Cameroon Overview

The three chapters in this section present research undertaken in Yaoundé, the capital city of Cameroon, from 2002 to 2004 and set in a national perspective. Although there have been one or two previous studies of different aspects of urban agriculture in the city, particularly concerning the growing of green leafy vegetables for the urban market, this research constitutes the first coordinated national effort to document the activity and to link this to public policy processes. The research contained in this section is also notable for its attempt to introduce a spatial perspective to the subject, both in the way of understanding how different urban and peri-urban agriculture activities function, and in the way of linking this to physical planning and local government administration.

Led by researchers from the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) but incorporating a wide range of governmental and non-governmental institutions, the Urban Harvest-supported research team carried out a series of detailed investigations to build up the mosaic picture presented in Chapter 3. This describes how perishable items produced by urban farming contribute to livelihoods and nutrition, how urban farming affects and is affected by water pollution, and what the patterns of production and flow are of tree seedlings and cassava, an important local food crop. They are framed within a long-term perspective which is both spatial and historical, thanks to the studies over many years by one team member who is also an official of the National Institute of Cartography.

Chapter 4 is a study of crop–livestock farming in the capital, a common and popular form of urban farming in this and other cities because of its productivity. The study includes a detailed investigation of waste production and utilization for this type of farming system at city scale.

Chapter 5 returns to the spatial and historical framework to present the study of institutions for urban agriculture, examining why and how strong institutions have not emerged to deal with food production in the city, at the same time presenting this as a challenge for effective urban government. The chapter concludes with a summary of how the findings of all these studies were dealt with in a public forum attempting to move forward the urban agriculture agenda in Cameroon in early 2004.