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URBAN AGRICULTURE: A KEY TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE CITIES

Juxtaposition of the terms “agriculture” and “urban” appears somewhat paradoxical in an era when our cities are so artificialised and disconnected from the rural world. Yet, in some countries, a significant proportion of the food supply is still produced in or in immediate proximity to cities; such was the case in France up until relatively recently.

“By reconnecting city dwellers with living things, urban agriculture can provide the conditions for an ecological, societal and dietary transition. This being so, it deserves to be supported”. »

Now that 80% of the population are city-dwellers and our food supply system is becoming increasingly vulnerable due to climate change and depletion of fossil resources, growing numbers of vegetable and sometimes even animal production projects are being implemented in conurbations. The Association

Française d'Agriculture Urbaine Professionnelle (AFAUP – French Association of Professional Urban Agriculture) only listed 6 professional entities in 2013; there are 300 today.

Whether market or non-market, professional, public or community-based, low-tech or high-tech, in car parks, abandoned factories, containers, or roof gardens, urban agriculture takes many forms, as do the services of general interest that it can provide: natural air-conditioning, soil de-artificialisation and depollution, preservation of biodiversity, strengthening of human ties, citizenship and democracy, reconnection with the food supply and the agricultural world, dynamisation of the economy, job creation and professional integration, management of water and waste flows, etc.

Nonetheless, as the Opinion shows, not all projects tackle the issues of urban sustainability and resilience to the same extent. This is why the ESEC has made recommendations that seek to support the most virtuous urban agriculture projects, by enabling them to have the necessary space available, through adaptation of urban-planning rules and architectural practices, calling for the design of appropriate



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legal tools, encouraging development of territorial partnerships, and mobilising research and training at the service of the operators concerned.

THE ESEC'S RECOMMENDATIONS

SUPPORT RESPONSIBLE URBAN AGRICULTURE, WITH A VIEW TO CREATING RESILIENT CITIES

- Implement a policy encouraging development of urban agriculture by supporting projects connected with territorial food supply and/or providing environmental, social and societal functions
- Orientate public aid in order to ensure remuneration of services rendered and fair compensation of urban farmers

ACCELERATE THE DIETARY TRANSITION BY REINFORCING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN DIETARY BEHAVIOURS, LOCAL FARMING AND PRESERVATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

- Ensure complementarity between urban, periurban and rural agriculture by universalising Projets Alimentaires Territoriaux (PATs – Territorial Food Projects)
- Give more space to trees in cities

PROVIDE URBAN AGRICULTURE WITH THE SPACE REQUIRED TO ENABLE ITS DEPLOYMENT

- In reforming property law, give thought to provisions specific to urban agriculture in the context of the tenant farming statute
- Associate and involve local authorities in the emergence of and provision of assistance to projects (design of standard agreements, contracts between urban producers and local catering centres, creation of an Urban Agriculture responsibility)
- Amend urban-planning rules, with “zero net artificialisation of soils” as the goal
- Adapt architectural practices
- Draw up indicators to foster and measure the sustainable development of urban agriculture and inform public decisions
- Encourage deployment of urban agriculture through tax measures (temporary exemption from land tax, taking urban agriculture and re-naturalisation projects into account when calculating property tax)

STRENGTHEN SOCIAL TIES, INTERDEPENDENCE AND THE LINK WITH NATURE

- Consolidate the legal statuses of collective gardens
- Promote urban agriculture's contributions in order to reinforce social cohesion and integration, in particular in the context of the “Integration by Economic Activity” reform
- Inventory and develop school vegetable gardens

MOBILISE TRAINING AND RESEARCH WITH A VIEW TO MAKING URBAN AGRICULTURE AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR IMPROVING AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD RESILIENCE

- Include modules on urban agriculture in training programmes for the professionals concerned (architects, urban-planners; BPW, landscapers, agronomists, and local authority officials) and raise awareness among professionals in the social, education and health sectors
- Continue, develop and perpetuate research and experimentation programmes (social and environmental services and economic models)
- Reinforce interdisciplinary approaches (development of territorial observatories, etc.)