

Municipal Policy Review: Urban Agriculture in South Africa¹

by

Lood Spies²

September 2000

¹Paper presented to the Cities Feeding People workshop: Lessons learned from projects in African Cities. June 21-25 1998, Nairobi, Kenya.

²Technikon Pretoria, E-mail: posf@mweb.co.za
The author of this paper (and project co-ordinator) is not involved in research on policy review in South Africa. His current research is focused on an educational model for open space utilization. Nevertheless, he has a great interest in promoting the concept of urban agriculture in a broader sense. The role of the co-ordinator can be seen as a catalyst to further stimulate the concept of UA in South Africa and to bring together all players by means of conferences and workshops focused on specific aims.

Abstract

This paper discusses an IDRC project in South Africa which involved a Municipal Policy Review. The paper provides brief background material on the genesis of this project which took the form of an international conference and workshop at Technikon Pretoria in March 1998. The conference on productive open-space management aimed to share information on problems, solutions, networks and urban agriculture; to identify the need for policy guidelines and the roles of players in UA; and to investigate key issues (institutional, environmental, socio-economic, UA practice) where action was needed.

The main part of the paper is a detailed self-assessment of the direct and indirect impacts of the project among the four of the eight impact areas: institutional capacity strengthening, partnerships with other institutions, scientific advances, and results utilization. Throughout this assessment the author shares many of the recommendations put forth by workshop participants who formed four thematic discussion groups based on the key issues listed above. The paper evaluates the present situation in South Africa based on the policy context, which reveals a number of supportive or enabling policy statements, and a review of the potential for involvement of various government departments. The author also includes a needs assessment for UA and discussed the risks connected with a national program strategy. Based on the project results, he proposes a model for government roles and responsibilities in future policy development. The author concludes by praising the conference for creating an opportunity for a comprehensive overview of the issues that affect the practice of UA in South Africa.

Introduction

Background

South Africa's political legacy has left the majority of its population living in urban and peri-urban communities characterized by extremely poor environmental conditions. The concept of urban agriculture (UA) offers real benefits to these communities. Over the past three years, many government departments and organizations have been coming to terms with the new South Africa. Consequently, they are busy developing policies and strategies that reflect the visions expressed in various white papers and that can help redress past imbalances in service delivery.

Many government service providers are still feeling their way through the minefield of procedures and protocols, but as service providers they should first try to understand the issues involved and agree to a division of roles and responsibilities before developing strategies with other stakeholders.

At this stage, there is no common understanding, vision or clarity on roles and responsibilities of the different service providers. Many of them are only now developing strategy and plans to deliver on their respective mandates. For example, confusion has been such that community forestry has only this year started to utilize fruit trees, which were traditionally considered agriculture's preserve. The policy was that community forestry should not be involved in this preserve (Gilliland 1998).

At this moment, there is no clear strategy for UA in South Africa. While certain policy documents suggest possible directions to follow, strategies and plans are isolated initiatives that are generally not integrated with actions of other service providers. The focus on urban open space management should now be directed at disadvantaged communities in order to redress the former imbalances of service provision in South Africa. However, UA activities in urban disadvantaged communities are still very limited.

Motivation for hosting conferences on UA in South Africa

1994 Technikon Pretoria national conference

The evidence in 1994 showed that effective utilization of urban open spaces had not been fully exploited in the apartheid era. South African urban areas were a particular heritage of apartheid, with separate standards for white and non-white areas. The “white” areas had municipal parks and recreation services, with horticultural activities in streets, parks and other public places. In contrast, “black” urban areas had poorly equipped and financed municipal services that provided no more than the absolute minimum. Horticultural development was extremely limited. Informal settlements had no services whatsoever. The lack of capacity in the townships was exacerbated by rural poverty and rural land dispossession, which forced increasing numbers into the townships and informal settlements. Since many townships were regarded as dormitory areas,

there was no sense of ownership and little incentive for residents to improve the environment. In effect, government took limited responsibility for the environment of disadvantaged urban areas.

In order to adopt strategies to effectively redress these important imbalances, the first of two conferences was scheduled at Technikon Pretoria. Delegates were invited from within South Africa. The Department of Environmental Affairs and the Faculty of Environmental Science, Technikon Pretoria, hosted this conference. The process followed during this workshop was one of consultation and consensus.

It became clear during the conference that a steering committee was needed to carry forward the progress made at the conference, and to ensure the integration and greater utilization of the concept of urban agriculture. In this regard, a decision was taken to elect an interim steering committee to maintain momentum and to develop a mechanism to ensure wider participation in advertising the benefits of UA and the particular roles of authorities. The committee began its activities under the name Productive Open Space Forum (POSF), a name that is still in use.

1998 Technikon Pretoria: IDRC international conference

Since 1994, most townships and informal settlements have become part of larger municipalities, many of which have some form of parks and recreation service, but which are limited in capacity. Despite the mandate to provide a service for townships, only limited impact on the ground can be seen after four years. Because of the new political dispensation, several institutions are becoming actively involved in community development and might include UA for these purposes.

Municipalities are the most important service providers with a mandate and responsibility to implement UA developments on public open space. Although service provision in townships is now fully recognized, it has been a slow process to insure that UA issues are included. A major problem is that local authorities often have no trained staff members nor the capacity to implement UA projects. Some initiatives have been started in local municipalities -- notably in Durban, Bloemfontein, Kimberley, Port Elizabeth, and Pretoria -- but in general there has been minimal impact on township UA and little community involvement in any municipal schemes.

Local governments play an important role in safeguarding the environment of areas under their jurisdiction. They have the powers to formulate their own by-laws, which have to be in line with national and regional government policy and guidelines. However, local government is intended to be the driving force for decentralized development planning and implementation. Provincial departments concerned with the environment also have important roles to play since they can provide direct or indirect support services.

South Africa adopted a new constitution whose bill of rights guarantees the right to "secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development." The latter statement suggests the affinity of UA with this bill

of rights.

During this time (May-June 1996), Dr. Luc Mougeot, IDRC, visited South Africa to investigate the exploration of UA in the changing country. This visit assessed:

- a) Follow-up to the Technikon Pretoria & Department of Environmental Affairs Conference on "Potential for Productive Utilisation of Urban Open Space" in South Africa (February 1994); and
- b) National and local policy environment for a UA initiative by IDRC.

Mougeot (1996) identified two important priorities that still need follow up:

1. Assess policy and legal discrepancies concerning future open space utilization; and
2. Institutionalize training courses.

IDRC then decided to sponsor a "Municipal Policy Review" on urban agriculture in South Africa. This project took the form of an international conference, followed directly by a workshop at Technikon Pretoria (March 3-5, 1998). This second conference on UA, the first international UA conference in South Africa supported by IDRC, was again jointly hosted by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) and Technikon Pretoria (TP).

Objectives of conferences on UA developments

National conference

The aim of the February 1994 national conference on the productive utilization of urban open space was:

- to introduce the concepts of UA in a changing South Africa.
- to stimulate an awareness and understanding of the values of UA.
- to consider the contributions UA can make towards community development.

International conference

The March 1998 international conference on productive open space management, with a shared focus on the potential of urban agriculture policy, aimed to:

- share information regarding UA problems and solutions, existing networks, and urban agriculture and Agenda 21.
- identify the need for policy guidelines and the roles of the players in UA.
- investigate key issues (institutional, environmental, socio-economic, UA practice) where action was needed.

Owing to the dynamism of the debate on utilization of open space, there was a need for a participative approach in both conferences. Thus, the central focus was to create an awareness

and understanding of UA and to determine participants' perceptions on various issues related to UA as experienced in South Africa.

The specific focus of the March 1998 conference was the need for policy review in SA. International speakers were requested to contribute to policy considerations on UA that could guide the policy review process in SA. Input was sought from both national and international speakers covering viewpoints on general UA issues. Interactive workshops with input from all participants were held to ensure that viewpoints were also captured from the institutions and players involved with policy and practical implementation issues. Table 1 examines the composition of participants at both conferences.

Table 1. Comparison of participation at 1994 and 1998 conferences

Role	1994 % (n=440)	1998 % (n=230)
Private	21.5	16.5
Municipalities and metropolises	26	35
Government departments	15	25
Educational institutions	15	8.5
Students	10	7
Parastatal and NGO	4.5	2
Media	3	2
Self-governing territories	3	0
Civic and community players	2	4

An analysis of table 1 indicates:

- a decrease in participation from the private sector, which can be attributed to greater community and social benefits of the project rather than financial rewards to participants;
- the increase in municipal and government participation, which resulted from the shift in priorities from the apartheid structures (representing minorities) toward the post-apartheid structures (representing majorities);
- management from governmental institutions viewed this conference as a source of guidance and information and as an opportunity for networking in order to direct their roles and responsibilities;
- the decrease in participation from the parastatals (NGOs) can be attributed to the decrease in their role in the new South Africa, being replaced in these functions by local authorities as the most important players in stimulation of environmental services.

Discussion of areas of impact

The areas of impact, or areas of relevant utilization, can be discussed in the following way:

- areas of impact of which the co-ordinator is aware and that happened as a *direct result* of the project;
- areas of impact that will occur at a later stage through dissemination of information, when players make use of the information gathered. This impact will be seen as an *indirect result* of the project.

Institutional capacity strengthening

Direct impact

Impact in this area was particularly significant. The project allowed temporary staff to gain multiple skills in the administration of an international conference. A computer, printer, fax machine, telephone line, and e-mail account were purchased to allow temporary staff to compile a data base of important players in UA in SA and generally to administer the conference. This equipment is now used by TP to support the Productive Open Space Forum, update UA activities, and facilitate electronic networking among stakeholders both in SA and abroad. The hosting and co-organizing of the conference resulted in TP being widely recognized as a tertiary institution and as a major player in the growth of UA in SA.

The international conference created stronger links between policy making bodies in SA and stronger linkages within local authorities interested in implementing UA in communities.

The availability of specialized literature and the conference proceedings in book form provided researchers and UA practitioners with a wealth of new reading material and knowledge. A better understanding of how existing policies undermine UA and access to information needed for policy formulation can be regarded as a significant contribution to institutional capacity strengthening of specific regional and local authorities.

As a result of the conference's success, the TP expressed its appreciation and asked the Department of Horticulture and Leisure Management to task the co-ordinator of this project to:

- assist the POSF in the promotion and networking of UA;
- investigate the development of a formal course in UA or, as an alternative;
- develop modules on UA that can be included in existing courses such as Open Space and Recreation Management, Health Extension Services, Agricultural Management and Environmental Management.

Another important impact is that TP and the DEAT are now widely used by various local authority officials in an advisory role regarding UA information networking and linking with

other community development programs. Distribution of a summary conference report to all local authorities in SA and other important stakeholders will also improve access to relevant information that could stimulate positive action for UA.

Partnership with other institutions

Direct impact

The presence of prominent South African players in UA on the task committee contributed to the success of the conference since all areas of UA impact were discussed at the planning stage from expert points of view. Their presence also opened up possibilities for collaboration between the team and relevant institutions (e.g. Project Tanzania of GTZ). Similarly, the project created collaboration and partnership with Canada's IDRC and its local office in Johannesburg. These close links during the planning phase resulted in the selection of the international experts. They in turn made a major contribution to policy issues as well as sharing valuable knowledge on UA practices and problems in their specific countries.

Since the first conference in 1994 co-organized by the TP and DEAT, the two institutions work closely together in the promotion of UA. The international conference proved once again the importance of strong partnerships between a tertiary educational institution and a national department that share common ground.

Both conferences opened up avenues for collaboration between TP, relevant national institutions and specific local authorities by means of wide consultation before, during, and after the conference. For example, the coordinator of the project was invited by several local authorities and communities to consult them on practical projects (examples are Middelburg Town Council, Tirelo Sechaba Project, Atteridgeville and Lima u Vune Community Project).

Several government organizations (national, regional, and local) are now in an excellent position to use the information shared during the conference for implementation in policy development and UA program interventions. Local authorities are in a particularly good position to use such information.

One of the most significant results of the conference was the spontaneous offer from a wide variety of important players to serve on the Productive Open Space Forum. The main tasks of this voluntary forum are to establish a networking system, share information regarding the enhancement of UA, and update local and regional activities. This forum will also play a major role in terms of liaison with other structures for co-ordination and to ensure momentum is maintained. The need for such a forum to continue the progress made at the conference discussions became very clear during the conference.

Scientific advances

Direct impact

The fact that this was the first international conference on UA in SA and that it generated important information regarding policy issues and guidelines, UA practice, and the transfer of knowledge can itself be regarded as a scientific advance.

The information contained in the conference proceedings has already been widely used by various academic institutions, students, researchers, government officials, and community leaders. The research findings shared between international and local experts resulted in a more common focus and general viewpoint on UA practice and problems.

Both the conference attendance and the variety of players was impressive. The effective use of the conference to draw attention to a range of issues has since become evident. This issue-based focus can definitely contribute to the stimulation of further research projects. It has also proved that the utilization of research findings on the ground is important.

Evidence presented at the conference about the strong association between UA and food security for communities strengthened the understanding that much work, research, and exploration are needed in order to present policy recommendations to local and senior governments.

The importance of community gardens was explored at the conference when delegates shared experiences regarding community development projects in SA and abroad. The work of the Toronto Food Policy Council and the American Community Garden Association in community gardening stimulated great interest among local and metropolitan councils about the local potential of such projects.

Indirect impact

Delegates formed four parallel breakaway groups with the aim of workshopping suggestions and solutions around the following themes: institutional, environmental, socio-economic, and UA practice. The core aim was to define the participants' perceptions on these issues. Each breakaway group explored a specific issue. The main points that emerged from these group discussions are summarized below.

Institutional group

- Importance of understanding UA covers many different disciplines; clear roles and responsibilities must be established for effective service delivery.
- If little value is put on UA, it will never receive attention or allocation of resources. Restrictive legislation and bureaucratic red tape is still perceived as a limiting factor.

- When local authorities have been committed to UA projects, output has been considerably enhanced.
- New policy is needed to encourage community ownership; develop support systems, and facilitate access to infrastructure, resources, financial support, extension services and training. Existing policies linked to the new political process require revision.
- UA must be stimulated through sponsored programs of action.
- An appropriate national department (Department of Environmental Affairs was proposed), under the leadership of the relevant minister, should investigate the importance of UA and issue guidelines.
- All government white papers should address the promotion and support of UA policy (e.g. Departments of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, Health, Constitutional Development and Local Authorities). National government needs to address a funding policy for UA.
- If UA is to be promoted by local authorities, substantial changes to current policy are needed. Since these policy changes will have important implications, guidelines are also needed.
- Successful implementation of UA policy will also depend on the commitment of local people.
- Policy to improve household food security is seen as a first priority, especially in areas of high population density.
- Cultural aspects and the role of women in UA must be recognized in a policy framework.

Environmental group

- Increasing environmental concern is challenging UA with regard to its ecological and esthetic impact. No one is monitoring the impact on, and interactions among, various activities in urban environments.
- SA has limited agricultural potential, a limitation that also affects UA.
- There is a need for research into environmental health and food security for the poor. A more appropriate term might be "urban food production."
- The lack of focused environmental education and capacity building programs in the environmental field limits general understanding of the variety of environmental opportunities offered, such as UA, and the responsibilities regarding interaction with the environment. There is a need for improved understanding of environmental links to both

formal curricula and informal education (through observation of UA). Activities such as Arbour Week and Environment Week when children can participate in agricultural activities and project development need to be expanded to include a UA Week.

- Communities that use open space for UA purposes need to be actively involved in decision making processes.
- Quality and quantity of open space in urban environments needs to be protected by good management principles.
- UA can teach people the meaning of sustainability. It can also cultivate a sense of responsibility toward the environment and, specifically, toward the value of open space in urban areas.

Socio-economic group

- Food security is a fundamental element of basic human rights. Food security programs should receive more attention in South Africa. Food security and food production must be a key element of any UA program and targets should be set. UA can ensure stable food supply and keeps food prices low, thus enabling the poor to have access to nutritious, fresh food.
- For UA projects to be economically successful, the overall benefit to the participant gardeners and their community must be greater than the costs incurred.
- UA creates many opportunities to earn an income and to access needed resources such as food. However, inadequate access to resources such as land, finance, water, and technical support should be addressed. In addition, a safer environment for UA projects should be created since local crime hinders promotion of these projects.
- The relatively strong economy in SA means that UA is not yet regarded as an important community development tool.
- Spontaneous UA is occurring in smaller towns, which is an indication of the levels of poverty already being experienced in rural areas.
- Guided UA projects supported by local policies can address unemployment and poverty issues in urban areas. UA projects would draw unused skilled labour back into production. UA also contributes to value adding activities.
- Street food vendors can depend on self-production for their enterprises.
- There is a need to understand the enthusiasm and aspirations of people involved in UA, and community leaders and organizations need to be challenged regarding the potential of UA. Democratic leadership structures to support UA are required.

Urban agriculture practice group

- Development and implementation of a UA program must be based on better understanding of community needs, institutional roles and capacities, and the correct practice for support service delivery. This understanding should include the benefits of UA, inhibiting and stimulating factors, an agreed strategy for development, budgets that provide for project development, and the inclusion of UA into local development plans.
- Access, availability, and quality of land are the most critical issues.
- UA projects fail owing to the lack of policy and practice guidelines.
- Lack of commitment among local authorities and communities can contribute to the non-existence of UA initiatives in towns and cities. Technical support and capacity building is often inadequate at the local authority and community level.
- Participative management structures and processes to stimulate UA are lacking among local authorities.
- The lack of research data, networking processes, and examples of case studies to support local authorities should be urgently addressed. Limited know-how and insufficient education and training of field workers are also perceived as limiting factors.

Result utilization

Direct impact

The conference contributed to a better understanding of the importance of UA among city authorities. Senior officials of local authorities and government now see the positive aspects of productive open space utilization -- it provides food, income, and informal employment. But sound policy statements and initiatives are not yet in place to support local action. Some officials tend not to commit themselves without a legal framework to support UA development. The consensus opinion was that the legal status of UA can only be changed through implementation of a national policy strategy. Nonetheless, Middelburg Town Council proved that a local authority committed to support UA at the community level is more important than legislation by itself.

As a result of material presented at the conference, a researcher at the national Department of Agriculture is adapting his research in order to focus on newly available information concerning UA and related developments.

Indirect impact

A. Issues identified needing attention

Conferences delegates proposed that the initiative should be taken further by acting upon the following proposals.

1. It is proposed that the national Department of Constitutional Development and Local Government, together with the Departments of Agriculture and Land Affairs, develop a broad policy statement designating local government as implementing agent. Detailed policy matters and strategies should then be developed and applied by local governments.
2. All action steps should be as inclusive as possible. There should be appropriate consultations with people participating in UA. A comprehensive needs-assessment is required, which should be community driven and cover both human and environmental aspects.
3. The development of end-user support systems such as capacity-building, sustainable programs, provision of extension services, technology, and training must be a high priority.
4. Since land is a vital resource for UA practices, there is a need for land identification and zoning, using proper criteria and recording data on constraints, potential availability, and ownership.
5. A proper policy for the productive utilization of open space is urgently needed. Such a policy should be sensitive to associated fields such as health, the environment, and sustainability. A review of current policies and legislation is seen as part of the process.
6. Funding sources to take this initiative further need to be identified. Budgets for promoting UA at all levels of government can make a difference. Urban agriculture should be properly recognized as a priority, not as a “leftover.” Lobbying of different organizations to promote UA in urban planning and development should be implemented.
7. Selected local governments should set an example by implementing the principle of productive open space planning in order to develop UA expertise in other local governments.
8. Existing knowledge and information should be identified, published, and disseminated. Past and present projects should be included in this initiative. A communication network could be developed out of the existing initiatives from this conference.
9. The issues identified during this conference can serve as guidelines to players for further actions and evaluation. The policy guidelines contained in this document should form a basis for such guidelines at relevant government levels.

10. The proposed web page is needed for enhancing and extending the international liaison established at this conference. Exchange of information should be stimulated. The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) is the most suitable agency to drive the process and operate the proposed web site.

B. Recommendations by delegates regarding policy issues

Policy recommendations emerged from the delegates as written proposals to the organizing committee. The importance of creating a legislative and policy environment conducive to UA became clear. In this regard, the following recommendations were made:

1. Red tape and restrictive legislation must be diminished for progress toward democratic principles to occur.
2. Appropriate legislation and government policies are needed to achieve better utilization of sustainable resources.
3. Policy should follow a consultative process, creating flexibility and adaptability. Policy should address issues such as: food security; land (access and tenure of); water and other resources; funding (capital and cash flow); standards (environmental, UA practice); education and training; extension services; open space land use, development and planning; socio-economic development; access to resources; and transfer of technology and skills.
4. Policies should promote an improved environment that ensures a better quality of life for all.
5. Strategies adopted by line departments and local and provincial departments should lead to the best possible outcomes. In the past, by-laws did not help the majority at the household level to meet basic food needs. The challenge for the transformed local authorities is to adapt their by-laws to make provision for UA practice in open space areas.
6. There is a need for a comprehensive policy framework for urban areas that includes UA practices in SA. Such a policy framework must address: uses and zoning of open space areas; fiscal and administrative procedures; and mixed land uses so that individuals can contribute to community development. Such a policy framework must also address strategies to promote the potential use of vacant space for UA, promote planning for food security and the well-being of communities, stimulate jobs and reduce poverty, and set guidelines for the utilization of urban open spaces to benefit all members of a community.
7. Traditional philosophies about the management of public open space at the local level must be “re-thought.” In this regard, the broad range of agricultural activities for which open spaces can be utilized (indicated in Table 2) was recommended by the working group as a framework for future open space planning.

Table 2. Potential urban requirements fulfilled by an open space system
(Agricultural and related functions are in italics)

Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Production of staples, protein, fruit and vegetables, herbs and spices</i> • <i>Stockfeed and forage</i> • <i>Security of production of agricultural land</i> • <i>Commercial and supplementary household production is required</i>
Other Agricultural Enterprises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Other income generating produce, for farm and informal requirements, such as cut flowers, instant turf, timber, honey, colorants, flavorants, essential oils, confectionery end use, pharmaceutical end use</i> • <i>Nursery production</i> • <i>Crafts materials (e.g. palm seeds – Ilala)</i>
Water production for Irrigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Recreational activities</i> • <i>Aqua culture</i> • Water for other productive enterprises (e.g. feedlots, block-making)
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision for major transmission lines •
Health	<p><i>Woodlots and timber wastes for fuel wood</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention of hazards such as flooding, air and water pollution, effective disposal of sewage, solid wastes and stormwater, slope stabilization and the prevention of erosion • Health extension (e.g. nutrition and hygiene) • <i>Production of traditional medicines</i>
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Formal and informal education, including provision of school playing fields, school gardening projects, school tree nurseries and care, environmental education and nature trails</i> • <i>Extension services related to agricultural horticultural and forestry products (e.g. demonstration plots)</i>
Recreation and Community Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active and passive recreation such as sport fields, water activities, <i>contact with nature</i>, manmade landscape areas • Venues for outdoor community activities (<i>communal vegetable gardens</i>) • Associated tourism possibilities
Building Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Timber for poles and fencing</i> • Concrete blocks • Building sand and stone
Transport Routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary collector roads (<i>use of verges</i>)
Conservation and Aesthetic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecological balance and sustainability of natural systems • Rehabilitation and expansion of natural features, such as <i>indigenous forests for medical purposes</i> • <i>Visual and physical contact with nature</i> •
	Conservation of fauna, flora and historic values

For successful implementation of open space design, and meaningful community development, commitment to the concept by the community is imperative. Open land used only for parks and sport fields should also include UA as a component of open space land use in future planning.

Forms of UA found in South Africa that can be enhanced by means of extension services and education are home gardens, self-initiated UA practices, and community projects (sponsorship driven, supported by local authorities, tertiary institutions, or NGOs).

As water distribution becomes more freely available, home gardens are expected to play an important role in disadvantaged communities and help to address poverty. Home gardens will also meet their substantial needs with limited investment and planning requirements from the public sector. However, home gardens will have limited implementation in the broader functioning of a UA policy. Therefore, preparation of policy must take into account all categories of UA practices.

C. Recommendations by the international team for urban agriculture policy

Recognition of UA as an important activity in urban systems

- Policy for UA fits within other policy initiatives concerning environment, land, gender, and food security.

Implementation

- Policy must include local institutions and stakeholders in a participatory, societal process.
- Community-based organizations must be recognized, encouraged, supported and linked to the system of urban governance.
- The participative open space management model (as proposed in Spies 1998) is recommended as an appropriate tool to stimulate implementation.

Land tenure

- Land security should be guaranteed for UA practitioners. That is, land for UA should be zoned and given community title to ensure that open space and public land remains in the public domain under community control.
- Temporary tenure should be secured for land earmarked for future development. Before any development occurs on such land, there should be appropriate notice given to practitioners.
- Farming of vacant land owned by private individuals or institutions could be practiced on a contractual basis.
- Peri-urban land should be bought to extend land to traditional owners. Prime agricultural land should not be built on (Ref Habitat 2). Guidelines are needed to conserve prime land for UA. High rise construction can be promoted where appropriate to release such land for UA.

Food Security

- Policy must focus on households, their entitlement to land and food, with equity (including gender equity) as a principle.
- Policy must address the food security needs of those urban poor who are also the urban landless residing in informal settlements.

Gender

- A gendered UA policy should aim to protect women's rights to farm, to feed their families, and transform their role from subsistence work to economic empowerment.
- Women are a specific target group due to their lack of land rights relative to men. They need to be addressed in policy as household heads but also as farmers in other households.

New urban technologies

- Policy needs to facilitate new urban technologies that are ecologically sound and improve health and nutrition. These include urban livestock farming systems that promote nutrient cycling; solid and human waste management systems that conserve water and utilize nutrient cycles; solid waste composting and recycling of biodegradable household and other wastes; utilization of surface water run-off; human waste technologies based on low water use, local treatment and productive-use (e.g. neighborhood and household systems incorporating aquaculture); and tree production for food, microclimate control, beautification, and hazard control.

Regulation

- Policy needs to generate appropriate regulatory systems for UA that assist local authorities to apply UA principles and minimize problems of competing land use and land conflicts.

Supports

- Policy guidelines are needed to develop appropriate support systems and infrastructure for UA. These include extension services, marketing facilities, water and other resource inputs, financing, training and education.
- There should be monitoring and evaluation of effective support systems through action research with urban farmers.
- A participatory process of policy development should be established in this area.

Evaluation of present situation in South Africa

It is important to note that policy change in SA did not emerge from research but from the political change process. The project co-ordinator consulted with a broad range of governmental institutions. As a result, a variety of documentation was made available before and during the conferences. The following represents a synopsis of this documentation.

Policy context

Many national policy statements and white papers could have a major impact on UA and urban forestry. But the visions expressed in the white papers have to be translated into a series of tangible actions.

Constitution of South Africa (Act 108 1996)

Guarantees every citizen a safe and healthy environment.

White Paper on Sustainable Forestry Development

Makes no specific reference to UA or urban forestry other than a reference to peri-urban and urban environments. This omission is probably due to the historical focus of community forestry in rural environments. It does state that there is an advocacy role for the government in encouraging tree planting and for trees to be part of development plans.

White Paper on Transformation of the Public Service

States that there must be a transformation of service provision to meet basic needs and to redress past imbalances in service delivery.

Development Facilitation Act

Requires municipalities to formulate land development objectives and, under the Local Government Transition Act, to formulate integrated development plans.

Rural development strategy within the Reconstruction and Development Program

Recognizes forestry as an important natural resource that can play a major role in improving living environments and economic opportunities.

White Paper on a National Water Policy for South Africa

Requires that water resources be allocated, after account is taken of the water reserve, on the basis of optimum use.

White Paper on Rural Development

Refers to the present situation of poverty and inequality of services with reference to a future of dignity, growth and prosperity. Recognizes and develops the role of local government in determining needs, setting priorities, and co-ordinating services.

White Paper on Agriculture

Refers specifically to UA, its environmental effects, the need for coherent planning and the need for technical and financial support to the resource poor. "The Department of Agriculture is in the process of defining a policy and UA will be one of the areas which will require further elaboration and thought." (Mbuli 1998).

White Paper on Environmental Management for South Africa

Recognizes the interrelationship between environmental degradation and poverty.

Energy White Paper

Indicates that fuel wood will remain a major source of energy for many rural households. It commits government to facilitate sustainable production through a national community forestry program.

Land Reform Program

Aims to improve access to land and security of tenure. This reform program also includes farm property belonging to local authorities.

White Paper on the Conservation and Sustainable use of Biological Diversity

Identifies, as a national priority, the necessity for sustainable use of biological resources.

In addition to the documents noted above, the international papers on policy delivered at Technikon Pretoria's two UA conferences recognized the need for integrated, participatory service provision to redress failings in service delivery. They also stressed the importance of the environment in urban development and the benefits that UA can provide. They did not indicate what roles and responsibilities different government institutions should assume, but emphasized local authorities as the most important players.

Government Departments

Government departments that are currently involved or may become involved in community UA projects include: Water Affairs and Forestry, Agriculture (ARC), Land Affairs, Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Health, and Education.

The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, through the Chief Directorate of Forestry, is currently taking the lead in community forestry support services. Departments such as Housing, Agriculture, Health, and Environmental Affairs can play important roles in the creation of policy and strategy that is conducive to the development of UA.

Other stakeholders

Non-governmental and community-based organizations

Arising from increased environmental awareness, NGOs, CBOs, school groups and community groups have been formed to improve local urban environments. NGOs such as Trees for Africa, Abilimi Bezakhaya, Permaculture, Wildlife Society, Ecolink Peace Garden Foundation and Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens (with the Outreach Greening Programme) are active in producing training and support information, fund raising, and project implementation. NGOs are an important catalyst for UA, particularly in initiating and supporting community initiatives.

Private sector

Corporate involvement has increased with growing interest among major companies (e.g. Total, Sasol, Nestle, Nedbank, May-Ford Seeds, Gencor) in sponsoring projects that focus on environmental awareness. The corporate sector and local business have an important role since they own or control large areas of land at urban factory and business sites.

International donors

Apart from some support for NGOs to stimulate UA, there is limited international support for UA projects. However, there are indications that international donors would like to become more involved, depending on the policies related to UA that emerge from the relevant government departments. IDRC supported the Technikon of Pretoria by co-hosting the International Conference of March 1998. Other donors such as GTZ Germany and ETC Netherlands also show keen interest in becoming involved in future UA actions.

Individuals

Among individuals, there is a more positive attitude to environmental issues and greater awareness of community projects as a result of such activities as school UA projects and Arbour Day activities. Other factors such as house ownership, higher income, stable employment and financial support from the local authorities have also helped encourage change.

Enabling support

Supportive legislation

Appropriate legislation is necessary to enable urban agriculture to develop and to support urban agricultural initiatives.

Awareness and understanding

Activities such as conferences, workshops, networking, and dissemination of information and research results can heighten awareness about the role of urban agriculture for both municipalities and individuals. This should lead to greater demand for UA project support and for service provision through sound policy and regulations.

Needs assessment for UA

More than ever before, South Africa requires leadership to create an effective, integrated national program for UA development. Without leadership, actions will result in only limited development of urban agriculture with little integration among national, regional, and local governments and communities. An effective program would need to identify roles and responsibilities for potential service providers at national, provincial, and local levels. Strategic actions would have to focus on implementation of a UA program based on a better understanding of needs, institutional roles, capacities, and best practice for support service delivery.

What is required?

An examination of the perceptions of players in UA and an assessment of the international speakers' papers and experiences points to three main components for the effective development of urban agriculture:

A supportive policy framework

Such a framework must deal with the roles and responsibilities of the service providers and the strategies to realize and support these roles.

Institutional capacity building

Capacity to undertake UA in disadvantaged areas is limited and will need to address seed money, training and education, local participation, and participative planning, management, and maintenance of pilot projects. This capacity will primarily involve local municipalities.

Establishment of enabling conditions

The goal here is to provide a supportive legal basis for urban agriculture, particularly with regard to land zoning and community ownership. Information is required to enable individuals and local government to make informed decisions regarding urban agriculture.

However, South Africa lacks access to information regarding all aspects of urban agriculture, which may inhibit development of the components identified above. This suggests that there is a need to organize the information available and disseminate it in ways that reach stakeholders even at the grass roots.

What risks are connected to a national program strategy?

If the lessons learned from international experience are recognized and national policy is adhered to, then risks can be minimized. The principle risks are:

- no demand for urban agriculture from certain urban population groups;
- failure to attract necessary support from regional government departments and municipalities;
- lack of integration by municipalities of urban agriculture into urban development planning;
- no community participation or consultation, resulting in a top-down delivery service; and
- no support for community-driven initiatives.

What is crucial for this project?

The pressures of the present political environment do not favour constructive policy review. Therefore, the timing of the Technikon Pretoria conferences on UA was crucial in contributing positively toward policy development. If it had not been for these conferences, UA would not even be on the agenda for discussion and development at the local level. The conference made a significant contribution to national awareness of the possibilities of a UA policy supportive of community development initiatives. But it is a pity that the vision of some government white papers is not reflected in current draft policy documents. For example, the white papers on sustainable forest development and on agriculture both recognized the importance of urban greening in improving the urban environment and economy. Yet the new Forestry Act makes no mention at all of urban forestry, a glaring omission (Edwards 1998).

Thus, South Africa needs more aggressive dissemination of information that can stimulate UA at all levels. There is also a need for more active and specialized research programs focussed on basic technology development.

Long-term sustainability of the TP project for UA could be jeopardized should the current co-ordinator leave his position. If the DEAT did not have the resources to replace the co-ordinator, the momentum of the project would be lost. In today's political and business climate, this is a matter that requires urgent attention. In this regard, the co-ordinator has already secured commitment from the TP management for the institution of a centre for service delivery within the Department of Horticulture and Leisure Management.

Strategic issues

The following issues need to be addressed by the Productive Open Space Forum (POSF):

- The establishment of regional POSFs whose co-ordinators would serve on the executive of POSF. TP should co-ordinate and facilitate this process and make its office available for the daily functioning of the national POSF service.
- A regional lobbying effort to stimulate UA activities by means of a participative process. The accent must be on local authorities.
- Sharing of the model for policy development (see Table 3) and assessment of policies, rules, and regulations that require reform to accommodate utilization and management of urban open space. Research in this regard needs to be stimulated by the POSF.
- Maintenance and further development of a database by means of a web site for POSF.

Table 3. Proposed government roles in holistic approach to policy development

	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>PREPARATION OF POLICY</p> <p>Central Government Department: Education Agriculture Health Environmental affairs and tourism Constitutional Development.</p> <p>Regional Government: Agriculture Housing & Local Government Education Health</p> <p>Local Authorities: Councils & Metropolises</p>	<p>Assess the merit of promoting UA considering the benefits and investment</p> <p>Consult with major actors interested in the development of policy related to urban areas /nutrition</p> <p>Consult with major actors interested in the development of policy related to urban areas / nutrition / agriculture / horticulture</p> <p>Prepare national policy guidelines (vision of White papers for adoption by responsible departments to facilitate the implementation of urban agriculture. The most important spheres in which the guidelines are needed will relate to: Planning Access to resources (especially land) Access to support services Promotion/public participation</p> <p>Provide guidelines for the preparation of policy/strategies at the following scales: Structure plans Viability studies Detailed design Implementation</p> <p>Identify areas where further research is necessary</p>
<p>STRUCTURE PLANS (For urban open areas)</p> <p>Regional Government: Provincial Departments Regional offices of Central Government Departments</p> <p>Local scale: Local authorities Local community groups</p>	<p>Consult with role players to streamline and co-ordinate efforts</p> <p>Assess the potential role of UA as a policy to be promoted within urban environments (or components thereof)</p> <p>Develop food security and entrepreneurial development programmes</p> <p>Develop UA strategy - align internal structures, budgets and staff training</p> <p>Identify and review - existing projects and disseminate information on UA to communities</p>

	RESPONSIBILITY
VIABILITY STUDIES/and DETAILED DESIGN (Project specific) Regional government (as above) where necessary as a facilitator to stimulate Local Government. Local scale: Local Committees Local authorities Consultants (Planners, Agriculture, horticulture expert's) NGO's	Assess level of community interest Assess economic viability Assess broader developmental impact Assess availability of resources e.g. land, extension funding, etc. Through a consultation process, decide on the viability of project
IMPLEMENTATION (Project specific) Regional Government , as above (where necessary as a facilitator). Local scale: Local Authorities e.g. Dept of Health, Technikon's University etc. NGO's Private sector	Facilitating training, education and support Facilitating access to land Facilitating access to inputs e.g. seed, fertiliser, etc. Provision of ongoing support services e.g. extensions, guidance, workshops re marketing, etc. Promotion of UA and ongoing organisational development.

- Development of a demonstration project in SA (with local partners and international donor organizations) to be used for training, demonstrations and active research. TP would lead this activity, in close collaboration with POSF.
- Organization of practical and educational UA workshops on a regional basis.
- Organization of a follow up international workshop in 2001.

Conclusion

“Past policies stressed food self-sufficiency, and whilst this was appropriate for a country picture, in as far as the past government was concerned, it fell far short of actually meeting the basic food needs of people in the country at the house-hold level.” (Mbuli 1998).

Policy is not static – it must respond to changing circumstances and needs and be constantly updated. The international conference on UA created an opportunity for a comprehensive overview of issues that affect the practice of UA and paves the way for addressing the challenge. The issues and guidelines set out in this report as they emerged from the 1998 conference can influence policy formulation for UA in SA.

The municipal policy review project represents a milestone in the development of guidelines for such a policy review process in South Africa. It contributes not only toward discussions on the importance of policies to support UA projects, but also further increases awareness and understanding of the importance of UA as a source of food production for the urban poor. The success of implementation of such a program lies in the institutionalization of the project.

Institutions that can deliver community UA services do exist. However, they lack co-ordination at the national, provincial, and local level as well as information about the planning and implementation of UA programs. Roles and responsibilities have yet to be defined. The co-ordinator of this project proposes the following model (see Table 3) as one that can be used for further policy development purposes. This model has been adapted from a table presented by the Department of Environmental Affairs during preparations for the first conference in 1994.

References

- Edwards, M. 1998. Trees for Africa. Forestry for a Small Planet. Winter (31).
- Gilliland, J. 1998. Consultant to Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, Community Forestry Branch. Personal communication.
- Mbuli, B.N. 1998. Opening Remarks to the International Conference on Productive Open Space Management, March, Technikon Pretoria. Pretoria. Department of Horticulture.
- Mougeot, L. 1996. Senior Program Specialist, International Development Research Centre, Ottawa. Personal communication.
- Natal Provincial Administration. 1989. Open space design for the Greater Mariannhill Structure.
- Republic of South Africa. 1994. Land reform programme. Department of Land Affairs. Government Printer, Pretoria.
- _____ 1994. National forestry action programme. Department of Water Affairs and Forestry. Government Printer, Pretoria.
- _____ 1995. White paper on agriculture. Government Printer, Pretoria.
- _____ 1996. Constitution of South Africa act 108 of 1996. Government Printer, Pretoria.
- _____ 1997. White paper on conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. Government Printer, Pretoria.
- _____ 1997. White Paper on environmental management for South Africa. Government Printer, Pretoria.
- _____ 1997. White Paper on national water policy. Government Printer, Pretoria.
- _____ 1997. White Paper on sustainable forestry development. Government Printer, Pretoria.
- _____ 1997. White Paper on transformation of the public services. Government Printer, Pretoria.
- _____ 1997. Discussion paper for workshop on urban greening. Council for Scientific and Industrial Research. Department of Water Affairs and Forestry. Government Printer, Pretoria.
- Spies, L. 1998. Participative management model for open space projects. Paper presented at International Conference on Productive Open Space Management, March 1998, Pretoria. Department of Horticulture.
- Technikon Pretoria. 1994. Proceedings of Conference on the Productive Utilisation of Urban Open Space, February 1994, Pretoria. Department of Horticulture.
- _____ 1998. Proceedings of International Conference on Productive Open Space Management, March

1998, Pretoria. Department of Horticulture.