Policy tools for Urban Agriculture. An overview of experienced solutions

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Enabling Multiple Benefits of Urban Agriculture

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The policy area **Territorial Cohesion** currently has several policy programmes supporting UA. These especially aim at funding exchange and learning programmes between territorial and urban development programmes in cities and regions across Europe. An example is the URBACT programme, aimed at promoting sustainable urban development that integrates economic, social and environmental dimensions and at improving the capacity of cities to manage urban policy for this. Through URBACT, several exchange projects relevant for UA policy development have been funded, such as RU:RBAN and Agri-Urban.

RU:RBAN aimed at transferring Rome's management models of Urban regeneration and social inclusion through urban gardens to a cohort of other European cities. Specifically, the cities exchange knowledge on: 1) urban gardens capacity building 2) governance, and 3) education about gardens management (Gardeniser)5. Agri-Urban aimed to "create a European network of small and medium-sized cities, with a potential for creating jobs in their rural or peri-urban areas, through an integrated approach, combining the social and environmental dimensions of agriculture in an innovative way"[6].

Other relevant support programmes for the Territorial Cohesion policy area are Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) and ESPON 2000. The UIA programme finances projects that test new and innovative solutions to address urban challenges in European Cities. Many initiatives financed by UIA have used UA-related activities to address their goals. The ESPON 2020 programme finances policy-relevant research with the overall objective of reinforcing the effectiveness of EU Cohesion. Many projects within ESPON have addressed UA, including the GRETA project aimed at promoting GI for territorial development[7].

For the policy area **Research & Innovation**, different projects funded under the Horizon 2020 research & innovation programme have covered UA-related activities, and supported the development of learning and exchange networks between city governments, universities and research institutes. This includes projects like: FoodTrails, FoodSHIFT2030, FoodE and the FUSILLI project, as well as the EFUA project. Various of these projects include UA cases, although there is no explicit exchange on this topic. Rather, projects focus on wider urban food systems and urban food policy approaches, and within which the role of UA is not always obvious.

Towards integrated support for urban food systems, incl. urban agriculture?

The review makes it clear that EU policies for UA are still very fragmented and incomplete. While relevant actions do exist in some policy areas, they remain isolated. There is no overall, integrated policy for UA.
On the positive side, EU policies are shifting towards more integrated, less sectoral approaches to food system policies with the development of integrating, thematic policy strategies, such as the F2F Strategy, the GI Strategy and the EU Soil Strategy. The F2F Strategy is a particularly important development, and in the context of which a new European Food System Framework (or even Law) is foreseen. That said, it is still very unclear how far UA will be explicitly included in F2F and the Food System Framework – even though it is clear that UA is very relevant for its goals (as well as the goals of the Green Deal).
Until now, the EU Food System approaches favour elements such as food environments, food procurement schemes and food waste – that is, areas on the consumer side of the food system. While these food system elements are certainly relevant, for a really transformative approach to food systems it is vital that the various different types of UA be addressed, and the huge potential benefits be acknowledged.

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5. LEADER stands for 'Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale', meaning 'Links between the rural economy and development actions'.
6. RU:RBAN Urban agriculture for resilient cities https://urbact.eu/networks/rurban
7. AGRI-URBAN The roots of the city https://urbact.eu/networks/agri-urban
8. GRETA – Green infrastructure: Enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem services for territorial development https://www.espon.eu/green-infrastructure

Policy tools for Urban Agriculture. An overview of experienced solutions

Claudia Cassatella

Urban and peri-urban agriculture (UA) has been recently addressed (or, at least, mentioned) by many policies, at the international and the local level. The policy domains span from food policies, to rural policies, to policies on green infrastructures, climate change adaptation, urban regeneration, and more.

Nevertheless, according to an analysis of 44 case studies worldwide by the EFUA Project (Cassatella et al., 2022), only a minority of existing UA practices take their first steps as a result of intentional public policy; those that do originate mainly from food policies or green Infrastructure policies. There is room for initiatives in other policy domains, such as urban regeneration.

When a city or a city region wants to establish or implement UA initiatives, they may apply a wide range of different instruments – from strategic plans to statutory plans and regulations, to incentives and assessment tools (see Cassatella et al., 2022; Table 1). These include, for instance, food strategies, zoning ordinances and protective designations, regulations on UA activities and spaces, fiscal measures, public-private partnerships and pacts.

Instruments	Testing Cities
Inventories	
Existing UA areas	Portland (USA); Rome (ITA); Turin (ITA); Vancouver (CAN);
Vacant or underutilised land/roofs	Baltimore (USA); Detroit (USA), New York (USA), Rotterdam (NLD); Singapore (SGP)
Plans	
Comprehensive strategies or plans	Baltimore (USA); New York (USA); Portland (USA); Marseilles (FRA)
Specific strategies, plans or programs	Oslo (NOR); Rosario (ARG); Toronto (CAN); Yarra (AUS)
Master Plans	Almere (NLD), Dar es Salaam (TZA), Kigali (RWA), Singapore (SGP)
Regulations	
Ordinances	Detroit (USA); Sacramento (USA); Tokyo (JPN)
Territorial agreements	Barcelona (ESP); Milan (ITA), Paris (FRA), Lille (FRA)
Regulations on UA management	Krakow (POL), Turin (ITA), Rome (ITA), Vilnius (LTU)
Temporary use	Detroit (USA); New York (USA); Kigali (RWA); Vilnius (LTU); Zurich (CHF)
Incentives	
Financial incentives	Sacramento (USA); Seattle (USA)
Technical assistance	Oslo (NOR); Sao Paulo (BRA); Seattle (USA)
Education and training	Quito (ECU); Rosario (ARG); Rotterdam (NLD); Seattle (USA); Sydney (AUS); Taipei (TWN); Toronto (CAN); Yarra (AUS)
Assessment	
Evaluation frameworks	Toronto (CAN)

Table 1: Policy tools to foster urban and peri-urban agriculture, with particular attention to spatial planning (Except from Politecnico di Torino, 2022)

On public land, UA initiatives are carried on under several governance arrangements. These included individual or collective loans for use, or agreements with associations for the co-management of public goods (Forte et al. 2022). The provision of social services (inclusion of people with disadvantages, or educational activities) might be foreseen. Specific regulations for the management of urban gardens may include environmental requirements (e.g. no pesticides, water management, e.g.) or on the aesthetic value of UA plots, fences and other materials used in urban gardens (to avoid negative visual impact).

On private land, a clear distinction must be traced between gardening and professional farming, which have different needs and deserve differentiated policies. City masterplans can introduce morphologies and typologies

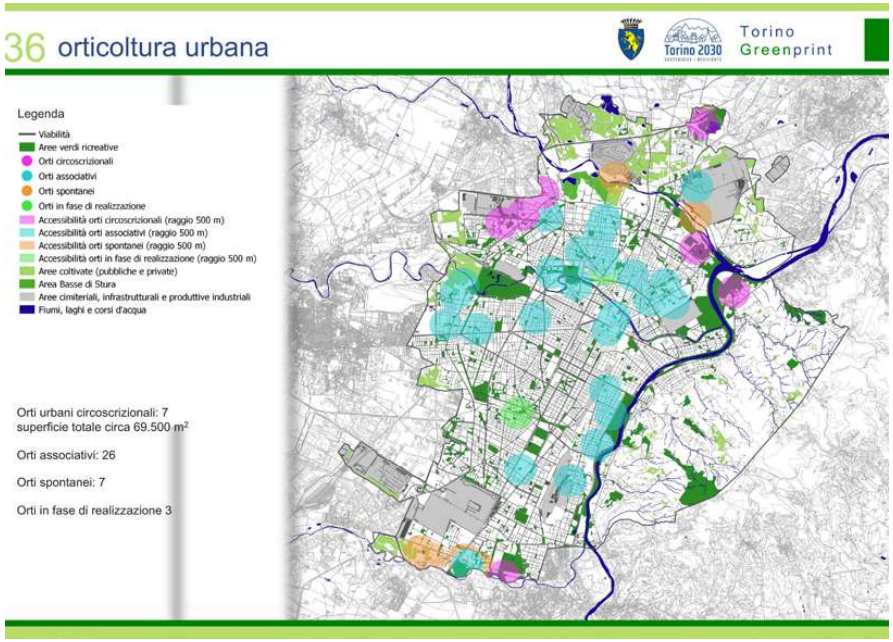

Figure 1: Urban agriculture as a component of the Plan for the Green Infrastructure (Municipality of Turin, 2020) The map identifies different types of urban gardens (allotment, community, spontaneous, new ones), and their accessibility radius. Detailed regulations are also provided for the management and the creation of the gardens

that favour farming on individual plots (see the City of Almere). Professional farming, an economic activity that is market-oriented (and not necessarily the local market) is not easily manageable by spatial plans. Nevertheless, spatial planning can provide protective measures aimed at protecting fertile soil for food production and acknowledging its related multiple ecosystem services.

Some peri-urban farmlands have been designated as protected areas with the mission of managing both nature and agriculture, in contrast to urban sprawl and taking advantage of urban-rural linkages (through, for example, alternative food networks or agritourism). Italian "agri-parks" each have a park authority and a spatial plan (see, for instance, South Milan Agri Park), while the French "Agri-SCoT" (*Schéma de cohérence territorial)* are based on agreements with professional farmers' associations (see, for instance Terres en Ville). Land banks can be instrumental to such designations.

In urban areas, the rise of Zero-acreage farming and agri-green roofs poses interesting new questions on the regulation of food production and distribution within urban spaces; to date, these questions have not been addressed at all. Special regulations have been defined by front-runner cities such as New York and Singapore. Indeed, Singapore is a unique case study where hi-tech UA is fostered by a detailed plan and by public investments.

Through surveys and interviews, the EFUA Project has collected a list of factors that create barriers to the implementation or continuity of UA practices. Among these, land property and land accessibility play a crucial role, as well as land conflicts.

In conclusion, the toolbox for planning with and for UA includes inventories of available land, strategic and statutory plans, regulations, incentives (fiscal, or technical), and assessment tools. To support city authorities in the integration of UA into public policies, the EFUA Project proposes guidelines and recommendations (see Politecnico di Torino, 2022; Table 2). A clear identification of the desired benefits of UA should guide policy design (see article by Gottero, p. 9), guiding the choice of the UA Type and its possible location. Professional and non-professional farming deserve differentiated policies. A participatory approach, from the outset, can help – such as, for instance, creating a

Developing a participatory process and establishing a UA committee	Ensuring availability and access to public land for UA	Identifying existing and potential land for UA
Creating a specific plan for UA	Defining regulations for UA	Developing financial or incentive tools
Developing facilities and infrastructures for UA	Supporting UA initiatives and urban farmers	Evaluating and monitoring public policies for UA

Table 2: Main policy recommendation to plan with and for urban and peri-urban agriculture. (Except from Politecnico di Torino, 2023)

committee of stakeholders. Giving legal recognition to UA (as well as removing legal restrictions) is crucial, as well as keeping or making space and improving its accessibility to gardeners and farmers. At the city level, specific plans can be adopted, UA can be integrated into zoning, possible locations for UA can be identified (paying attention to infrastructures), different types can be regulated, and combined with other urban functions to maximise benefits and manage conflicts.

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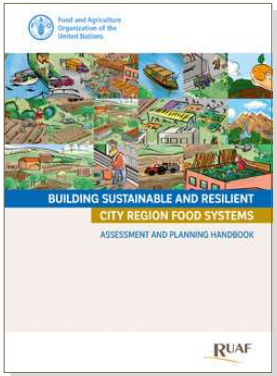
Launch of the new City Region Food Systems Assessment and Planning Handbook

In May, RUAF and FAO launched the City Region Food Systems (CRFS) Assessment and Planning Handbook and accompanying online toolkit. These new resources are instrumental in helping stakeholders to understand the sustainability and resilience of their food system.



The Handbook and toolkit are outputs of the CRFS programme, co-run by RUAF and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) since 2014. The CRFS programme has been funded by the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, and by the CGIAR International Water Management Institute.

Complementary resources, and a customizable process

The Handbook and toolkit contain two thematic tracks: the 'main track', which relates to the overall functioning and performance of the CRFS, its resilience and sustainability; and the 'multi-risk' for more detailed look at specific potential hazards, such as climate shocks and stresses, pandemics and their impacts.

The CRFS process consists of five modules: Inception, Define the CRFS, Rapid Scan, In-depth Assessment, and Action Planning. While the Handbook sets out the activities, the online toolkit contains supplementary guidance, explanations, examples, templates and training materials all accessed via clickable links.

A central pillar of the CRFS process is multi stakeholder working, which ensures a range of perspectives are represented, that the project team can draw on a base of knowledge and experience, and helps build momentum for long-term action on multiple fronts.

The CRFS process has been piloted in a total of eleven city regions: Colombo (Sri Lanka), Lusaka (Zambia), Kitwe (Zambia), Medellin (Colombia), Utrecht (Netherlands), Quito (Ecuador), Toronto (Canada), Kigali (Rwanda), Antananarivo (Madagascar), Melbourne (Australia), Tamale (Ghana).

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UA Magazine is a vehicle for sharing information on urban agriculture and urban food systems. It publishes good practices and impact stories.

UA Magazine welcomes contributions on new initiatives at individual, neighbourhood, city and national levels. Attention is given to technical, socioeconomic, institutional and policy aspects of sustainable urban and peri-urban food production, marketing, processing and distribution systems. Although articles on any related issue are welcome and considered for publication, each UA Magazine focuses on a selected theme (for previous issues, visit www.ruaf.org).

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