

Agroecosystem Determinants and Desirability of Topics in Developing a Training Curriculum on Urban Agriculture in the Philippines

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SUMMARY

Population growth in urban areas is providing a challenge in developing countries around the world. Often such growth means unemployment or underemployment and food security is a challenge.

Urban agriculture (UA) is viewed as a growing need in developing countries as the population of cities continues to rise at an alarming rate.

In spite of the recognition of the important role urban agriculture can play in the Philippines, there is still a need to promote and educate people about this potential subsistence or income generating opportunity. There is insufficient attention from the local authorities. We need to look at the uniqueness of this form of agriculture, especially as there have been some failures, in the eyes of experts, not users.

One limitation has been the lack of training and programs.

In the Philippines very few cities have adopted the UA concept. The benefits include supporting the families' nutritional needs and the extra income from the sale of produce.

A survey was carried out of 139 urban farmers in Muntinlupa City, Philippines. The results indicated there was a real need for a training curriculum in UA. Such a curriculum should help farmers be more productive and efficient. The curriculum must fit the needs of the clients.

The suggested clients are typically married, below the poverty line, and have a limited area available for urban farming. They rank poorly in socio-cultural interaction. The amount of land or space they have available is small.

Objectives of a proposed program could include: awareness of organic farming; update the participants on methods of organic farming of vegetables; update the participants on herbicide preparation; help construct a demo farm for organic production of vegetables and preparation of suitable herbicides.

What we found was a high level of desirability for this form of farming. Respondents said UA should be introduced into the community.

In conclusion, we found UA was greatly needed. There was enthusiasm from the prospective clients. There is a need for sound training the inclusion of the farmers in the planning process. Separate and different programs can be developed for different needs on available land plots. It would be advisable to partner with the private sector to gain support and funding.

How is all this related to the Millennium development Goals (MDGs)? We are dealing with urban farmers, using local languages, and seeking to alleviate poverty and promote sustainable development.

DISCUSSIONS

Questions: The farmers are poor. Will the local government help with providing fertilizers?

Answer: This was a pilot study to look into development of UA in this city. We came up with a consultative meeting. We do not know yet. A lot will depend on the policy of the local government, which has tended to neglect UA in the past.

Question: The government typically spends less than 1% on non-formal education. What about materials and a local government with no budget and no interest?

Answer: We recognize the amount allocated in the budget is below 1%. How do we address this? We need to involve the local councilors. So with a UA project, there will be problems in implementing it. We need multi-sector collaboration. When it comes to curriculum, the university may be able to help. The UA farmers should be consulted. These farmers will tend to know what they need.

Question: When looking into this program, how big was the demand? What were the sources of land available? And who will support these activities?

Answer: At the moment, the study is being proposed to institutions to motivate them to support the project. The director of the university will propose this to the local government, and other sectors including the local chamber. We realize that space is limited and there is not much land available. We hope to harness technology to a certain extent, such as in the growing of vegetables in hanging gardens. We need to look into processes that involve less toil and other alternatives.