



6 Stakeholder Dialogue

Stakeholder workshop in Tamale, Ghana.

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Although urban agriculture is rarely the main topic of discussion, it interlinks and supports a large array of development objectives given its interface between agriculture, food safety, sanitation, health, urban planning and the environment, as the example of irrigated vegetable farming in open spaces shows (Figure 6.1).

Given this complexity, different institutions, local assemblies, statutory and regulatory bodies, traditional leaders, NGOs, CBOs, and the (formal and informal) private sector can have a stake in urban farming, not to mention urban farmers, traders, consumers and researchers. Similarly, a range of bylaws, policies, regulations, medium-term plans and strategies address urban farming directly or indirectly. This applies in particular to those ministries that underwent the decentralization process in Ghana and shifted responsibilities to district

departments and units, reporting to local assemblies. In particular, the decentralization of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture should be mentioned, as it created at city district level *de facto* Metropolitan Directors of Urban Agriculture, which gives urban farming an institutional home. Yet, the complexity of the urban institutional environment calls for multi-stakeholder dialogues to address farming-related challenges or opportunities, as the impacts might be felt across the institutional nexus and require a participatory planning process. This situation becomes even more challenging when peri-urban agriculture is concerned, which requires a dialogue across administrative rural–urban boundaries.

As a response, various research and development organizations concerned with urban food security and urban food systems have over the

years convened a series of often interlinked stakeholder processes. In Tamale, these consultations were commonly facilitated by the University for Development Studies (UDS) and the Urban Agriculture Network (URBANET). External support came, for example, from the Ghana Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Alliance, and international projects and organizations like the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), the RUAF partnership and the UrbanFood^{Plus} research project.

Especially where urban food supply and agriculture are subject of research, stakeholder platforms can (a) steer the research to locally relevant questions and knowledge gaps, and (b) discuss the implications of research findings for informed decision making and urban planning. Key issues around urban farming relate to land availability, ownership and land use planning, which are in general one of the most common issues of conflict in Ghana, in particular in urban and peri-urban areas, making

the reconciliation of interests one of the major challenges for participatory stakeholder processes. Other contentious issues, in particular in Tamale, are water access for agriculture, given that Tamale can face long periods of insufficient domestic water supply, and the impact of poor sanitation on water quality and food safety.

The UrbanFood^{Plus} project-facilitated stakeholder dialogue in Tamale started in 2011 and moved from a situation analysis to identify priority areas for interventions and/or policy attention to a phase of agreement on a joint **strategic city agenda** with institutional commitments for urban agriculture development in Tamale. Latest with the acceptance of the city agenda, the ownership of the multi-stakeholder process should pass on to the local stakeholders.

This transition is, however, not without challenges. There can remain 'lip services' or different readings of traditional and current land rights, or a mismatch between formal planning approaches (like



Figure 6.1. Development objectives linked to open-space urban farming.

zoning) and informal realities. A common example in Ghana is that traditional *chiefs* transfer agricultural community land for non-agricultural purposes, also to third parties. This might even affect agricultural land zoned for flood retention, which is protected by the Riparian Buffer Zone Policy. In all these cases, especially farmers need a platform to explain their stakes, also as urban agriculture continues to struggle with its recognition as a valid urban land use category.

Another issue of public concern and for stakeholder discussion is the pollution of water used for crop irrigation. Participants in the stakeholder process conceded that treatment of wastewater before use for irrigation would be an appropriate solution, but municipal scale options were still far off. UrbanFood^{Plus} engaged in the search for alternative safety options, like on-farm wastewater filtration. The stakeholder dialogue indicated that this requires a solution between the slow water flow preferred by scientists for good filtration and the high water flow needed by farmers to save

time during manual irrigation. With storm water gutters in the metropolis being reconstructed to divert wastewater out of the city center towards peri-urban areas, stakeholders pointed at alternative irrigation water sources, such as rain or floodwater.

Finally, as also experienced in other African cities, an important step in the dialogue is to explicitly recognize the role of informal activity in urban food systems, rather than attempt to enforce formal approaches with limited resources.

These examples show the value, but also challenges of a multi-stakeholder platform, and the need for a mutually respected facilitator, especially considering that the dialogue process involves the interactions of diverse groups with differential levels of power. A powerful stakeholder not mentioned so far is the media. To reduce the risk of 'lip services' in the jointly agreed city agenda, media attention can be effective to support commitments and accountability (Figure 6.2).



For more information:

Bellwood-Howard, I.; Kranjac-Berisavljevic, G.; Bogweh Nchanji, E.; Shakya, M.; Veenhuizen, R.V. 2018. Participatory planning for food production at the city scale: Experiences from a stakeholder dialogue process in Tamale, Northern Ghana. In: *Integrating food into urban planning*, eds., Cabannes, Y.; Marocchino, C. London, England: UCL Press; Rome, Italy: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Bellwood-Howard, I.; Amoah, P.; Zakaria, R.; Veenhuizen, R.V. 2016. Experiences from stakeholder dialogues in Tamale, Northern Ghana. *Urban Agriculture Magazine* 31: 33–34.

Drechsel, P.; Obuobie, E.; Adam-Bradford, A.; Cofie, O.O. 2014. Governmental and regulatory aspects of irrigated urban vegetable farming in Ghana and options for its institutionalization. In: *Irrigated urban vegetable production in Ghana: characteristics, benefits and risk mitigation*, eds., Drechsel, P.; Keraita, B. Colombo, Sri Lanka: International Water Management Institute (IWMI). Pp. 199–218.

Figure 6.2. Media response to the stakeholder workshop held in Tamale, Ghana, in 2018.



Visit of project members and stakeholders to the central field experiment in Tamale, Ghana.