

Annexe 1

Reportage on the Workshop – FAO Newsroom

Available on:

<http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2006/1000340/index.html>

Note: 3 interviews and photos complement this Radio Clip

Greening our cities

Municipal authorities and communities committed to urban forestry development

22 June 2006, Rome – Urban areas, home to more than half the world's poor, are projected to account for nearly all population growth over the next 25 years, with 9 out of every 10 births occurring in cities. According to FAO, urban forestry initiatives can help offset the environmental, economic and health risks posed by rapid urbanization and poverty.

Urban dwellers are increasingly recognizing the importance of trees and other vegetation beyond their visual contribution to the cityscape. In many cities whose main streets are lined with trees and flowers, the revitalization of greenery can be attributed to the joint efforts of FAO, municipal authorities and local communities in highlighting the abundant benefits resulting from good urban forestry practices.

Indispensable contribution

“In addition to the aesthetic value offered by urban forestry, trees and other greenery can make a significant contribution to food security, well-being, health and also improve the quality of life by diversifying household incomes,” FAO forestry expert Michelle Gauthier points out.

The economic benefits are numerous, according to Gauthier: tree cover reduces air temperature, resulting in energy savings for city dwellers, and trees can increase property values and protect roads and buildings against landslide, flood and sand encroachment.

Vegetable gardens increase and guarantee available household food; fuel wood from local forests helps reduce household energy costs and timber can be used for basic household furniture.

Irrigation of urban forests with appropriately treated wastewater can help cities challenged with

wastewater disposal – disposing through utilization, thereby preserving urban water supply. Such recycling and conservation of already scarce water supplies have proved especially valuable in arid and semi-arid areas.

For many, the benefits of urban forestry cannot be overemphasized. According Dr. Kamel Mahadin, Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Jordan in Amman, there should be a single basic rule governing our understanding of urban forestry: “Plant as many trees as you can.”

Urbanization and urban forestry

The mass exodus of people from rural to urban and peri-urban areas is a global trend and poverty in and around cities has become a cause of great concern. The continually deteriorating living conditions of the urban poor pose serious health risks, breed conditions unfavourable for economic investment and also trigger extensive damage to the environment.

FAO believes that urban forestry initiatives can help mitigate some of the negative effects of rapid urbanization and poverty and stresses that such initiatives need not be complicated, although the urban framework is complex and has not traditionally integrated forestry considerations into its planning and development.

Trees in densely populated areas face some daunting challenges: their growth and survival are threatened by space limitations, mediocre soil quality, water inadequacy and nutrient deficiency, to name but a few.

In many current urban greening initiatives professional foresters and land use specialists still have a minor role.

“Local forestry experts play a unique role in determining which tree would survive under what conditions, taking into account the restrictive environment offered by congested and polluted urban areas,” says FAO’s Michelle Gauthier. “They can provide technical solutions to problems concerning tree vitality in urban areas, but they also need to be trained in tree planning and planting in an urban environment”.

The involvement and stewardship of local communities, municipal authorities and public and private investors are also necessary.

Prof. Thomas B. Randrup of the Danish Centre for Forest, Landscape and Planning, who has been

working with FAO on urban forestry issues for a number of years, says: “It is not enough to plant the tree, you also have to make sure that the tree will survive and that there is public awareness about the survival needs of the trees”. He further emphasizes the need to set up efficient networks among researchers and practitioners for sharing expertise and concerns.

“This would indeed enrich the dialogue with governments, municipalities, research institutions, NGOs and the private sector in looking for viable solutions towards alleviating poverty and improving livelihoods,” says Gauthier.

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THE 1000 ACRE AREA OF THE NEW AND FUTURE SALT LAKE CITY UTAH OLYMPIC PARK IS LOCATED IN THE SALT LAKE CITY MOUNTAINS.

