

PLANNING FOR AND WITH URBAN AND PERI-URBAN AGRICULTURE (UPA)

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

This poster shows some results of the European Forum on Urban Agriculture (EFUA), an ongoing H2020 research project (2020-2024) which aims to unlock UPA potential by improving knowledge, networking, deployment and policies. UPA provides several benefits that concern different dimensions of the urban environment and, if appropriately guided and supported, can contribute considerably to the achievement of the main targets of urban agendas. However, UPA is not yet totally and formally recognised and integrated into land use policies and planning tools. To maximise UPA benefits and support city authorities in the development and integration of UPA into public policies, EFUA proposed these following 9 recommendations:



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



Cities and public bodies should ensure the availability and access for UPA 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 UPA into public parks, etc. Urban land for agricultural use should also be protected through specific zoning limitations.



Creating inventories of existing plots and urban farms, as well as available (public and private) land with potential use for implementing professional UPA and urban gardening - including underutilised, abandoned, marginal and degraded lands, brownfield sites and rooftops - is crucial to support UPA. 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 UPA, including urban farming and how existing urban policies limit the development of UPA.



UPA 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. UPA plans should be coordinated and integrated into land use planning, with other sectoral policies and more comprehensive strategies and plans at city level. Plans should identify different UA types (professional and not professional), define strategies for UPA development, recognizing UPA as a specific (existing or new) zone in the land use designation system.



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.).



The lack of funds and financial instruments are the main factors usually leading to the failure of UPA initiatives. Financial resources include not only subsidies or block grant funds for maintaining and developing existing UPA 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.).



The management and development of UPA facilities and infrastructures, is a key aspect for ensuring success of UPA initiatives. This might include not only the accessibility to specific sites or the normal functioning of UPA 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.



Public bodies should provide information to citizens about UPA initiatives and promote short chains, local agri-food products, sustainable farming practices, and UPA-related recreation activities. Public bodies should be able to manage any potential social and land use conflicts between UPA 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 UPA, for schools, practitioners, urban planners and politicians.



This step includes the evaluation of the effectiveness and outcome of UPA-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 UPA committee.

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This Poster presents an abstract of the Task 4.2 "In-depth analysis of urban planning strategies towards UA" (Lead: Politecnico di Torino) of the European Forum on Urban Agriculture H2020 project. It is intended for discussion and consultation with policy makers. The full results, which include "Guidelines to support city authorities in the integration of UA into public policies and planning tools", are 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.