

CONCEPT NOTE

Regional Consultation on "Strengthening Food and Nutrition Security of the Urban People through Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture in Asia"

FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
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Background

The growing world population followed by the trend of increased urban population has posed a new challenge to the traditional growth and development approach practiced in the past. The world population is becoming increasingly urbanized as a result of both natural increase and rural-urban migration. According to the United Nations Population Division, the percentage of urban population has exceeded 50% of the total world population, and it will continue to increase for the next decades to nearly 70% by 2050.

With population explosion round the world more particularly in the Asian countries, challenges and problems in the areas of food security and malnutrition are gaining significance.

In Asia, although urban population is just 42.2%, in the last two decades, Asia's cities have grown at a faster rate than any other region: 13 of the 20 most populated urban areas in the world are now in Asia. Asia is urbanizing at unprecedented speed. Though still predominantly rural, this upward trend is expected to continue for many years to come. In this decade alone, it is anticipated that two-thirds of the growth in the world's cities will occur in Asia, raising its urban population by another 411 million. Migration, primarily rural to urban, is a key driver of this growth. However, together with natural growth, reclassification of rural areas is also an important contributor: every year millions of people become city dwellers by this way even without movement, as their communities transformed into cities because of rapid urbanization. In the wake of increasing levels of urban food insecurity, the UPA offers great promise.

However, it is only recently that urban and peri-urban agriculture (UPA) has received due recognition. For many years it has evolved as an informal activity while competing for land, water and labour in the urban environment. In 1999 FAO, upon recommendations from the Committee on Agriculture (COAG), has been officially mandated by its membership to deal with UPA as an integral part of agriculture production systems contributing to feeding the cities, while creating employment and generating income for the urban poor.

UPA has the potential to be converted from its former status of informal and uncontrolled activity to an "ally" for the urban resources and environment management provided adequate production and crop protection technologies are applied that are highly water, labour and space efficient while being environmentally friendly and cost-effective at the same time.

The people living in cities have to face important challenges, including the rising of food prices, and its consequences in terms of social and economic costs. Urban households who practice urban and peri-urban agriculture as a means of supplementary income and for direct household consumption are generally more food secure and benefit from a more diverse diet. Urban and peri-urban food production also helps increase the availability of healthy and affordable food - mainly fresh fruits, vegetables, eggs and dairy products - for a larger number of urban consumers.

Since the recommendations made by the member countries at the COAG meeting in January 1999, FAO has provided assistance to series of countries, mainly for the implementation of short to medium term projects and organized UPA workshops for training in each region of the world. During January 2013, FAO/RAP/PNASF Regional Workshop on 'Strengthening Urban and Peri urban Agriculture towards Resilient Food Systems in Asia (UPAFSA-2013)' held in Bangkok highlighted the activities undertaken by the participating countries, identified the successes and the bottlenecks and the discussion culminated in recommendations on technology, policy, development and international collaboration. The proposed regional consultation is a step forward as a follow-up in the process of achieving the goals of food and nutrition security of the urban people.

Objectives

The Regional Consultation will strive on reviewing the experiences gained with the aim of identifying the success stories on urban and peri-urban agriculture and explore the possibilities of their adoption in other countries of the region in order to assist member countries to promote food and nutrition security status of urban and peri-urban population.

Specific objectives

- Apprise member countries on the current status of development in the field of urban and peri-urban agriculture
- Exchange and share knowledge, experience, encountered problems, and available technologies in order to learn from each others' experience and lessons
- Identify of 2-3 successful case studies in each country used by farmers/producers in their urban and peri-urban settings
- Document these case studies in the context of their agro-ecological suitability and urban, peri-urban development strategies, programmes and policies.
- Identify opportunities for transfer of these case studies within the countries and at regional levels.
- Identify priority action, relevant policy options and recommendations for promotion of these case studies in Asia.

Expected outputs

1. Country status on UPA stated and shared among participating countries
2. Two-three case studies on UPA in each participating country identified and documented according to their ago-ecological settings

3. Knowledge shared and experiences learnt on the UPA with greater attention to policy, research & outreach programme, delivery of support services, marketing and value chain including processing and marketing, and capacity building
4. Priority action, relevant policy options and recommendations to promote UPA identified and agreed
5. Publication of the proceedings/consultation results with conclusion and recommendations and a book on the successful case studies made.

Participants

A total of 30 participants (two participants from each country) and 5 UPA experts from the region and 5 representatives from FAO and AIT will be invited to attend this consultation. The proposed countries are: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, PDR Laos, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

Organizer

The regional consultation is being organized by FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO-RAP), in collaboration with Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Bangkok.