

Chapter 6

Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture on Policy Agenda**6.1 Introduction**

The main purpose of this chapter is to examine a body of literature on policy issues pertaining to urban and peri-urban agriculture in South Africa so as to assess reasons for the negligence of literature on urban agriculture to address the reasons for official's positive attitudes towards urban and peri-urban agriculture. In conclusion the paper calls for considerate attention to urban and peri-urban agriculture by policy makers, government officials, researchers and those concerned and a realization of the need for policy reform.

6.2 Reasons for the rejection of urban agriculture by policy makers, government officials and town planners

In South Africa, there is no comprehensive policy specifically geared towards urban agriculture as urban town planners and policy makers in general do not view it as a potential land use within our urban areas. Various departments might develop programmes and activities related to urban agriculture, but they have not yet been institutionalized and integrated within other policies.

Coetzee (1994) has stated that urban agriculture has been excluded as a planning parameter in development projects in urban areas because of its perceived inability to contribute to economic growth. That was eight years ago and even today Brown (2002) admits that there is no action plan for urban farming activities, formally approached and there are no specific regulations and norms regarding urban land use in relation to urban agriculture. There are no clear policy guidelines on urban agriculture and it is not integrated into city development plans. In South Africa, town planners and policy makers have little understanding about how the urban poor survive. They do not understand what life is like for the poorest of the poor. As a result, urban plans and policies generally have little relevance to the situation which the poor face and may well; make it far worse (Rakodi 1993; Rogerson 1993)

De Necker & Uys (1995) conducted a survey on urban manager's perceptions with regard to urban agriculture in Greater Cape Town. Their findings reveal that urban managers perceive urban agriculture to be of a temporary nature and economically insignificant. Migrants move to cities in search of jobs and they have to adapt to city life. Accommodating urban agriculture hampers densification and leads to urban sprawl. If officials say that peri-urban agriculture is only temporary and argue that it cannot be accommodated in long-term city planning, the statement should be contested because poor people migrate to townships to stay; therefore urban agriculture is going to stay too.

Tinker (1994:vii,) puts it that urban agriculture is considered as an oxymoron and has been largely ignored by agricultural planners, government officials and policy makers. Slater (2001: p.6) concurs that, "*Urban agriculture is an oxymoron and indicative of failure in the urban development process*". Tinker (1998: p.5) goes on to say that "*Despite the predominance of poor people in cities of the developing world, most planning favors the elite on the grounds that income statistics reinforce the presumption that city dwellers are better off than those living in rural areas but in urban areas poverty is underscored when income is adjusted to reflect the high cost of food in cities*". Opinions expressed by the interviews are interspersed in the following two boxes to illustrate, support or rebut findings gleaned from the literature.

Box 3: Key informant interview (Tygerberg Council)

Officials view urban agriculture as a 'nuisance' they want anything other than residential. They perceive subsistence farming as a waste; they are interested in huge commercial farming. Agriculture is noxious; nobody wants to be seen with agriculture because it is associated with low status. Legislation and rules chop off town planner's hands. The outdated laws and regulations bind us. I have to enforce the law even if I disagree with it or is outdated otherwise I will lose my job. For instance I'm using the law that was developed in 1994, the officials are not changing laws with regard to land-use planning. They are changing laws concerning HIV/AIDS and smoking acts. Moreover, town planners are not doing their core function (planning); they are busy doing administrative tasks such as budgeting. Furthermore there are no models readily available to the officials and planners in order to apply the concept of integration of urban agriculture in land use planning.

Leon Myburgh (2002)

Box 4: Key informant interview (NGOs)

The land here in Khayelitsha is earmarked for housing for a longer term as a result it ended up being a dumping site, full of rubbish and hazard to our environment. Community residents throw garbage at these reserved sites. Open spaces have been reserved for houses, churches, schools, and recreational activities for longer term. For example, another open space next to Khayelitsha station is earmarked for CBD (central business district). These open spaces encourage crime, crime in the sense that our kids are being raped and gunned down at these open spaces. She added, boys come to these open spaces to smoke dagga and practice crime. The officials say Khayelitsha is no longer a township, it is a big city, it is more modernized, and therefore agriculture cannot be practiced in modernised city. Authorities say that rural people must adapt to township life. They must accept western standards and be modernised. Gardening is people's culture and heritage and culture is something that cannot be modernised at all.

Cristina Kaba (2001)

American studies show that where there are no flowers and gardens there is likely to be more litter (Johns, 1993).

Cristina's saga continues: *"In 1994 we applied for land to the Municipality of Tygerberg. They replied saying the land was reserved for schools, but according to us there are enough schools in Khayelitsha, as a result they are merging two schools because of fewer students at school. The minister from the parliament visited us and we told him that we want land for gardening. Minister followed up the matter to the council, asking them why not giving land to people whom want to garden. In November 2001, the council gave us the land but on condition that we have to lease it. "Community residents cannot lease land because they earn very little income; insufficient to meet conventional land purchases requirements".*

Cristina commented: *"The Councillors are doing top-down approach, they are imposing their ideas on us and the communities become annoyed by that. For instance the Council established two community gardens at Harare and Litha Park. The projects were unsuccessful because people were told what to do; the council was exploiting them. The council is now coming to me to rectify their problems".*

6.3 Reasons for the acceptance of urban and peri-urban agriculture by policy

Urban agriculture, especially the cultivation of crops, may be hindered by competition between agriculture and other forms of land uses. Land is for building houses so that people can go and work in secondary industries. If land is earmarked for housing so that people should work in secondary industries and factories, the statement is contestable because companies are downsizing and retrenching people. It is very difficult for people to get jobs in Cape Town because competition for jobs is tight and most people who migrated from rural areas are illiterate and unskilled. In former times there were more jobs for unskilled people but nowadays the available jobs require skilled and educated people. These unskilled hopeless people convert to agriculture in order to secure a livelihood.

Urban agriculture is not recorded in economic official statistics due to its informal nature, thereby reinforcing the planner's lack of interest. Fisser (1996: p.97) put it: "*Diversity and fragmentation of urban agriculture leads to lack of support and attention from city councillors and town planners*". Lee (1993) "*Even in Africa, Ethiopia for an example, the government attitudes, policy makers and town planners actually discourage urban agriculture. The value of urban agriculture has been seriously under-estimated by government officials*". In Kenya, for example it is illegal to keep livestock or to cultivate crops within urban areas (Smith; 1994). Consequently crops were burned and cultivators were prosecuted. Freeman (1991) states that urban agriculture, especially in Third World countries, is common but remains untouched as a research topic. That was more than a decade but as from 1992 onwards the volume of literature on urban agriculture has increased mainly because of the urbanization of poverty, (Hardoy, Mitlin & Satterthwaite; 2001: p. 280).

Although urban peri-urban agriculture poses risks to health and environment the advantages of incorporating it into economic planning must surely outweigh the disadvantages. The next section will examine why officials are increasingly becoming more positive towards urban and peri-urban agriculture.

6.3 Reasons for the acceptance of urban and peri-urban agriculture by policy makers, government officials and planners

Although councillors, town planners and government officials neglected urban agriculture in the past, they are aware of it in Khayelitsha. Urban agriculture is receiving notable attention from councillors because they are giving land to the people who want to do gardening. Furthermore, the City of Tygerberg (2000) note that Khayelitsha is one of the city's poorest communities and they have embarked on a Livestock Management Project. The project aims to improve the general conditions of livestock keeping in Khayelitsha, to eradicate health and environmental problems caused by livestock, and to reduce physical risks such as car accidents.

Esam Esakho Isitiya 'Yours and My Garden' got 20 hectares of land from the council. The project members (11 of them) went to Council to negotiate land and to show them what they do (gardening) and tell them about their motivations for gardening and the way they do it. These people are giving vegetables to patients who are infected with TB and HIV/ AIDS free of charge. The council agreed and gave them the land for gardening. Cristina's group also got land from the council for gardening. The community project located at Nomsa Maphongwane Primary School is also expanding. The school principal gave them permission to use unused land productively because the project members are committed and dedicated to gardening.

Recently Council has given land (approximately 35 hectares) between Town 2 and Mfuleni to the people who have livestock. The area was fenced by Council and livestock owners employ people to look after their livestock. The Economic, Tourism and Property Management services in association with Planning and Environment services are facilitating the construction of the Khayelitsha Livestock Management Project (City of Tygerberg 2000).

In Durban for example, D'MOSS (Durban Metropolitan Open Space System) have keen interest in urban agriculture. Today the need for commercial urban agriculture is becoming more and more apparent. Land that is suitable for urban agriculture is actively being sought (Bodenstein, 1995: p.17).

The officials have understood the positive effects of urban agriculture on human health and the environment. The health aspects include improved access to nutrition and thus improved health, better physical and psychological health due to physical activity and leisure time (De Zeeuw 2000).

The environmental aspects include greening programmes which have a direct effect on the environment. Urban agriculture beautifies the township and surroundings. Eberhard (1989b: p.50) states that in United States of America 73% of the urban gardeners said that beautifying the environment and cleaning it up were the main reasons for their involvement.

Researchers have shown that urban agriculture can benefit urban areas. Rakodi (1988) shows that there is no scientific proof that maize provides breeding ground for mosquitoes in Zambia. Tinkler (1994: ix) noted a prevailing culture and prevalence of rooftop gardens in St Petersburg and Moscow and argues that research on urban agriculture challenges the assumptions of economic development theories, Marxist and Modernist, that see it as the inappropriate retention of peasant culture in cities and confidently predict its disappearance. Sandler (1994: 65) concludes that, urban vegetable gardens are going to be vital to South African agrarian, and to feeding the nation's growing population.

The increase in the number of community gardens in Khayelitsha is a sign of public approval of urban agriculture. Politicians are condoning the practice of agriculture in the city because they want to win support. Arise and Act (*Vuku Zenzele*) by President Thabo Mbeki inspired people to do something for themselves of which gardening is one accessible example. De Necker & Uys (1995: p.6) put it that "*Poor people must be allowed to do agriculture in towns and cities because it is accessible and they are hungry*". Urbanization has resulted in the expansion of urban agriculture and the officials have no choice but to condone the practice.

Finally, urban and peri-urban agriculture has been accepted by international community because of its significance in relation to poverty alleviation (Rogerson, 2001: p.17). The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) with its enviable perspicacity, became the first major international agency to recognise the importance of food production (Tinker 1994). The FAO followed by establishing a specialised support division for urban and peri-urban agriculture

6.4 Conclusions

Ideally every household can sustain itself with subsistence farming, and urban agriculture has the potential to offer just that. Urban agriculture plays a vital role in tackling poverty and improving household food security for the urban poor. It also creates job opportunities and promotes self-sufficiency of urban residents. There are positive and negative perceptions of urban agriculture but there is need for government officials, policy makers and researchers to understand urban agriculture as a survival and last resort coping strategy for the urban poor rather than an income generating activity.

Most of the people who are engaged in agricultural activities are unemployed women between the ages of 30 and 50 years, who are also involved in informal activities which offer very little and insecure. Nevertheless some men are actively involved in gardening, particularly older men who garden to access food and who also enjoy gardening. The majority of the surveyed respondents were unemployed and therefore have less economic opportunities. From the study it can be deduced that people with less economic opportunities are more likely to be involved in agriculture. It can also be concluded that urban agriculture has received very little attention from government officials and policy makers although recently Council is giving land to people who want to garden.

The main reason for the surveyed respondents to be engaged in gardening is to access food, while others said they enjoy participating in agricultural activities, others were gardening to complement diet, others gardening to obtain money and others said that they garden to avoid squatters in their housing compounds. One can deduct that vegetable production does not have the potential to develop into cash cropping (commercial/ market) without support from NGOs and the introduction of other income generating activities such chickens, sewing or beadwork. One individual will need approximately 250m² to earn an income of R1 200 per month.

From this review of work on urban livelihoods and agricultural activities and the use of the sustainable livelihood framework, one can conclude that **natural capital**, such as insecurity of tenure, is critical. Access to land is not effectively facilitated at national and local governmental level. Land policies are complex and poorly understood by the urban poor. Limited supply of water is also a critical factor. Levels of **social capital** are relatively low

because gardening projects have found a preference among participants for individual plots rather than shared activities. In relation to **human capital** levels of literacy were quite high requiring a good platform for skill development, extension services and technical training in urban agriculture. **Physical** provision of housing, water and sanitation are often priorities for urban poor people. The need for agricultural spaces should be factored into plans at neighbourhood level and siting of basic amenities on individual house plots.

In planning for development activities the use of the sustainable livelihood framework entails analysis of the context in which different people live, including external trends such as population growth, economic and technological, natural shocks, people access to different types of assets such as human, social, physical, natural and financial capital and their ability to use these resources productively. It is, therefore, useful to use sustainable livelihood framework as it gives a clear picture of how people live their lives and make ends meet.

The sustainable livelihood framework captures all the components of urban and peri-urban agriculture, it applies very well to urban environment and was used by Brook & Davila (2000) to analyse the livelihood strategies of poor household in the peri-urban interfaces of Ghana, Kumasi and India, Hubli-Dharwad.

4.5.3 Government Government should primarily address the problems of urban gardeners. Dewar & Watson (1991) argued that, given current and ongoing limitations on expected job creation in the formal economy in Cape Town, there is no doubt that many people will have to turn to the primary resources of the region for their livelihood (cited by Rogerson, 1993: p.41). Government should provide better extension services and inputs. My suggestion is that basic amenities such as running water, access to land, and credit should be extended to urban gardeners. Access to and security of land tenure could be approved through official recognition of urban agriculture. Local council support is essential for granted permissions for community food gardeners to make use of unproductive land productively. Community food gardens and household gardens should be established or watered with water and effective water management should form an important part of any policy (Wade, 1987).

6.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings of study, the following recommendations can be made. It should however, be noted that different conditions require different solutions and must be handled by policy-makers on a case-by-case basis.

6.5.1 Information dissemination Information exchange between all parties involved in urban and peri-urban agriculture should be disseminated to the target groups. Evidence from literature shows that apart from five working paper series on urban agriculture by Town Planning Branch of Cape Town City Council, most officials were unaware of the available literature, and moreover, the substantial body of literature does not reach the intended target. The findings of research reports including dissertations, theses, books, reports and conference papers should be disseminated to government officials, local NGOs and gardeners. Workshops between gardeners, NGOs and officials should be promoted to ensure effective exchange of information. Community gardeners, NGOs and government officials should make use of available literature and not decorate their offices with research reports.

6.5.2 Planning Officials should view agriculture as a resource and not as a problem. Planning for urban agriculture must be recognised as an important part of the policy agenda. Agriculture is an idiosyncratic form of livelihood in a city (Smith, 1994) and thus planning for the accommodation of urban agriculture is needed for the restructuring of our cities.

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6.5.4 Policy A conducive policy environment is a key to the success of agricultural development. Policy formulation should be an iterative process, involving all stakeholders and main practitioners. Information exchange between policy makers, NGOs and gardeners through workshops is needed to address the general ignorance of urban agriculture by policy makers and government officials.

6.5.5 Role of private sector and NGOs The private sector should play a vital role in funding community food gardens as well as agricultural research. Local NGOs should continue supporting urban agricultural projects as well as home gardening, making sure that the partnership between local government and themselves is developed to promote co-operation and sharing of resources as well as expertise. It is unlikely that community food gardeners will start or expand gardening without the financial support of NGOs and government.

6.5.6 Community involvement In Khayelitsha NGOs and government assistance towards promoting urban agriculture are not enough, therefore effective participation by the community is essential. Community members must promote gardening by associating gardening with freedom, innovation and cosmopolitan. Gardening should be about democratic development of the society and environment.

6.5.7 Promotion of urban agriculture City councils tend to favour urban agriculture as a temporary use of vacant public and private land until the land is developed for a different, usually higher status, purpose. Another way of boosting urban agriculture as it is practised today, is to set aside space within RDP housing developments. Households should be given a house and a piece of land to practice agriculture. Inhabitants of the peri-urban squatter camp in Joe Slovo, Port Elizabeth, are planning to develop a settlement with agriculture as weapon to fight hunger (Jarlov, 2001: p.9). Throughout Khayelitsha there are open spaces that have been earmarked for a long time for CBDs, schools and churches but have not yet been developed. There are also open spaces available for vegetable production namely, road reserves, areas beneath power –lines and part of storm drain system.

Urban agriculture in townships should be an everyday part of everyone's experience so that the trading of local produce becomes common place (Burnham, 1994: p.3). Marketing of vegetables is a problem for community food gardens because there is no garden shop in Khayelithsa. Moustier (1993: p.313) points out that marketing inefficiencies actually result from production or transport deficiencies, therefore production and transportation should be the first point of intervention for programmes designed to improve cities' vegetable provisioning.

6.5.8 Health and safety measures On the health and safety measures, health officials should give advice to urban gardeners on the type of water and compost usage. Nutrition Departments from the universities should provide advice regarding cooking habits.

6.5.9 Land-use From a land use planning point of view, isolated areas should be set aside for livestock keeping and inspectors from veterinary offices should inspect animals to control animal diseases that could be transmitted to humans.

In order to ensure sustainability, types of urban farming must be surveyed and government should provide support by starting with backyard gardens, then develop community gardens (open space cultivation) and move to big commercial agriculture. By moving directly to commercial agriculture is a 'jump strategy' and so policy makers should pave a path for backyard and community gardeners into commercial mainstream.

Areas for future research

Although much has been done on urban agriculture, future research is needed on the:

- Exploration of the impacts of urban agriculture on the economy as a whole.
- Impact of urban agriculture on the environment in terms of waste disposal and soil conservation measures.
- Extent to which urban agriculture satisfies household basic needs.
- Dynamic changes and current status of urban and peri-urban land tenure, informal and formal markets and other forms of land transactions.