



2.2 Backyard Farming

Backyard farm in Tamale.

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Backyard farming in context

Urban planning approaches influence urban form and layout, which in turn affect the spaces available for different forms of urban agriculture, and how they function. In Tamale and Ouagadougou, clear differences in how backyard farms are laid out and the role they play reflect different trajectories of urban development and planning.

Urban planning in Tamale

Land use planning has historically been weakly enforced in Tamale. As the city expands rapidly, traditional villages are absorbed into the urban structure rather than being demolished. Thus, traditional housing layouts remain, including spaces for farming between dwellings.

Furthermore, traditional *chiefs*, who own most land in Ghana, frequently unofficially demarcate areas for residential allocation, which yields them revenue. When these are inexpertly demarcated, interstitial spaces are available for backyard farming.

Backyard farming in Tamale

Backyard farming is ubiquitous in Tamale. Average field size is just 0.11 ha. Yet these small gardens are integrated into the market economy: 49% and 64% of those farming in the wet and dry season produce commercially (Figure 2.16). The open urban structure facilitates this: Over 60% of backyard farmers invest in wooden fencing. Marketers walking around residential areas can then see the produce in the gardens. Okra and irrigated leaf vegetables such as amaranthus are produced all year by commercial backyard farmers. In the wet season, a large number of people take advantage of the rains to produce maize and tomatoes.



Fenced backyard chili pepper farm in Tamale, Ghana.

This means that more people practice backyard farming during the rainy season, reflecting this opportunistic element.

Urban planning in Ouagadougou

As the capital of French Upper Volta since 1919, Ouagadougou was formally planned, with wide streets separating gridded neighborhoods. All land is state owned, and the process of *lotissements* allocated geometrical housing plots to residents, a style that is less common in Tamale. Rooms are therefore usually constructed inside a rectangular walled compound, rather than in the traditional arrangements found in villages, where unallocated space remains between circular compound structures.

Backyards in Ouagadougou

Backyard farming in Ouagadougou is uncommon in residential areas: *lotissement* and geometrical allocation lead to interstitial space being rare. People also take very seriously the interdiction of urban cultivation of tall crops: an oft-

cited reason for the occurrence of mosquitoes. Many interpret this to prohibit cultivation within compounds. When backyard farming does occur, it is generally limited to maize and okra for household consumption, on small plots inside the ubiquitous compound walls. Just 8% of those farming in the wet season produce commercially; none do so in dry season. Residents perceive that plots should always be walled, both for security and due to a sense of propriety. This means that fencing is unnecessary, and cultivation remains ‘hidden’, which carries the disadvantage that crops are out of view for potential marketers. Less than 50% of people spend money on inputs at all, and less than 5% expend on fencing.

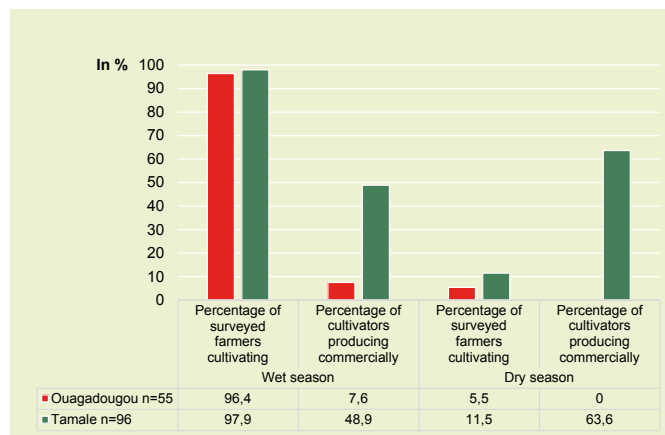


Figure 2.16. Commercial cultivation in backyard farms by city and season.^{2,8}

For more information:

Bellwood-Howard, I.; Shakya, M.; Korbeogo, G.; Schlesinger, J. 2018. The role of backyard farms in two West African urban landscapes. *Landscape and Urban Planning* 170: 34–47.



Gridded layout (left) and backyard farm in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso (right).

Comparison

Some aspects of backyard farming in Tamale and Ouagadougou are similar, such as the cultivation of okra and maize for household consumption and concentration of backyard farming in the rainy season. Yet different urban planning trajectories have led to major differences. Looser planning

implementation in Tamale means unconfined backyard farms are more common. These remain open and visible to market traders, and are more easily integrated into the urban food marketing system (see page 56). One implication of this is that backyard farmers in Ouagadougou will have to actively seek traders or market access. Thus, if backyard farming

is recognized and possibly facilitated in urban planning, it can enhance not only household food and income security, but also marketing livelihood opportunities, especially for women. The wider implications are that urban planning could usefully consider how backyard farming fits into the urban landscape.