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African cities must implement green measures to ensure food security – UN report



Growing greener cities in Africa, a publication by the Food and Agriculture Organization, stresses the importance of sustainable practices such as urban market gardening to meet nutrition needs. Photo: FAO/Olivier Asselin

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Policymakers in African cities must implement green measures to make sure that growing urban areas can meet the increasing demand for food, according to a report released today by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)).

The publication, entitled [*Growing greener cities in Africa*](#), stresses the importance of sustainable practices to meet nutrition needs such as urban market gardening, referring to the home, school, community and market gardens that produce fruits and vegetables in and around the continent's cities.

“The challenge of achieving a ‘zero hunger’ world – in which everyone is adequately nourished and all food systems are resilient – is as urgent in African cities as it is in rural areas,” FAO’s Assistant Director-General for Agriculture and Consumer Protection, Modibo Traoré, notes in the publication’s foreword.

He adds, “African policymakers need to act now to steer urbanization from its current, unsustainable path towards healthy, ‘greener’ cities that ensure food and nutrition security, decent work and income, and a clean environment for all their citizens.”

The report, which draws on surveys and case studies from 31 countries across the African continent, found that market gardening in cities in 10 countries is already the single most important source of locally-grown fresh produce. However, this practice has grown with little official recognition, regulation and support, and in many cases has become unsustainable as farmers are increasing the use of pesticides and polluted water.

To address this issue, the publication urges governments and city administrations to work together with growers, processors, suppliers, vendors and others to give market gardens and urban agriculture the political, logistical and educational support necessary for sustainable development.

One of the report’s recommendations advises policymakers to zone and protect land and water for market gardens, and encourage growers to adopt a farming model that will boost yields while preserving natural resources by applying the right amount of pesticides, seeds and fertilizers.

The report also stresses that greener measures are crucial if the continent is to sustain the strong economic growth it has recorded over the past decade, and notes that while it has led to rapid urbanization, many people are still facing poverty in urban areas.

According to an FAO [news release](#) on the report, more than half of all urban Africans live in slums, up to 200 million survive on less than \$2 a day, and poor urban children are as likely to be chronically malnourished as poor rural children.

The publication was released in advance of the sixth session of the World Urban Forum in Naples, Italy, which seeks to examine rapid urbanization and its impact on communities, cities, economies, climate change and policies.

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