

PLANNING FOR AND WITH URBAN AGRICULTURE

9 Keys to successful UA-related public policies and planning tools

When making use of UA as a means for urban development, public planning departments and urban planners should pay particular attention to the following tasks:



Developing a participatory process and establishing a UA committee

UA should be implemented on the basis of a participatory planning process, engaging different stakeholders and defining a UA committee or public department/agency involves the identification of specific governmental responsibility concerning UA at city level. The committee should include the private sector, non-governmental organisations, NGOs, associations and different public departments related to UA issues. The committee should aim to support policy makers and evaluate the progress and outcomes of UA policies over time. Moreover, the committee should observe the constant process of diversification of UA and promote tools to adapt public policies to new developments and practices.



Ensuring availability and access to public land for UA

Cities and public bodies should ensure the availability and access for UA to urban and peri-urban public land for agricultural use, in order to significantly contribute to the conservation and enhancement of urban green spaces and agricultural land. This can be achieved by acquiring private properties, through the definition of long-term concessions, as well as developing various forms of land acquisition such as taxpayer bonds, the integration of UA into public parks, etc. Urban land for agricultural use should also be protected through specific zoning limitations.



Identifying existing and potential land for UA

Creating inventories of existing plots and urban farms, as well as available (public and private) land with potential use for implementing professional UA and urban gardening - including underutilised, abandoned, marginal and degraded lands, brownfield sites and rooftops - is crucial to support UA. This step should include the collection of baseline data on agricultural activities, the development of a land database and a land bank, as well as the identification and analysis of the main stakeholders. This step also includes the identification of potential barriers for UA, including urban farming and how existing urban policies limit the development of UA.



Creating a specific plan for UA

UA should be planned and implemented on the basis of a participatory planning process involving a wide range of community actors, and in accordance with regulations on farmland protection at the supra-local scale. UA plans should be integrated into landscape and urban design, with other sectoral policies and more comprehensive strategies and plans at city level. Plans should identify different UA types (professional and not professional) and define zoning restrictions, recognizing UA as a specific (existing or new) zone in the land use designation system.



Defining regulations for UA

Regulations should support land-use zoning and urban policies, as well as define what is permitted and what is not. Regulations can include guidelines and requirements to implement urban gardens, allocation mechanisms for urban gardens, rules for agricultural temporary use of public vacant or underused plots, by-laws on animal and livestock management, sale activities (direct sales on farms, location of farmer markets, including stocking and accessibility), and restrictions on the use of resources such as water and energy (irrigation systems, water abstraction, etc.).



Developing financial or incentive tools

The lack of funds and financial instruments are the main factors usually leading to the failure of UA initiatives. Financial resources include not only subsidies or block grant funds for maintaining and developing existing UA initiatives, but also fees, tax rebates and reductions, abatements and exemptions for landowners, specific tax regulations for urban land, credit and loans, as well as incentives for innovative agricultural activities (e.g. indoor farming, high-tech farming, etc.).



Developing facilities and infrastructures for UA

The management and development of UA facilities and infrastructures, is a key aspect for ensuring success of UA initiatives. This might include not only the accessibility to specific sites or the normal functioning of UA plots (e.g. irrigation systems, roads, small facilities, plot layout, fencing, etc.), but also farmer market structures, as well as any potential decontamination and soil rehabilitation work.



Supporting UA initiatives and urban farmers

Public bodies should provide information to citizens about UA initiatives and promote short chains, local agri-food products, sustainable farming practices, and UA-related recreation activities. Public bodies should be able to manage any potential social and land use conflicts between UA practitioners, citizens and the private sector. They may support and facilitate the establishment of agreements with farmers (particularly for public procurement) or associations, as well as with landowners for land allocation. They can offer technical advice and assistance, training and educational activities concerning UA, for schools, practitioners, urban planners and politicians.



Evaluating and monitoring public policies for UA

This step includes the evaluation of the effectiveness and outcome of UA-related policies (projects and plans) through specific monitoring, evaluation and research activities (including the application of a set of indicators) and periodic reports established by the UA committee.

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This Poster presents an abstract of the current Task 4.2 "In-depth analysis of urban planning strategies towards UA" (Lead: Politecnico di Torino) and is intended for discussion and consultation within the EFUA project Forum. The full results, which include "Guidelines to support city authorities in the integration of UA into public policies and planning tools", will be illustrated in the Deliverable 4.2. "Report on in depth-analysis on UAs role in urban planning". Authors: Cassatella C., Gottero E., Cotella G., Salizzoni E., Pede E., Quaglia S., October 2022.