



# FOOD *for* THE CITIES

## Urban livestock, food security or environmental hazard?

FAO / E. Guerne Bleich



*Disease transmission risks exist and may be prevented. Following good practices, animals may play an important role as waste cleaners. Scavenging local poultry in Bogor, Indonesia*

FAO / O. Argenti



*Small ruminants raised in the cities is very common and generate important incomes for the urban poor*

### Challenges...

Keeping livestock in urban or peri-urban environments is not new. Historically humans have always been closely associated with their livestock, often sharing the same dwelling. All species are involved: poultry, rabbits, guinea pigs, pigs, sheep, goats, cattle even buffalo. Having your market often literally on your doorstep ensures that the consumer has a fresh product. The producer in most cases also has better

access to goods and services: veterinary care, drugs, feeds etc. With increasing urbanisation and economic growth, the demand for animal food increases and large scale production operations emerge. Initially, given the perishable nature of animal products, inadequate conservation, transport without chilling or processing, production is located in and around towns and cities close to consumer demand. In countries with well developed infrastructure, high employment and high per capita income, livestock raising is no longer closely associated

with urban or peri-urban areas and driven more by access to feed and lower land and labour costs.

In many developing countries the phenomenon of keeping animals in urban and peri-urban areas is increasing. Urban poverty, exacerbated by the "urban drift", means that every opportunity to produce food or generate income from what is essentially a free resource is exploited to the full. While keeping a few, confined small-stock to supplement the family diet and income offers little environmental risk, real risks occur in developing and emerging economies with growing conurbations that have not developed the sophisticated infrastructure necessary to disaggregate livestock production from the consumption centres. Large commercial, highly intensive, livestock production units rearing pigs, broilers, layers, milk (cattle and buffalo colonies) around conurbations in China, South-East Asia, the Indian sub-continent and South America are a major environmental and public health concern.

The challenge is to develop coping strategies that address the immediate environmental and public health issues associated with urban and peri-urban livestock keeping and thus buy time for longer term economic growth and infrastructure investment in roads, communications and energy. The implementation of such strategies should, however, not negate the benefits and low risks, for both owners and consumers, associated with small-scale household or commercial livestock production.

FAO / E. Guerne Bleich



*Smaller scale enterprises and the use of small animals allows for better marketing opportunities. Small scale commercial poultry farmers in Bogor, Indonesia*



FAO / E. Guerne Bleich

*Poultry production around the cities improves household food security. Muscovy ducks is an important meat production practice in Angola*

## **FAO's response and action...**

FAO assists in developing strategies to address the issues facing urban and peri-urban livestock keeping. Capacity building is provided through advice on good husbandry practices, animal health, small-scale processing, food safety, veterinary public health and policy support. On the practical side, the Special



FAO / E. Guerne Bleich

*Producers can generate income by taking advantage of the high food demand and proximity of the city to market their products. SPFS's goat and poultry rising in Tsevié, Togo*

Programme for Food Security (SPFS) operates in many developing countries to improve food security at both national and household levels and is involved in peri-urban as well as rural areas. The Animal Production and Health Division also hosts a dedicated programme dealing with livestock and environmental issues, the Livestock, Environment and Development Initiative (LEAD), that focuses on pollution issues associated with intensive, peri-urban livestock production. <http://www.virtualcentre.org>

**Special Programme for Food Security.** Livestock keeping is a major activity of the SPFS. For example, in Chad, the high demand for poultry meat and eggs in the urban centres provided an important marketing opportunity which was not satisfied by domestic production. Local farmers lacked the resources to obtain a regular supply of improved birds or quality feeds and it was difficult to obtain reliable access to veterinary services, drugs and vaccines. Using modern constraints analysis and a consultative process combined with training in improved technologies, the SPFS promoted affordable and practical interventions for successful peri-urban poultry keeping that provided real benefits to producers and consumers.

**Animal waste management.** Some of the largest concentrations of intensive livestock production in peri-urban areas are to be found in East Asia. Pollution from inappropriate manure disposal is a major environmental concern. LEAD, with funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), implemented a project for China, Thailand and Vietnam entitled Livestock Waste Management in East Asia. The project addressed major environmental threats by developing policies that balance the location of livestock production operations with the appropriate land resources, and encourage the beneficial use of manure and other nutrients by crop farmers. At the national level, this project stresses the need to plan in advance for the location of future livestock development, so as to create the conditions for better recycling of nutrients.



FAO / E. Guerne Bleich

*Animals provide cash and fresh produce in the inner city with little or no packing and processing. Cultural practices are a challenge for good hygienic practices. Poultry marketing in Bogor, Indonesia*



**Food for the Cities - Multidisciplinary Area**  
**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS**  
[www.fao.org/fcit/index.asp](http://www.fao.org/fcit/index.asp)

For further information, contact:  
**FAO, Animal Production and Health Division**  
**Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy**  
**AGA-Registry@fao.org**  
[www.fao.org/ag/againfo/home/en/home.html](http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/home/en/home.html)