African Urban Harvest
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Agriculture in the Cities of Cameroon, Kenya and Uganda
Jac Smit – In Memoriam

This book is dedicated to the memory of Jac Smit (1929–2009), who devoted his life and energy to the subject discussed in these pages (www.jacsmits.com). Jac helped bring the crucial role that urban agriculture plays in African cities to world attention in the early 1990s through his writings and tireless advocacy work.
Within less than a generation a majority of Africans will live in urban areas. As the pace of urban growth outstrips job creation and the capacity of most governments to provide essential infrastructure, the face of African poverty is being transformed from what was once considered a primarily rural phenomenon to one including tens of millions of unemployed and underemployed living at the margins of the formal urban economy. Indeed, research has shown that the depths of income poverty, health risks and food insecurity in the informal settlements of some African cities are often worse than in stressed rural communities.

Urban agriculture is uniquely well positioned to respond to these challenges. Ironically, despite increasingly integrated global food systems, local production in urban and peri-urban areas remains essential to feeding African cities, due in part to systemic failures in markets linking rural and urban areas. This fact was dramatically demonstrated in the urban food riots provoked by the global food price spikes of 2007 and 2008. Historically discouraged and often prohibited by municipal governments, urban agriculture has attracted growing interest – and legitimacy – during the past decade and a half, largely due to a growing body of hard evidence showing that it can provide a sustainable motor for both human development and economic growth. The current volume represents a seminal contribution to that paradigm shift.

Drawing on the results of rigorous research conducted in Cameroon, Kenya and Uganda, the authors carefully explore the dynamics of urban and peri-urban agriculture through three complementary lenses – livelihoods, health and policies/institutions. From these scholarly studies, stronger typologies and analytical tools are emerging. The country case studies reveal the rich diversity of food and non-food agricultural systems that have emerged in different urban settings, and underline powerfully the importance of understanding agro-ecological, political, institutional and historical context before designing interventions. The case studies also reveal the complex and dynamic two-way demographic and economic interactions between rural and urban areas.

And contrary to much conventional thinking, the case studies show that urban agriculture is not simply a coping strategy for the poor, but is often a highly lucrative economic strategy pursued by the rich as well. Illuminated by insightful political economy analyses, power relations are exposed as critical factors in defining urban
land tenure and land-use systems, water rights, the structure and operation of food markets, and the design and enforcement of health and food safety measures.

The complex and multi-level nature of power relations challenge simplistic silver bullet approaches to rationalizing urban and peri-urban systems, and to making them more efficient, equitable and safe. Careful, deliberate and inclusive political processes are key processes that include a wide range of actors and that are driven by hard evidence. In-depth case studies of multi-disciplinary and multi-agency platforms in Kampala and Nairobi presented in the final chapters point to ways forward, demonstrating how action research can contribute to policy reform by providing the right evidence, to the right audience and at the right time, and by catalyzing and framing negotiations between key stakeholders.

Urban Harvest, a system-wide initiative of the Consultative Group on Agricultural Research, must be congratulated for producing this marvelous volume. Similar congratulations are due to the International Development Research Centre, which supported, since 2000, the research process that produced the underlying evidence. Indeed, IDRC has been a pioneer in the field, having funded some of the earliest work in the 1980s that helped define the scope, scale and importance of urban agricultural systems globally. Since that time, IDRC helped create linkages with and between many regional and international organizations – including Urban Harvest, the RUAF Foundation, The Urban Agriculture Network (TUAN), UN-Habitat, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and a host of local research and development organizations. The synergies created through these multi-dimensional partnerships created benefits that were out of reach for each working in isolation. The lessons of the IDRC experience for development programming more broadly are clear – persistence, continuity, and adaptation based on hard evidence can achieve transformational changes in thinking and approach. Rather than chasing fads, IDRC stayed with a problem for more than two decades, created and nurtured partnerships, and built local capacity that has now taken the lead. It is hoped that going forward the CGIAR has the same wisdom to retain a meaningful focus on urban agriculture and to build on the partnerships fostered by Urban Harvest.

It is fitting in many ways that this book is dedicated to Jac Smit, himself a pioneer and passionate advocate of urban agriculture. Often referred to as the “father of urban agriculture”, starting in the 1960s Jac worked in more than 30 countries helping planners to understand and support urban agriculture in ways that directly improved lives and livelihoods of urban populations. Jac founded TUAN, and as the lead author of the classic reference book, Urban Agriculture: Food, Jobs and Sustainable Cities, published in 1996 by UNDP, Jac helped construct the intellectual framework within which urban agriculture is now perceived. A great teacher, Jac not only informed but inspired those of us privileged enough to have worked with him. Jac Smit died in November 2009. He would have loved this book, a book that in many ways reaffirms his vibrant legacy.

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The Urban Harvest program is convened by the International Potato Center (CIP), one of the fifteen international agricultural research centres supported by the CGIAR – the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research. The CGIAR is a global partnership of governments, multilateral organizations and private foundations that works to promote food security, poverty eradication and the sound management of natural resources in the developing world. We would like to acknowledge the vision and initiative of Dr. Wanda Collins, former Deputy Director General for Research at CIP, who led the development of the original proposal to the CGIAR on urban and peri-urban agriculture. We also gratefully acknowledge CIP’s logistical and financial support, in particular to the lead editor, which made the publication of the book possible. The support of the Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto, is also recognized, with special thanks to Donald Cole. Without a grant from the Ford Foundation (East and Southern Africa Office) most of the detailed editorial work could not have been done. The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is not only funding the publication costs of this book and acting as a co-publisher, but members of its staff are also contributors to Chapter 14. Further, it has financially supported many of the research activities described in the book, including the Urban Harvest Program itself. As always with IDRC, our acknowledgement of their role goes way beyond the financial to include almost all aspects of the implementation of this research. Further financial support
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As described in Chapter 14, many CGIAR centres contributed to the research, but three deserve special mention: IITA which led the research team in Yaoundé (special thanks to Christian Nolte); CIAT which led the team in Kampala (special thanks to Roger Kirkby); and ILRI which led the team in Nairobi (special thanks to Dannie Romney). Because the Kampala research took off in the direction of influencing policy and legal change as described in Chapter 15, the editors would also like to thank the Kampala Urban Food Security, Agriculture and Livestock Coordinating Committee (KUFSALCC), especially George Nasinyama and Abdelrahman Lubowa, for their contributions to the research in Kampala, while the role played by Kampala’s CIP office must also be acknowledged.

The early chapters of the book concern urban agriculture in and around Yaoundé, Cameroon. The investigation of urban agriculture livelihoods in Yaoundé was designed and carried out by a team from IITA, IRAD and the University of Dschang. The nutrition study was executed by a team made up of scientists from CIRAD, IITA, ISSEA and the University of Yaoundé using data previously collected during seven surveys carried out in 1999–2000. Team members from ICRAF, IRAD and CIRAD made the survey of horticultural and tree-seedling nurseries, while the study of water pollution affecting and caused by urban agriculture in Yaoundé was designed and executed by team members from the University of Yaoundé, Ecole Nationale Polytechnique Supérieure (ENPS), IITA and ICLARM. A method for the quantification and spatial analysis of urban food supply flows was developed and applied to a test case of fresh cassava roots by team members from IITA, CIRAD, CARBAP and INC. The authors would like to thank the following persons specifically for their contributions to this chapter: Olivier David, François Damesse, Anne Degrande, Divine Foundjem Tita, Elie Foukou, Fernand Isseri, Emmanuel Ngikam and Valentina Robiglio. Funding for the studies into urban farming systems in Yaoundé that appear in Chapter 3 came from the World Bank managed by Urban Harvest. IITA and ICRAF contributed material resources and researcher time, and Diana Lee-Smith provided supervision and support for the work through regular workshops.

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The institutional study in Chapter 5 relies on 20 years of research on Yaoundé by the lead author, and draws on data from a wide range of disciplines and sectors. It involved the collaboration of representatives of numerous institutions currently involved in the management of UA or engaged with it in some way: the Communauté Urbaine de Yaoundé (CUY); the Communes d’Arrondissemen; NGOs and neighbourhood associations; provincial, departmental and divisional offices of agriculture; relevant government ministry services; researchers engaged in related
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Chapter 6 is based on the outcome of the Urban Harvest funded project “Strengthening UA in Kampala”. Along with the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) as lead organization, collaborating institutions included the International Potato Center (CIP), the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO), the Department of Agricultural Extension and Education at Makerere University, Kampala City Council (KCC) and two NGOs, Environmental Alert and Plan International. Additional funds for the studies in this chapter were mobilised from CIAT and CIP and financial contributions from the International Network for Improvement of Banana and Plantain (INIBAP, a Division of Bioversity International) and the Department for International Development of the UK (DFID). The latter two grants made possible the household sample survey of farmers and the pilot listing survey of UA enterprises in two parishes in 2004, respectively. The authors would also like to thank the residents of Bukesa, Banda, Buziga and Komamboga parishes.

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