



## URBAN GROWTH: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR HORTICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND TRADE IN KENYA

Video conference on high value horticulture for Eastern & Southern Africa  
Kenya Development Learning Centre (KDLN) 30<sup>th</sup> November 2010

### Introduction

Urban Agriculture encompasses the production of food and nonfood plant and tree crops and animal husbandry, both within Urban and Peri-urban areas. This paper restricts the discussion on urban agriculture in the context of production of food and nonfood plant and tree crops. The history of urban agriculture sub-sector in Kenya dates back to 1899 when the railway workers mainly from India started the practice in the mainland towns. Urban agriculture has thrived in Kenya over the years due to ever increasing level of urbanization which currently stand at 22%; with cultivation of mainly vegetables and ornamental crops for the urban market being on the increase. Studies indicate that up to 77% of urban farmers in Kenya produce entirely for their own consumption. However, urban agriculture is a viable commercial venture for the middle and high income households. Despite the significant role of urban agriculture, the sub-sector has over the years operated with little support in terms of policy, legal, and regulatory framework. In addition, the sub-sector has insufficient technical capacity to keep abreast with changing trends in technology. This situation has raised concerns regarding safety of the food, environmental pollution, and increasing number of conflicts over resources such land and water. In a bid to mitigate these challenges, the Government has developed the National Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture and Livestock Draft Policy of 2010 in order to: guide; spur further growth; and sustain the development of the sub-sector. In addition to the national policy, the National Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture and Livestock Steering Committee (NUSC) has been instituted to oversee the policy implementation. Other committees instituted are: the Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture Coordinating Committee that is charged with the responsibility of handling technical matters; and the Municipal and Town Councils Agriculture and Livestock Committees (MCAL) that are mandated with responsibilities of managing Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture and Livestock programs and projects at the municipal and town council level. The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) through Community Based Organizations (CBOs); and Development Partners have made a notable contribution towards the improvement of Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture in Kenya. Despite the efforts in late nineties, regional approach to issues regarding Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture remain elusive.

## 1.0. Present status of Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture in Kenya

Agricultural growth and development is crucial for Kenya's overall economic and social development. Agriculture directly contributes 24% of the national GDP and is an important source of livelihood for rural and urban and peri-urban farmers. It is estimated that more than 70% of rural population is engaged in informal agricultural employment (Anonymous, 2010). Equally important is Urban and Peri-urban agriculture that employs 29% of all urban households (Lee-Smith *et al*, 1987). Studies indicate that up to 77% of urban farmers in Kenya produce entirely for their own consumption making the sub-sector an important source of food security. However, urban agriculture is a viable commercial venture for the middle and high income households (Caleb M. *et al.*, 2010; Memon and Lee-Smith 1992).

Other than the climatic conditions, crops cultivated under Urban and Peri-urban depends on the crop cycle. Generally, within the cities, short cycle crops such tomatoes, spinach, courgettes, lettuce, kales, leeks, French beans, summer flowers etc are preferred while longer cycle crops such apple, paw paw, banana, mango, and avocado dominate the peri-urban areas. In addition, there is an increase in number of nurseries for ornamental plants, herbs and spices in cities across the country; nurseries for vegetable seedlings are also becoming important part of Urban and Peri-urban agriculture in Kenya. Data on area under urban and peri-urban production for different cities in Kenya is scanty. However, in Nairobi alone, more than 650 Ha of land is under urban and peri-urban production (Anonymous, 2009; Kangethe *et al*, 2008). Reports indicate that vegetables cultivated along roadsides accumulate high intake of heavy metals; lead is of particular concern in Kenya, which still has leaded fuel (Hide and Kimani, 2000).

The characterization of the various Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture farming systems in Kenya is yet to be done. Consequently, inadequate Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture technologies have been developed limiting crop choices and adaptation of production technologies. Currently, greenhouse, drip irrigation, organic farming, and to a less extent hydroponics are among the technologies commonly adopted in urban and peri-urban agriculture. However, there is generally insufficient technical capacity to keep abreast with changing trends in technology. Moreover, limited awareness creation of the available urban and peri-urban technologies has also been an impediment to improved productivity.

Water for irrigation is a limiting factor for development of Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture. There are for instance 3,700 farmers in Nairobi that practice irrigation agriculture with 36% of the farmers having limited access to potable water for irrigation (Hide and Kimani, 2000).

Comparatively, Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture is more paying than rural Agriculture. This is attributed to direct marketing by producers due to high demand of produce in urban centres. In addition, Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture has minimal marketing costs due to less need for packaging, storage and transportation of food.

In recognition of the importance of Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture with regard to food security, employment creation, and poverty alleviation, the Government has developed the National Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture and Livestock Draft Policy of 2010 in order to: guide; spur further growth; and sustain the development of the sub-sector. However, for these efforts to bear any meaningful

results there is need to harmonize the various conflicting legislations that have hindered the growth of the sub-sector.

The Mazingira institute is notably one of leading institutes with local expertise in Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture. Formed in 1978, the institute has over the last three decades established it's self as a leader in matters regarding urban agriculture, while also training communities to learn better skills to increase income generation and well-being.

The Nairobi and Environs Food Security, Agriculture, and Livestock Forum (NEFSALF), is a consortium of farmers, policy makers, veterinarians, researchers, and national and international agriculture research institutions, including Urban Harvest and the International Livestock Research Institute. NEFSALF is made up of 50 farmers associations, with more than 700 farmers. Since it's inception in 2004, the consortium is herald for increasing farmers' empowerment against repressive local legislations.

## **2.0. Present status in managing challenges of Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture**

There is lack of specific policy geared towards addressing the development of Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture. In addition, there are a number of legislations that indirectly support or hinder the growth and development of the sub sector. The Draft National Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture and Livestock Policy (2010) is intended to enhance coordination and promote harmony among the various legislations.

The Draft Policy provides for proper coordination of UPAL activities through three (3) levels of committees: the National UPAL Steering Committee (NUSC); the UPAL Coordinating Committee; and Municipal and Town Councils Agriculture and Livestock Committees (MCAL).

The NUSC has the overall mandate of overseeing the implementation of UPAL policy. The membership of NUSC will comprise of Permanent Secretaries (PS) of line ministries and Chief Executives of key private sector institutions involved in UPAL with the PS agriculture as the convener. There are nine (9) line ministries to the Ministry of Agriculture in Kenya: Ministry of Cooperative and Development; Ministry of Environment and Mineral Resources; Ministry of Fisheries Development; Ministry of Lands; Ministry of Livestock Development; Ministry of Local Government and Local Authorities; Ministries of Public Health and Sanitation; Ministry of Trade; and Ministry of Water and Irrigation

The UPAL Coordinating Committee has the technical mandate over the implementation of the policy. The membership of the committee will comprise of various Directors of the line ministries, Chief Executives and representatives of key institutions involved in UPAL. The committee will oversee and coordinate the implementation of UPAL activities in municipals, and Town councils and their precincts.

The mandate of MCAL will be to manage UPAL programs and projects at the municipal and town council level; and will comprise of Heads of Departments of relevant line ministries, local Authorities and representatives of key institutions within the Municipal and Town council jurisdictions

Mazingira Institute has a track record on urban agricultural research and contributions significantly in this field; the institute is also strategically placed to undertake UPAL activities both within the country and at the regional level.

Over the years, the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have continued providing technical and financial support towards Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture. Among the NGOs notable in the sub-sector include: Mazingira institute; Farm Concern; Genetic Technologies; Africa Harvest; Green Towns; World Vision; Care Kenya; Green Belt movement; Practical Action; AGRA; CRS; Winlock International; Land O'lakes; Technoserve; and Solar Cookers International.

The Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture in Kenya also receives enormous support from the Development Partners notably: FAO, IDRC, GTZ, JICA, DFID, EU, USAID, SIDA, Ford Foundation, World Bank, GEF, UNEP, ADB and Rockefeller Foundation. The Development Partners offer financial and technical support towards improvement of major infrastructure like markets, roads, waste treatment plants, warehouses and rail linkages.

### **3.0. On-going strategy at regional level**

The idea of establishing an Urban Agriculture Network for Eastern and Southern Africa (UANESA) was recommended in an Urban Agriculture workshop held in Nairobi, Kenya in 1998. The Network's mandate was envisaged to be Development, Research, and Training in Urban Agriculture; with Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Republic of South Africa as member states. UANESA was to accomplish its mandate through lead institutions in member states (Camillus and Lood, 1999). However, the dream of this initiative is yet to be realized.

## Reference

1. **Anonymous (2010)**. Agriculture Sector Development Strategy 2010 - 2020, 2<sup>nd</sup> reprint. Agriculture and the Economy, pg 1. Government (K) printers.
2. **Anonymous, (2009)**. National Horticultural Crop Production and Export Statistics (2005 - 2009) Report. Fruits and vegetable statistics for Nairobi Province. Ministry Of Agriculture (K) and Horticultural Crops Development Authority (HCDA).
3. **Caleb Mireri, Aphonse Kyessi, Nimrod Mushi, and Peter Atekyereza (2010)**. Urban Agriculture in East Africa: Practice, Challenges, and Opportunities. City Farmer Canada's Office of Urban Agriculture.
4. **Camillus J. Sawio and Lood Spies (1999)**. Towards the Establishment of a Development and Research/Training Network on Urban Agriculture for East and Southern Africa. Urban Agriculture Notes, City Farmer Canada's Office of Urban Agriculture.
5. **Hide and Kimani( 2000)**. In: Ayaga, G., Kibata, G., Lee-Smith, D., Njenga, M. and Rege, R. 2005. Policy Prospects For Urban And Peri-Urban Agriculture In Kenya. Urban Harvest-International Potato Center, Lima, Peru.
6. **Kang'ethe E. (2008)**. Health Risk Analysis of Cryptosporidiosis in Urban Smallholder Dairy Production, Dagoretti, Nairobi, Kenya. Final Technical scientific report
7. **Lee-Smith, D., M. Manundu, D. Lamba and P.K. Kuria (1987)**.Urban Food Production and Cooking Fuel Situation in Urban Kenya: Results of a 1985 National Survey. Mazingira Institute, Nairobi, Kenya.
8. **Memon P. A., and Lee-Smith D., (1993)**. Urban Agriculture in Kenya. Canadian Journal of African Studies Vol. 27, No. 1.