



# Urban and peri-urban horticulture development *in practice:* FAO's approach

**Urban and peri-urban horticulture (UPH)** *helps to grow greener cities by contributing to food security, employment, waste management and community well-being.*

*FAO's Programme for Urban and Peri-urban Horticulture has adopted a five-point approach to the sustainable development of the sector*

**1 Ensure political and institutional commitment.** Although UPH is a reality in most developing cities, it often goes unrecognized in agricultural policies and urban planning. The essential first step towards sustainable management of urban and peri-urban horticulture is the official recognition of its positive role in urban development, particularly in the nutrition and livelihoods of the urban poor. FAO has been instrumental in raising awareness of UPH among policy makers in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. It assists governments in framing measures to promote UPH development as part of national food security strategies, and advises city authorities on integrating horticulture into urban master development plans.

**2 Secure land and water for horticulture.** Political and institutional support facilitates the legal measures needed to secure land for UPH, especially market gardening. Often, the process begins by registering informal groups of growers as associations. Once the land and its users have been identified, city authorities process their requests for temporary permits or long-term leases. FAO encourages planners to

demarcate peri-urban zones for horticulture or combine UPH with compatible uses, such as green belts. In urban areas, it supports programmes for household and community gardens. FAO projects promote rooftop collection systems to harvest rainwater, and drip irrigation to reduce water consumption.

**3 Ensure product quality while protecting the environment.** FAO uses Farmer Field Schools to promote intensification and diversification of horticultural production. Field schools introduce small-scale growers to Integrated Production and Protection Management (which reduces the use of toxic chemicals to control pests and diseases), and to improved cultivars and cropping practices adapted to local conditions. By fostering good agricultural practices, field schools help to build sustainable production systems that are environmentally friendly and ensure the safety and quality of produce. FAO projects encourage the use of organic compost in urban environments and train vegetable growers in the safe recycling of wastewater for irrigation.

**4 Ensure participation by all stakeholders in the UPH sector.** The primary beneficiaries of FAO interventions in support of commercial UPH development are low-income, small-scale vegetable growers, who have very limited access to the services and inputs needed to increase the quantity and quality of production. Low output and low incomes perpetuate their poverty. FAO fosters the professionalization of small-scale growers by securing access to training, tools and inputs – especially quality seed and planting materials – and to micro-credit. Its projects encourage growers to form producer associations (which help them to reduce their costs along the value chain) and facilitate linkages with extension, research, city administrators, private supply services and development NGOs.

**5 Secure new markets for fruit and vegetables.** In developing countries, fruit and vegetable intake is far below recommended levels. To promote consumption, FAO supports crop diversification, improvements in storage and processing, public information campaigns, labelling of produce, and the creation of neighbourhood collection points and markets. It encourages growers' associations to explore new channels to consumers, such as farmers' markets and supply contracts with restaurants and supermarkets. Niche markets for herbs, spices and organic produce are another profitable alternative. FAO supports school garden programmes, which provide children with gardening experience and lay the foundations for daily fruit and vegetable consumption at school and at home.

**FAO projects** *help governments and city administrations to optimize policies, institutional frameworks and support services for UPH, to improve production and marketing systems, and to enhance the horticulture value chain*

#### **Plurinational State of Bolivia**

In El Alto municipality, FAO trained some 1 500 low-income households in organic cultivation of fruit, vegetables and herbs in small greenhouses. The gardens provide fresh produce all year round for home consumption and sale.

*Funding: Belgium*

#### **Burundi**

This project is helping to establish a UPH programme in the capital, Bujumbura. It will form a UPH consultative committee, chaired by the mayor, and improve access to credit, inputs and training for 7 500 to 10 000 residents who practise horticulture.

*Funding: Belgium*

#### **Colombia**

Assistance from FAO and other organizations has helped to introduce various types of urban gardening – including backyard plots and micro-gardens on terraces and rooftops – to 50 000 residents of Bogota, Medellin and Cartagena.

*Funding: Colombia, Italy*

#### **Democratic Republic of the Congo**

FAO is supporting horticulture development in five cities. The project has introduced improved vegetable varieties, installed or upgraded 40 irrigation structures, and trained more than 10 000 growers in good agricultural practices.

*Funding: Belgium*

#### **Guatemala**

Launched in 2010, this project seeks to enhance the food security and incomes of 11 500 residents of Guatemala City and surrounding areas by improving the availability of good quality water for vegetable production.

*Funding: Spain*

#### **Namibia**

Target beneficiaries were unemployed slum dwellers in the cities of Windhoek and Rundu. The project helped to establish community demonstration plots and train groups of young vegetable growers in micro-garden and micro-irrigation technologies.

*Funding: Belgium*

#### **Nicaragua**

This project will provide drip irrigation systems and training in intensive vegetable production to some 9 500 low-income beneficiaries. To ensure sustainability, beneficiaries will be trained to operate and maintain UPH infrastructure.

*Funding: Spain*

#### **Rwanda**

FAO advised the Kigali city administration on measures aimed at integrating horticulture into its long-term urban development plan. The project also assisted in establishing 40 micro-gardens and introducing rainwater harvesting systems.

*Funding: Italy, City of Rome*

#### **Senegal**

In collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, FAO helped to introduce micro-gardens in low-income areas of Dakar. In 2008, the programme won UN-HABITAT's Dubai Award for Best Practices to Improve the Living Environment.

*Funding: Italy, City of Milan, Spain*



FAO's Programme for Urban and Peri-urban Horticulture

#### **Contact**

Programme for Urban and Peri-urban Horticulture  
Plant Production and Protection Division (AGP)  
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations  
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla  
00153 Rome, Italy

[greenercities@fao.org](mailto:greenercities@fao.org)  
[www.fao.org/ag/agp/greenercities/](http://www.fao.org/ag/agp/greenercities/)