

Urban Agriculture

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What are the potentials and implications of urban agriculture, and its relationship to food access?

With impending factors including rising oil cost, natural disasters, and bioterrorism threats, the need for locally grown food also increases. As one SF Chronicle writer expresses “the post-oil era will see our transformation from a transient society to one that focuses on home and neighborhood. Sprawl development will give way to compact, walkable environments. Suburbs will disappear altogether. Those in direct proximity to cities will be replaced by farms; those farther out will gradually be reclaimed by nature.”

The potential for urban food production is great, and demonstration projects are exhibiting its viability. The United Nations Development Program estimates that fifteen percent of food worldwide is grown in cities and this figure could be significantly expanded. Envision urban fish farms, farm animals at public housing sites, municipal compost facilities, schoolyard greenhouses, restaurant-supported salad gardens, backyard orchards, rooftop gardens and beehives, window box gardens, and much more.

Definitions: Urban Agriculture + Food (In)security

Urban Agriculture:

“the growing, processing, and distribution of food and other products through intensive plant cultivation and animal husbandry in and around cities.”

In addition, “a complex system encompassing a spectrum of interests, from a traditional core of activities associated with the production, processing, marketing, distribution, and consumption... These include recreation and leisure; economic vitality and business entrepreneurship, individual health and well-being; community health and well-being; landscape beautification; and environmental restoration and remediation.”

Food Security/Access

Food security is all persons in a community having access to culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate food through local, non-emergency sources at all times.

- provisions for a safe, regional food supply that is less vulnerable to the uncertainties of economies and the choices of government leaders and individuals.
- Natural disasters such as floods, droughts, or hurricanes can also cause temporary and long term effects on the food supply.

Varying Scales

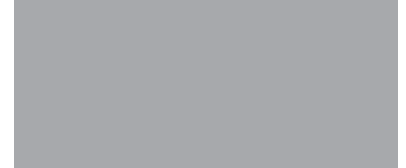
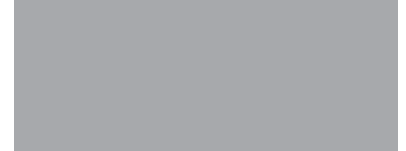
Urban Commercial Farms, Market Gardens, Community Gardens, Private Gardens

History + Cases

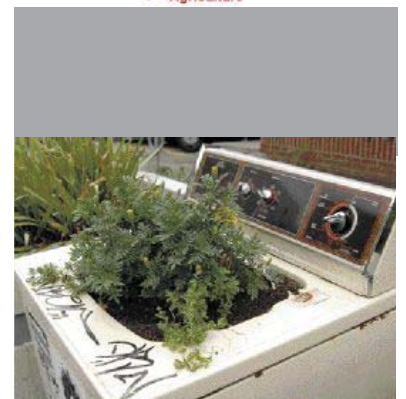
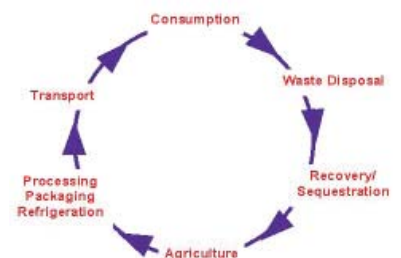
- WWI + WWII (Victory Gardens)...
- Ebenezer Howard's Garden Cities
- Russia, Cuba, San Francisco, Seattle

City Resources / Land Use

- Leftover Spaces (Vacant Lots, Rooftops, Utility Right of Ways)
- Multifunctional Land Use (Farms + Gardens as part of Greenbelts/Habitat)
- Regional Food Connections
- Reuse of Waste Streams (Composting)
- Entrepreneurship Opportunities (Community Supported Agriculture – CSAs)



FOOD CYCLE



Kensington's mystery machine



Communities (Primary potential users, but not exclusive to)

Immigrant Populations, Elderly, Low-Income /Public Housing, and more...

Challenges

Land tenure, Start-up costs, Access to markets, Knowledge and skills
Seasonal limits, Health, Vandalism + Crime

Implementation (Policy)

- Support infrastructures for increased urban food production, processing and marketing
- Extend to urban growers appropriate farm-related services and opportunities
- Preserve farms on the urban fringe and support initiatives that convert idle under-used urban lands and resources to food production
- Promote and develop training in food production
- Sponsor and publicize research which integrates health, nutrition, food production, access, and economics together to solve city issues
- Educate professionals so that urban agriculture is automatically considered a part of urban planning



As a System

Urban agriculture incorporates production, transportation, processing, distribution, preparation, waste management, and resource inputs. Resource inputs occur at all levels of the food system. In addition, a sustainable food system would:

- Incorporate social-justice issues into a more localized system;
- Alleviate constraints on people's access to adequate, nutritious food;
- Develop the economic capacity of local people to purchase food;
- Train people to grow, process, and distribute this food;
- Maintain adequate land to produce a high proportion of locally required food;
- Educate people, who have been increasingly removed from food production, to participate in, and respect, its generation; and
- Integrate environmental stewardship into the process.



Resource outputs such as compostable food waste (which can comprise up to 1/3 of landfills), would go back into the system.

Linked to many other community systems such as jobs, waste, transportation, water pollution, health care....

Resources

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Community Food Security Coalition:
<http://www.foodsecurity.org/>