

Review

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[Bright Nkrumah](#) *

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Review

Street Food: Urbanization and Agriculture in Africa

Bright Nkrumah

Salisbury University; bright.nkrumahup@gmail.com

Abstract

Africa is a land of paradox. It is home to the world’s largest uncultivated arable land. Yet, food insecurity remains a pervasive in urban centers. With increasing rural-urban migration, hunger and obesity will continue to pose considerable threats to urban residents. It is in that respect that the paper rehabilitates the notion of urban agriculture (UA) as a buffer against uncertainties in food access, both in terms of quality and quantity. Despite the numerous potentials of this practice, few urban residents in Africa engage in producing their own food. While a plethora of contemporary literature has explored the challenges undercutting UA, there are still unanswered questions. Lingering questions concern what the underlying cause of limited participation in participation in the practice is. The paper discovered that a substantial percentage of African cities lack a comprehensive urban policy. To that end, there is no comprehensive guideline in the allocation of land and logistical support for potential farmers. The paper argues that, since UA has the potential to enhance the resilience of urban residents to climate change and ultimately, food insecurity, it is imperative for states to frame urban policies that recognize UA as an essential component of urban development.

Keywords: Africa; agriculture; food insecurity; policy; urbanization

1. Introduction

Africa is a region of paradox, characterized by stark contrasts between the abundance of fertile land and food insecurity. The region is home to about 60% of the world’s uncultivated arable land (Chimbi 2023). It doubles as the home to the world's youngest and fastest-growing population (Sadigov 2022). Yet, hunger and obesity are rife in urban centers. At the time of writing, 43.53% of the region’s population lives in urban areas (O'Neill 2025). The poor, once nestled in the hinterlands, are drifting to cities (Dollar & Kraay 2002). This phenomenon is evolving as urbanization is associated with good fortune and a breakaway from hunger (Amegah 2021).

Although the problem of food insecurity has traditionally been linked to rural areas, urban dwellers are not exempt from the peril (Orsini, et al. 2013). The irony, however, is that unlike in rural areas, urban hunger is not an average lack of food, but rather, affordability (Davis, et al. 2022). By depending on supermarkets and grocery stores, the urban poor are susceptible to price hikes in the global (food) markets. It is in this context that contemporary thinkers have attempted to explore the prospect or otherwise of urban agriculture (UA) as a panacea to food insecurity (Kingsley, et al. 2021; Puigdueta, et al. 2021). The basic construct of food insecurity is having limited or no access to food to meet one’s nutritional needs (Carvajal-Aldaz, et al. 2022). In essence, it signifies a reduction of one’s capability to have access to the quantity and quality of food when required. ‘Access’ can be split between direct and indirect sources. While a direct source implies obtaining food through own production, an indirect source involves food that is secured through barter, gifts, purchase on the market, or food vouchers.

As a means of ensuring food security, UA has several distinct expressions, spanning from horticulture to rearing small animals. Yet, despite its prospect, the potential of low-income urban households to engage in UA is undercut by several constraints. It is against this backdrop that the paper uses a systematic review of existing literature to explore these constraints and develop a conceptual framework on how UA could be harnessed to improve the well-being of low-income

urban households in Africa. Although each country has its distinct ethno-geographic dynamic, the paper perceives urban dwellers across the region as a collective. Their collectivity is reflected in their common struggles, *inter alia*, high unemployment, poverty and food insecurity. To that end, the paper perceives Africa as a unified entity for the present discussion.

The paper is grounded in a careful analysis of existing literature. Divided into five parts, the analysis proceeds as follows. Excluding the present introduction, the next section provides a review of the evolution and current state of UA across the region. Seeking to understand the limited engagement of urban poor households in the activity, section three reflects on the challenges that hinder UA in contemporary African cities. Some of these challenges act individually or collectively to undercut the prospect of farming in cities. Taking all the facts from section three into account, section four provides a more nuanced understanding of the measures required to improve UA. It is hoped that the suggestions will mark a sea change in the practice of farming across the continent. The final part, section five, concludes with a summary of the overall discussion and findings of the paper.

2. Urban Agriculture in Africa

Africa's urban population is rapidly growing. The snowballing of the human population in urban centers has dire ramifications on the livelihoods of its poor inhabitants (Odoms-Young, et al. 2024). With 50% of its population projected to be urban by 2050, it could be argued that the continent has the highest rate of urbanization globally (Bos 2023). Still, hunger and obesity remain endemic in urban centers. Since 1990, several attempts have been made to tackle the crisis, yet progress remains slow (Otekunrin, et al. 2020). High unemployment, surging inflation, and debt tightening continue to impede the purchasing power of the poor. In cases where there have been social welfare programs, the ineffective operationalization of the interventions has barely improved the lot of the urban poor (Devereux 2021).

Poor diets are one of the main causes of non-communicable diseases and associated deaths in African cities (Wadumestrigue, et al. 2021). The driver of this phenomenon is food cost thereby making them inaccessible to low-income households. Farm produce is relatively affordable at source, but the packaging, transportation, and vendor fees hike their prices (Hannah, et al. 2022). The price tagged on fruits and vegetables deprives low-income households of the basic nutrients required for a healthy lifestyle. For that reason, a disproportionate percentage of city dwellers battle with hunger, undernourishment, and stunting in children (Atukunda, et al. 2021).

A characteristic attributable to the urban food market is the hike in prices driven by profits for wholesalers and retailers (Hobson 2006). In the absence of food price regulation, urban indigents are susceptible to price fixing. Historically, Cape Town (South Africa) has been the epicenter of exponential hikes in food prices. Between 1998 and 1999, the price of bread increased from 3% to 12% (Hobson 2006: 10). In recent times, such a phenomenon has been recreated through the *Bread Cartel* case (*Competition Commission v Pioneer Foods*). In this groundbreaking litigation, the court found that major bakeries discretely reached an agreement to increase the price of bread despite a stable price in wheat flour (Robertson 2022).

It is against this backdrop that the potential of UA comes to the fore. UA is a shorthand notation for the production, distribution, and marketing of (non)food agricultural products on land or water within the geographical boundary of a city (Kiribou, et al. 2024). In contrast, the production of food on the outskirts of cities is considered peri-urban agriculture (Mulya, et al. 2023). While that distinction remains, the paper will adopt UA as an umbrella term in reference to agricultural activities in both urban and peri-urban locations. The adoption of such a general term is necessary as both systems of production share a common aspiration, that is, the provision of food for (peri)urban residents.

UA has a long history in human civilization. It could be traced to around 3500 BC when residents in Mesopotamia grew crops in city walls (AU 2025). In Africa, it evolved at the advent of colonialism (Alpern 1992: 24). Today, an estimated 40% of city dwellers engage in UA (Doupleff 2012; Bacha & Mohamed 2024). The practice occurs on commercial and small-scale levels. As illustrated by Table 1,

small-scale farming ranges from household to community gardens (Wadumestrige, et al. 2021). Small-scale UA ranges from indoor herb gardens on windowsills, hanging plants, small backyard vegetable gardens, and balcony container gardens, to vertical fence gardens.

Table 1. Features of UA.

Type of UA	Features
Community gardens	The farming activity occurs on a parcel of land allocated by the city to a group for a fee. It has become a model for containing hunger in Banjul-Gambia.
School gardening	This is the practice of cultivation on school grounds. Despite the scarcity of land in Cape Town - South Africa, high schools in the city use it to increase students’ ecological awareness. Similar activity is used for experiential learning, food security, and youth development in Gitega-Burundi.
Vertical farming	Seeking to maximize limited lands, the various stages of crop cultivation take place on aqua-and-hydroponics. It involves the use of innovative technologies for intensive crop production.
Micro-gardens	Confronted with relatively low urban spaces, practitioners use containers for production. Vegetable gardens are popular in the balconies, patios, and yards of residents in Accra. Yet, the space required for feeding a family may vary. The small size of fruits, herbs, and vegetables enables agriculturalists to engage in miniature gardens in small spaces. Over half of residents in Lusaka-Zambia engage in cultivation of carrots, edible flowers, mushrooms, leafy greens, tomatoes, basil and mint in their homes.
Squat farms	This involves tilling a vacant land without a lease or permission of the landowner. Since they could be displaced at any time, squat farmers cultivate crops with shorter life span, <i>inter alia</i> , flowers, fresh eggs, herbs, and so on.

On a commercial level, UA stretches from multi-acre initiatives, such as rooftop greenhouses and farms on industrial land, to community gardens (Gulyas & Edmondson 2021). Production in African cities is diversified, spanning along the lines of small-animal husbandry and horticulture. The former is dominant in Yaounde (Cameroon) and Kampala (Uganda) where households rear aquatic organisms and livestock, including fish, bees, bovines, rabbits, ponies, pigs, sheep, and poultry (Beach 2013). That said, the dominant form of UA across the region is horticulture, mainly due to its efficient use of land.

UA yields considerable benefits for producers. As illustrated in Table 2, the gains for engaging in the practice are diverse. It spans from households producing for their own consumption to social networking. Despite these potentials, a disproportionate percentage of the continent's population rarely engages in UA. It is against this backdrop that the next section turns to explore a few of the barriers that undercut its potential in the region.

Table 2. Benefits of UA.

Benefits	Beneficiaries
Climate mitigation	The transportation of food from rural (source of production) to urban (the consumer) contributes to greenhouse emissions. Reliance on food from one’s backyard reduces food miles and the adverse effect of climate change.
Food security	The few practitioners of UA in Algiers, Ouagadougou, Khartoum, and Cape Town depend on the practice as their primary source of food. In contrast, low-income households in these cities spend about 60% to 80% of their total income on food.
Preservation of cultural heritage	Urban farmers adopt methods that mimic practices in their rural communities. By teaching children how to interact with soil and its organisms, UA serves as the medium for the transfer of indigenous knowledge.
Social integration	Marginalized groups could leverage UA as a means of integrating into the fiber of society. Community gardens provide a conducive atmosphere where the disabled, elderly, left women, migrants and the unwaged could network and advance their common interest.
Source of income	UA serve as the primary source of income for some households. Pockets of commercial farmers can be seen along the coast of West Africa. In Benin, 261 residents in Cotonou and Porto Novo actively engage in vegetable production as their primary source of income.
Recreation	In an era of the dying culture of children’s outdoor play, edible green spaces provide the avenue for youth to build friendships. Then again, the potential of UA to realize these benefits is strongly shaped by local sociopolitical and environmental dynamics.

3. Barriers to Africa’s Urban Agriculture

To understand the nature of impediments hindering UA, one ought to first appreciate the state of urban governance on the continent. For all the impediments discussed below they flow from policy challenges and weak institutions. In a recent survey, it was found that more than 96% of countries in the region did not have urban policies. With less than 4% that do, UA is scarcely recognized as a priority for governance (Kiribou, et al. 2024: 3). This phenomenon has triggered competing uses and users of land. As desirable spaces for the circular economy, city lands are at the convergence of industrial, recreational, and residential development. This phenomenon has resulted in the shrinking

of urban lands in the inner cities of Accra (Ghana), Nairobi (Kenya), Tare (Rwanda), Iringa (Tanzania), and Cape Town (South Africa) (Balogun, et al. 2022). With developers aiming to meet housing demand, vacant land for horticulture or animal keeping becomes increasingly limited (Steenkamp, et al. 2021). Then again, long-term access to land for horticulture is tied to homeownership, an aspiration that remains a pipedream for the poor. The cost of single-family units negates permanent access to land for production. To overcome that limitation, some horticulturalists lease lands or squat on vacant private/public lands. Consequently, farming activities on such lands are temporary as they are prone to disruptions (either from owners or retrofit for infrastructural development). It is imperative to insert here that this vulnerability is widespread in the region due to insufficient legal protection against land eviction and recognition of UA as part of city green spaces (Steenkamp, et al. 2021).

Tied to land contestation is the dwindling open spaces in inner cities (Specht, et al. 2014). Besides small plots that are often confined among built-up areas, the frequent conversion of city lands into concrete roads places a strain on horticulture. Given this constraint, a disproportionate percentage of urban agriculturalists have historically relocated their operations to the city outskirts (Tambwe 2006). While such a strategy is attainable, a central concern is food travel. The disconnect between producers and consumers leads to high food miles with a substantial carbon footprint and economic ramifications for producers. With crops that are easily decomposable (such as tomatoes), the inefficient transportation network in peri-urban areas causes some produce to rot before it reaches the market (Cudjoe, et al. 2022). Besides the disruption of road networks from floods and erosions, improper handling and storage of the produce in the trucks result in poor ventilation and microbial growth, which makes the goods unfit for consumption. The waste ultimately affects the expected income of farmers, and by extension, the socioeconomic conditions of their households.

Then again, perennial drought and insufficient access to water (for irrigation) affect the potential of soils to retain moisture. Considering that arid soil limits the activities of microbes, the health of plants cultivated by urban farmers fares poorly under such a climate. This development is exacerbated by heavy metal concentration from dumpsites leaching, and runoffs. Heavy metals not only compromise the quantity of farm produce but also its quality. While small amounts are necessary for maintaining good health, larger quantities of heavy metals can become toxic (Jaishankar, et al. 2014). For instance, in Ado-Ekiti (Nigeria), the leaves of crops show high levels of heavy metal concentration. These include okra (0.32mg/kg cobalt; 0.36mg/kg copper); spinach leaves (0.36mg/kg arsenic; 0.32mg/kg cobalt); maize grains (0.28mg/kg arsenic; 0.48mg/kg copper); groundnut (0.37mg/kg arsenic; 0.71mg/kg copper); and Roselle leaves (0.33mg/kg cobalt; 0.32mg/kg iron) (Onakpa, et al. 2018: 490). Consumption of food with high levels of arsenic, lead, or mercury can increase the risk of cancer, kidney dysfunction, and neurological problems.

Another barrier is apathy toward the practice. According to Davies, et al. (2021), indifference is tied to the prevailing narrative of farming. In cities, any mention of farm(ing) conjures a specter of a primitive and unsophisticated lifestyle. In contrast, a manicured lawn is associated with affluence and sophistication. That perception persists as farming has traditionally been confined to rural areas, and lawns to urban spaces (Rigg 2005). Thus, in conforming to such a narrative, some longtime residents remain indifferent to farming despite having access to land. But for newcomers, relocation from the countryside to a city demonstrates a shift in priority. In some instances, it symbolizes a disconnect from labor-intensive farming practices to wealth creation. Hence, upon arrival, many are anxious to take multiple jobs, work long hours, and on weekends. The desire to build wealth, coupled with the hustle and bustle of modern life, limits the time to engage in UA. Ironically, the COVID-19 lockdowns provided the time for many urban residents to start their own. Wetaya (2020) affirms that UA experienced a hike in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Kampala (Uganda), and Nairobi (Kenya) during the pandemic. The eagerness of households to engage in the practice during this period brings to bear the duality of regular jobs and UA. That is underscored by a conflict of interest in terms of time allocation between primary occupation (be it accounting, construction, trade, and so on) and farming. With the latter often considered as a leisure or secondary activity, production is often on a small scale.

With UA unable to cushion households against the rising cost of living, crops and animals tend to suffer neglect.

Additional disincentive is the stringent regulations of homeowners' associations (HOAs) prohibit crop and livestock rearing (Davies et al. 2021). Such restrictions are pervasive in (gated) communities, including condominiums, planned communities, and townhomes. In some instances, the restrictions emanate from the exclusion of UA from municipal planning (Horst, et al. 2024). The non-codification of farming in zoning laws provides little safeguards against HOAs, planners, and developers who encroach on farm sites. In cases where the UA is contemplated in municipal legislation, the laws merely dictate what and where one could cultivate. An example might serve to illustrate what has just been said. Section 8(b)(t) of the by-laws of the City of Tshwane (South Africa) proscribes the cultivation of plants in a public space (CoT 2020). Thus, a resident in Pretoria (South Africa) was a subject of arrest for growing cabbage in front of his home (McCain, N. 2021). While such restrictions are necessary to ensure that farming practices align with the topographic features of the municipality, the heavy-handed approach by security forces could deter potential agriculturalists in urban spaces.

An extra layer of limitation to UA squat farming. Farmers in this camp neither own private properties nor negotiate short-term leases with landowners. Dreading unforeseen eviction, a considerable proportion engage in monocropping. This is the cultivation of repeated, off-season, fast-growing vegetables. Although this technique undermines soil fertility, as it rarely allows the land to fallow. The inability to diversify into cover crops degrades soil nutrients. Ultimately, nutrient-poor soil impacts the quality and quantity of future produce. This phenomenon could undermine the prospect of urban farmers who aim to sell part of their produce to retail food stores (Usman & Haile 2022). That is dominant in megacities where retailers have standards on the type, size, and quality of produce to purchase from producers. As such, the few that have direct access to land tend to apportion the cost of land leases on the goods (Tuomala & Grant 2022). Given the high cost of leases, the market price of urban farm produce is often outmatched by rural and imported produce. Bartis & Oberholzer suggest that a traditional farmers' market is an ideal location for the sale of urban farm produce (Bartis & Oberholzer 2022). While their observation holds some merits, these markets are rarely set up in low-income communities, given the high cost of the goods displayed (Hardman, et al. 2022). Thus, farmers in low-income communities may have to transport their produce to a wealthy neighborhood to get a fair price for their yield (Follmann, et al. 2021). Such practices could be burdensome and costly.

Then again, the lack of urban policy is reflected in the scarcity of government assistance for urban farmers and small-scale producers (de Oliveira & Ahmed 2021). The conventional practice across the continent is the prioritization of subsidies for commercial agricultural exports rather than subsistence production. One of the future ramifications of this deficiency is the inability of farmers to adapt to climate change. There is a reasonably sufficient connection between temperature rise and poor crop yield. Tropical cities do not have winter and experience hot temperatures all year round. With climate change projected to intensify heat stress, the practice of UA faces a new threat (Balogun, et al. 2022). In Kinshasa-DR Congo, extreme temperature varies from 30 to 35°C, with an annual average between 24 and 26°C (Mufwaya & Muchuru 2016: 2026). Unlike in rural areas with vegetation and water bodies, the dense buildings and roads in cities absorb and retain more heat from the sun. To that end, Abdul-Lateef, et al. (2024: 28-29) moot that cities such as Iringa (Tanzania), Kampala (Uganda), Nairobi (Kenya), Tare (Rwanda), Ibadan (Nigeria), Maputo (Mozambique), and Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of the Congo) are susceptible to warming and decreased precipitation. Under such conditions, the types of crops to cultivate will be limited. Cool season crops such as carrots, salad greens, broccoli, cauliflower, spinach, and lettuce will be impacted. To adapt to the growing water scarcity, local growers in Kinshasa rely on wastewater for irrigation. Still, this approach is maladaptive. Whereas wastewater has the advantage of potentially enhancing soil conditions and increasing yields. That said, it has high nutrient and salt contents that could pose considerable health risks to consumers (Mayeko 2012).

4. Addressing Barriers to Africa's Urban Agriculture

Addressing food insecurity through UA is compelling, considering the right to food. As a physiological need, the right to food enjoins rulers to ensure their citizens have access to food. A few examples might help illustrate what has been said. In the last three decades, Africa has experienced the evolution of Constitutions codifying people's entitlement to food. While the right is implicit in the directive principles of state policies among many African countries, it is explicitly enumerated in at least three constitutions. The first to do so was Article 27(1)(b) of the South African Constitution (1996), which codifies the right of every person to have access to 'sufficient food'. That sentiment is echoed in the Kenyan Constitution (2010) where article 43 stipulates that every person has the right 'to be free from hunger, and to have adequate food of acceptable quality'. The specific language employed by the Zimbabwean Constitution (2013) was uniquely perceptive as it lays out quite clearly and succinctly the duty of powerholders. Article 15(a) of the instrument extols that the 'state must encourage people to grow and store adequate food'.

To grow food, one ought to have the *means* to do so. The 'means' implies access to land, seeds, and tools that will enable one to achieve that end. In consequence, the state ought to provide access to land and resources that will enable to promotion of subsistence farming. Consequently, the insufficient government support for UA deserves some consideration. It is projected that climate change will exacerbate the existing food insecurity in Africa. To that end, the following offer a few feasible steps that could be operationalized to enhance the resilience of urban dwellers to climate change.

As climate change is projected to disrupt the global food chain, access through own production is vital. UA is the key to that end. Limiting dependence on external food sources is more pressing for indigents who are susceptible to market fluctuations and inflation. Own production negates negative health ramifications that are spurred by processed food (with chemical and physical preservatives). However, these lofty ideals can only be attained when certain interventions are implemented.

The most pressing need is the adoption of an integrated urban policy. Africans are moving to cities, and this surging population is accompanied by increasing demand for food (Nkrumah 2018). The rate of urbanization calls for a well-coordinated municipal policy to efficiently distribute resources, including land. The process of deciding who gets what, when, and how is essential in the allocation of land and municipal assistance for UA. It is tenable to say that community engagement is an essential element for a paradigm shift to food insecurity. The genuine participation of households in municipal governance is important for guaranteeing their access to resources.

It is imperative that states codify UA as an essential feature of urban planning. That approach could be attained through the setting up of a UA committee. It is important that such committees not only encompass experts and policymakers, but also genuine participation from the grassroots. The codification of UA in urban policies ought to ensure the allocation of pockets of land for green spaces. Access to green spaces could be complemented with interventions that strengthen the resilience of urban farmers to climate change. Such interventions may include subsidized access to water (Desalegn, et al. 2024). Then again, it is likely that estate developers could leverage this program, thereby leading to gentrification. To mitigate such occurrences, there is a need for (a raft of) supportive policy regimes that ensure land security for agriculturalists. That line of action could encourage mass urban production that could provide relief for the increasing demand for rural food sources. The urgency for production to meet the needs of the increasing urban population leads to continued and intensive production with limited duration for the land to fallow. Being unable to leave land unplanted for a season has pernicious effects on the environment, as the soil is unable to replenish nutrients and retain water. With this development affecting harvest and availability, enabling horticulture in underserved communities could be an inroad toward containing urban food insecurity.

The codification of UA in urban policies could ensure budget allocation for agricultural support services (McClintock, et al. 2021). This strategy could rejuvenate the fading role of extension officers across the region (Ekobi, et al. 2023; Spurk, et al. 2025). The role of these officers could be instrumental

in training farmers on how to contain heavy metals. To forestall the concentration of heavy metals in urban food production, farmers could adopt one of two precautionary measures. At the basic level, they may discontinue cultivation on heavy metal-contaminated soil. While this is ideal, it is unlikely that horticulturalists will comply with the suggestion, given the scarcity of urban lands. At the secondary level, they may specialize in the cultivation of crops that are resilient to heavy metals. Garrido, et al. (2005) state that the uptake of heavy metals in plants is relative to the type of plant species. Seed-based crops do not actively absorb heavy metals, as opposed to plants that are grown from other parts. In essence, it may be prudent for farmers to be selective in the choice of crops based on the nature of the soil.

State-sponsored training for urban farmers could include alternative farming systems (AFS). These systems are key elements for revolutionizing food production through the provision of a reliable water supply for crops (Despommier 2013). As an illustration, drip irrigation has the prospect of improving the quality and quantity of crops by enabling water to slowly drip into the root zone. Besides improving the efficient use of water, the lack of water contact with the aerial part of the crop also reduces microbiological contamination and overall pest load in the farm field (Halder, et al. 2023). In terms of the growing concern around climate change, there is a need for a transformative adaptation. Abdul-Lateef, et al. (2024: 29) suggest that urban farmers can minimize risks through smart farming. Digitization, such as artificial intelligence, could provide timely information on rainfall distribution and recommend types of crops to grow based on climatic conditions and pest control. The complex nature of these technologies demands a deeper understanding of hydroponics, nutrient chemistry, and plant physiology. But, despite their potential, AFS remains on the fringes of city gardening. Insufficient knowledge of their uses, the cost of technology, and reliable access to electricity are a few of the obstacles that militate against the widespread use of the systems. Since AFS are somewhat in their early stages of development, many farmers, especially the aging, are oblivious to the introduction and application of these new techniques (Muhie 2022). Thus, limited knowledge implies negative outcomes. Failure to appreciate and apply specific handling techniques could lead to dire ramifications (i.e. potential spread of diseases, soil nutrient depreciation, and overwatering). Still, the cost associated with AFS workshops makes it unappealing for growers to sign up for training or skills development (Abdul-Lateef, et al. 2024). Yet, while this setback could be addressed by promoting collaboration between farmers and scientists, individualism – a key element of urban society- undercut such an aspiration. Individualism and the culture of working in silos hinder close community ties that are required for the transfer of knowledge in informal settings. For this reason, enhancing the skills of farmers in the innovative use of AFS and digital technologies ought to be prioritized by municipal extension officers. Cape Town ought to be commended for taking the lead in the capacity building of urban farmers (Olivier 2019). Nonetheless, this intervention is fraught with a major limitation, mainly the exclusion of squat farmers. Among others, two reasons specifically stand out for this approach. The first concerns the municipality's passive denunciation of illegal occupation. Second, in contrast to propertied farmers, squatting does not guarantee stable cultivation as it could be disrupted by landowners at any moment. While landowners are entitled to displace squatters, perhaps there ought to be a temporally reprieve for the use of vacant lands for subsistence farming. Such reprieves could be entrenched through anti-displacement policies and retention programs in poor communities. The protection of squatter farms could be reinforced through the recognition of UA as an integral part of urban development and city-led green initiatives.

5. Conclusion

The practice of cultivating crops or keeping animals has traditionally been a rural activity. But as a growing number of the continent's rural population migrates to cities, they are cut off from direct food supply. This development has triggered incessant hunger and obesity across the region. It was against this backdrop that UA has emerged as a panacea for containing urban food insecurity. Despite its prospect, a substantial percentage of urban dwellers do not participate in the act of producing their own food. In an attempt to understand this irony, the paper discovered that the majority of

African states do not have an explicit urban policy. The few that do rarely codify UA as a feature of urban development. To that end, there is less availability of green spaces for own cultivation. For this reason, the paper entreats African states to frame overarching urban legislations that recognize UA. It is expected that the codification of UA as an essential element of urban planning will enhance the resilience of cities to climate change and food insecurity. The demarcation of land for green spaces ought to be a prime objective for local governments. Also, considering citizens' right to food, municipalities ought to provide the resources for the training and capacity building of urban farmers to be resilient. At the same time, it is suggested that local governments adopt a targeted strategy of subsidizing the cost of municipal water and related utilities that are essential for their own production. In sum, the paper entreats African states to adopt comprehensive urban policies. However, such policies ought to respond to the emerging needs of urban farming.

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