

Workshop on Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture in Ghana:
Implications for Agricultural Extension.

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*Address by Dr. (Mrs) Olufunke Cofie, West Africa Regional Coordinator,
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and Food security*

Mr Chairman

Honourable Minister, Ministry of Food and Agriculture

Directors

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Urbanization is one of the greatest challenges of our time. It is estimated that by the year 2015 88% of the one billion projected growth in the global population will take place primarily in cities in developing countries. Increasing urban population creates an enormous demand for services and places great pressure on the limited natural resources. Resulting problems are increasing urban poverty, growing urban food insecurity, and degradation of the urban environment. Therefore, identification of ways to provide food, and other basic services to the city residents and create sustainable cities is a challenge for many city authorities.

The phenomenon, Urban Agriculture refers to the production, processing and marketing of food (such as vegetables, fruits, milk, eggs, meat, mushrooms) and other agricultural products (like herbs, ornamental plants, tree seedlings) within and around urban agglomerations. Statistics from the United Nations show that 15-20 % of the world's food needs are produced by about 800 million urban and peri-urban farmers and gardeners.

Various international organisations and a rapidly increasing number of local and national governments and NGO's have recognised the importance of urban agriculture for the alleviation of urban poverty, enhancement of urban food security, local economic development, recycling of urban wastes and for greening of the city. Examples of special initiatives that consider and promote urban agriculture are:

- IDRC's program 'Cities Feeding People'
- FAO's initiative 'Food for the Cities'
- CGIAR's 'Urban Harvest' Program
- UNDP/Habitat 'Sustainable Cities Program'
- WHO 'Healthy Cities' program as well as
- RUAF's 'Cities Farming for the Future' program.

I am happy to see that the Ghanaian Government has also joined the number; first, through the decentralization programme and now looking at the implications for agricultural extension services

The Resource centres for Urban Agriculture and Food security (RUAF) is an international network of partners that provide training and policy advice to local governments, NGOs and other local stakeholders. It was established in response to the expressed need of organisations and local governments in the South, for effective mechanisms for the documentation, exchange and discussion of research results and local experiences on urban agriculture. RUAF is represented in Anglophone W.Africa by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and work with many city partners. The mission of RUAF is to facilitate the integration of urban agriculture in the policies and programs of national and local governments, technical departments, research institutions and NGO's.

In January 2005, RUAF launched The Cities Farming for the Future (CFF) Programme with the support of DGIS (Directorate-General for International Cooperation, The Netherlands) and IDRC (International Development Research Center, Canada). The CFF programme is being implemented by regional partners in pilot cities in seven regions of the world: Latin America, South Asia,

South East Asia, China, Middle East and North Africa, Eastern/southern Africa as well as West Africa. We are fortunate to have Accra as one of 20 pilot cities in the world while Kumasi and Tamale are designated partner cities (among 40 others) for dissemination of experiences gained in Accra.

The overall goal of the CFF Program is to contribute to urban poverty reduction, urban food security, and improved urban environmental management by assisting the city authorities to recognise the benefits of urban agriculture, whilst addressing also its challenges. The challenges of urban and peri-urban agriculture including prohibitive urban policies and regulations, high competition for available natural resources, land insecurity, lack of support services and appropriate technologies, health risks from the use of polluted water coupled with high food demand and market proximity call for interventions at various levels. One striking feature of UA which distinguishes it from rural agriculture is that it is embedded in and interacting with urban economy and urban ecosystem and thus an important component for sustainable city development.

The main activities implemented in the CFF programme include:

1. Supporting local capacity development with regards to urban agriculture through Training of Trainers; and training of senior and middle-level staff of government departments, NGO's and other stakeholders.

The training for Ghana was held last month with many (up to six) representatives from MoFA. It was evident that the training programme enhanced understanding of the key issues involved in UA and the capacity to collaborate and develop a strategic agenda and action plan on UA through multi-stakeholder processes in the context of poverty alleviation, local economic development and environmental management strategies.

2. Organisation of Policy seminars to enhance awareness regarding the potentials and risks of urban agriculture and to facilitate its recognition as an area for government intervention. A special seminar for policy makers is scheduled to be held in the last week of October, 2005. It will be an opportunity to present a policy narrative on urban agriculture based on the exploratory study done in Accra. The study attempted to characterise the land use systems in Accra, took an inventory of the various urban agriculture production systems, analysed key stakeholders involved and also reviewed existing policies and regulations that influence urban agriculture directly or indirectly. We are looking forward to jointly organize

this seminar with MoFA and we hope that the Honourable Minister will be available to deliver a keynote address on urban agriculture to other policy makers

3. Development of guidelines, information packages, working methodologies and instruments for various local stakeholders. Facilitating networking and access to relevant information as well as documented experiences (such as published in the Urban Agriculture Magazine), in order to enable practical policy and technology interventions
4. Assisting in the organisation of regional and local training workshops and supporting local policy formulation, preparation and implementation of action plans, including among others, participatory appraisals, design and implementation of pilot projects on issues prioritised in the individual city context

In view of the foregoing, we are happy to be part of this workshop and RUAF is willing to support MoFA as much as lies within our capabilities. I like to encourage your active participation to steer the workshop in a positive direction for the benefit of all.

Good luck and thank you for your attention.