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,
wa te r 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.
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.

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.