within the city itself, and research has shown that about 200,000 urban dwellers benefit from it every day (Cofie et al., 2005). In addition, this form of agriculture supports the livelihood of farmers and market women whose incomes have been found to be above the poverty line as set by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

However, urban agriculture has many challenges including being a neglected sector in spite of its crucial role for the cities. Urban agriculture requires land and water. These two factors are scarce commodities in the city. Higher economic returns gained through other land-use options have shrunk the land parcels available for urban agriculture or pushed urban agriculture activities from many plots.

To promote urban agriculture, the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) needs to pass supportive legislation, rather than advancing only prohibitive bye-laws. It is within this context that the role of policies for urban agriculture has been assessed. The RUAF-CFF programme, coordinated by IWMI-Ghana, started in 2004 to collaborate with a number of stakeholders in Accra on the issue of urban agriculture.

A sequence of activities was undertaken under the Multi-stakeholder Processes for Action Planning and Policy Formulation (MPAP) by RUAF-IWMI and the Accra Working Group. A pilot project, entitled “Promoting Public Education and Policy Support for Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture in Accra”, has been commissioned for implementation, which seeks to facilitate the review and modification of the city bye-laws on urban agriculture. It also seeks to create more awareness of the benefits of urban agriculture, how to minimise the risks and ways to ensure food safety in the city.

As part of this project, a study visit to Kampala was organised for two key members of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly: Mrs Evelyn Doku, the Metropolitan Director of Food and Agriculture and Mr Ben Nii Annan, the Presiding Member of the Metropolitan Assembly. The objective of the study visit was to learn from the experiences of Kampala in reviewing the city’s ordinances on urban agriculture and the development of a new city ordinance.

All these activities were aimed at deepening the knowledge and understanding of key stakeholders on the importance of urban agriculture in urban economic development, as well as targeting key policy makers at the Accra Metropolitan Assembly and its sister District Assemblies to incorporate it into their strategic action plans. For instance, during a multi-stakeholder forum and a policy seminar organised by RUAF-IWMI, key officials from the Accra Metropolitan Assembly, Ga West District Assembly, Ga East District Assembly, and Tema Municipal Authority, as well as representatives from the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and some relevant donor agencies and NGOs,
were invited to share ideas on how to make urban agriculture an essential component of the cities’ development agenda. Mrs Winnie Makumbi, of the Kampala City Council, was invited as a special guest to share the experiences of Kampala with the participants at the policy seminar.

At both events there was a general consensus reached on the need to promote urban agricultural development in the city. Some of the ideas and implementation strategies are incorporated in the recommendations below. The effect of this collaboration with key officials and policy makers at the AMA and other municipal authorities is yielding positive results. The AMA has started reviewing its bye-laws to make them urban agriculture friendly. Indications are that its sister District Assemblies will follow soon. The general public’s awareness on urban agriculture is also being enhanced.

This paper is based on the exploratory study which was carried out in the initial stage of the RUAF-CFF programme in 2005 and 2006, in which the authors were involved. As part of this study, AMA’s bye-laws and other official documents were reviewed. The results and the current state of affairs, a.o. activities undertaken to promote urban agriculture are described here.

**METROPOLITAN BYE-LAWS RELATED TO AGRICULTURE**

- *Hawkers Permit Bye-laws 1995; 9*
- *Control of Swine, Cattle, Sheep and Goats Bye-laws 1995; 1 (2)*
- *Control of Poultry in Dwelling Houses Bye-Laws 1995*
- *Growing and sale of crops Bye-laws 1995*
- *Control of Dogs Bye-laws 1995, as well as sections of the Public Markets Bye-laws 1995*

A review of the relevant sections of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly’s 1995 bye-laws shows clearly that the AMA recognises the existence of urban agriculture within its area of jurisdiction.

**Policies on urban agriculture should recognise and address gender**

However, the bye-laws are restrictive. For example, the bye-laws on the keeping of swine, cattle, sheep and goats state that “no person may keep any swine, cattle, sheep or goats within the area of administration of AMA without a permit issued by the AMA for that purpose, which shall be determined in accordance with the fee-fixing resolution. The number of goats and sheep to be kept in any dwelling house may not exceed 10. No person may keep swine and cattle on any premises except at designated places based on an application approved by the AMA”. Similarly, the bye-laws on poultry in dwelling houses, also states, “the number of poultry that may be kept in a dwelling house within AMA’s administration area is restricted to 200 birds”. According to the bye-laws on the growing and sale of crops, “residents may not grow crops anywhere except on their own premises, unless they first register with the medical officer of health by furnishing their name and address and the description of the site where the crop is to be grown. No crop may be watered or irrigated with effluent from a drain from any premises or any surface water from a drain, which is fed by water from a street drainage. Also no crops may be sold, offered or displayed for sale at any other place than in a market, stall, store, or kiosk”.

The AMA’s bye-laws thus require an urban agriculture practitioner to register with the metropolitan assembly, and to observe certain restrictions regarding the permissible size of a farm, the type of crops that can be grown, the type of water to use, the number of birds, goats, sheep that can be reared in a dwelling place and where cattle and swine can be reared. In practice, however, almost none of these activities are ever registered, nor do they meet the municipal regulations concerning them. The main thrust of almost all the bye-laws of the AMA with regards to urban agriculture is to forestall public health and food safety concerns as well as to engender appropriate sanitary conditions in the urban environment.

The dominant perception was that UPA practices compromise public health and food safety, and that prohibitive and restrictive laws against urban agriculture in the city is the best option. This school of thought regarded certain activities of urban agriculture as misplaced rural enterprises that should not be conducted in the city. City authorities in Ghana concentrate more on revenue collection and provision of sanitation, albeit unsuccessfully, to the exclusion of urban agriculture.

The fact that the AMA has a District Agricultural Development Unit (DADU) with budgetary allocations means that the city authority does recognise the importance of agricultural activities in the urban area. However, this awareness is not fully translated into concrete legislative support for urban agricultural development in the city. However, the current action plan seeks to form a task force to review the bye-laws and develop a position paper for consideration by the Assembly.

Urban agriculture did not feature prominently in any of the reviewed short-, medium- and long-term projects and programmes of the AMA. There is, however, some degree of shift to integrate it in the plan currently being developed. There are also no clearly defined (zoned) areas set aside for urban agriculture. Most of the plots of land on which agriculture is practised belong to institutions (notably the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Burma camp, and the University of Ghana, Legon). This puts the sustainability of urban agriculture in those places in doubt since these institutions may develop their land sooner or later for some purpose other than urban agriculture. The high value of land for other uses has aggravated this situation. At a higher policy level, a Land Administration Project (LAP) has been launched to develop policies on the creation of land banks for agricultural development and investments.
KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Urban agriculture contributes immensely to the socio-economic development of the city, particularly in terms of gainful employment, wealth creation, poverty reduction, and food security. To enable urban agriculture to play a more significant role, policies that are inimical to its sustainable development are being revised to stimulate farming practices that guarantee public health and food safety. The AMA, MOFA, RUAF-CFF through IWMI-Ghana and its collaborating partner institutions (CSIR and Metro Public Health Department and the University of Ghana) and other key stakeholders including NGOs and donor agencies are currently facilitating research and collaboration to promote the safe use of wastewater for irrigation, create more awareness and continuously educate the public on safe handling of produce. In all these areas, more public education and policy support are required.

The following are some actions being implemented by the Accra Working Group on Urban and Periurban Agriculture, to integrate urban agriculture into the development agenda of the AMA:

**AMA has started reviewing its bye-laws to make them urban agriculture friendly**

1) Relevant stakeholders have been invited to participate in a working group to develop a comprehensive policy paper on urban agriculture in Accra, and to develop strategies to enhance farmers’ production, income, livelihoods and contribution to the national agriculture. RUAF-IWMI with its key partner institutions through the MPAP seeks to achieve this in its Action Plan.

2) The Working Group on urban agriculture in Accra has planned a series of awareness creation programmes to educate the general public on the importance of agriculture in the city. It hopes to continuously raise public awareness on food safety, including how to treat produce from urban agriculture.

3) Urban agriculture is not fully integrated into the general micro-economic level development policies including the Ghana Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy II (GPRS) programmes. Its integration at the AMA level presents an appropriate entry point for poverty reduction at the city level.

4) The government through the District Assemblies and the Ministry of Food and Agriculture should allocate more funds to promote and improve urban agricultural production.

5) Access to land and water is very crucial for the success of urban agriculture. Land-use policy thus has a large impact on urban agriculture. The demand for land far outstrips its supply. Allocation of land in the urban space should not be based solely on economic determinants of land use. The Accra Metropolitan Assembly should provide land for urban agriculture, rather than making desperate farmers resort to the use of greenbelts, which are not meant for farming. The RUAF-IWMI has undertaken a land use mapping of AMA (2005) and plans to provide periodic updates of maps in order to support participatory decision making in this regard.

6) Policies on urban agriculture should recognise and address gender differences and inequality and gender differentiation of labour. Wherever possible, farmers are encouraged to consider micro-processing and best practices as well as to identify their problems and challenges.

7) Participatory monitoring and evaluation of the activities of urban farmers needs to be implemented, to assess their compliance to city bye-laws and best practices as well as to identify their problems and challenges.

8) Farmers are being provided with extension information on good agricultural practices and with assistance to help prevent conflict with other residents whilst enhancing their productivity and production. This should help remove some of the negative perceptions the public has about urban agriculture. This is particularly so with respect to concerns on the use of polluted wastewater and its effect on food safety and public health. Livestock farmers are being introduced to space-confined practices that do not allow their animals (including goats, sheep, pigs, and cattle) to roam the streets. This support also includes information on improved post-harvest handling systems such as storage facilities and better marketing strategies to reduce contamination and post-harvest losses, and information on environmental sanitation and personal hygiene to mitigate potential health risk.

9) Extension services by MoFA need to be strengthened and packages specific for urban agriculture developed. The RUAF-IWMI has developed a database on its research findings and those of other research institutions and provides regular updates to stakeholders. It also hopes to develop extension materials (posters, flyers) on some of these technologies for distribution to farmers. Field demonstrations and study visits are also planned to facilitate extension to farmers or practitioners.

References


Acknowledgement

The exploratory study on urban agriculture in the Accra Metropolitan Area was conducted by four teams, which conducted (respectively): (i) an urban agricultural inventory; (ii) a stakeholder analysis; (iii) land use mapping; and (iv) a policy review and analysis.