



CATALYTIC INNOVATIONS IN AFRICAN AGRICULTURE CENTENNIAL SERIES

# URBAN FARMING

URBAN AGRICULTURE ORDINANCES ■ UGANDA

The Catalytic Innovations in African Agriculture Centennial Series was developed as part of The Rockefeller Foundation's Centennial publications. The Rockefeller Foundation, as an institution with a long history in agricultural innovation, commissioned this series to highlight promising developments in African agriculture, agricultural markets, and value chains on the continent. The projects and programs featured were selected from a review of nearly 150 such initiatives based on criteria that included a focus on smallholder farmers.

**THE ISSUE** City governments across the developing world are challenged to eradicate urban poverty, improve food security, and enhance the urban environment. Urban agriculture is a potential source of income and security, but can also spark a series of local problems. Roaming livestock causes traffic jams and can spread disease. Farmers often raise crops and graze animals on roadways and vulnerable wetlands—leading residents to complain that urban farming practices are a nuisance. However, as more understanding emerges of the important role farming plays in local food security, governments face the challenge of balancing farming and

nonfarming interests. These issues are prominent in the rapidly expanding city of Kampala, Uganda, as surrounding communities incorporate into city limits. Historically, the national government was hostile toward urban farming, imposing harsh penalties—including jail time and the confiscation of livestock.

**THE INNOVATIVE RESPONSE** In recent years, Kampala has taken advantage of new devolution laws to pass five ordinances regulating city farming and establishing guidelines for its commercial practices. The ordinances address livestock nuisance, designate lands for crop raising and grazing, and establish best sanitary practices.



The Catalytic Innovations in African Agriculture Centennial Series recognizes innovations across the continent and includes projects not funded by The Rockefeller Foundation.



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## PROJECT BACKGROUND

### THE STAKEHOLDERS

Throughout the early 2000s, a coalition of civil society groups, researchers, and sympathetic city leaders in Kampala lobbied for the legalization of urban agriculture to address food security, income, and environmental issues. These efforts culminated with passage of five urban agriculture ordinances in 2005. The main driver of reform was the Kampala Urban Food Security, Agriculture and Livestock Committee (KUFSALC). In particular, George Nasinyama, a professor at Makerere University, was, and remains, a leading advocate and organizer. Other important actors included the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), which established a broad initiative on urban and periurban agriculture through its Urban Harvest program. In addition to Dr. Nasinyama, researchers Dr. Diana Lee Smith and Professor Nancy Karanja of Urban Harvest were actively involved in writing the ordinances.

**The goal ... is to recognize food security as an integral aspect of urban planning and management in a rapidly growing city.**

### OVERVIEW

The Kampala urban agriculture ordinances establish regulations for the commercial growing, handling, and distribution of plants, fish, and livestock within Kampala. Under the ordinances, urban farmers wishing to sell their goods must obtain a permit and allow an agricultural extension agent to inspect their operations to ensure proper practices are followed. Though not as severe as prior national sanctions, noncompliance with the ordinances can lead to farmers losing their licenses, being fined, or being required to perform community service.

### GOALS

The goal of the ordinances is to recognize food security as an integral aspect of urban planning and management in a rapidly growing city. More than 50 percent of households practice some form of urban agriculture in Kampala, and women head 70 percent of them. In terms of food security, an early study found that children in low-income households practicing urban farming had a malnutrition rate of 20.7 percent, compared with 61.5 percent in low-income, urban households that do not practice farming. Supporters sought to promote the health, income, and nutritional advantages of urban farming through a legalized regime that not only regulates, but utilizes extension officers to share best practices for healthier animals and more bountiful crops. Likewise, supporters aimed to address quality-of-life issues for Kampala's residents. Toward this end, the ordinances ensure livestock does not clog traffic, and hold farmers responsible for unsanitary conditions that may spread disease and create odors. Further, the ordinances prohibit farming and grazing on designated greenways, public lands, and vulnerable wetlands. Another goal of legalizing urban agriculture in Kampala was to allow the government to account for all urban agricultural activities in the city. This would make it easy for extension agents to monitor farming practices, and for the city to efficiently collect any taxes derived from commercial farming practices.

## WHAT IS INNOVATIVE ABOUT THIS PROJECT?

### GOVERNMENTAL EMBRACE

The Kampala urban agriculture ordinances are among the first instances of a policy response to urban farming practices by a municipal government in sub-Saharan Africa. By moving from treating urban farming as a nuisance to understanding its importance for food security and income generation for poor people, the ordinances represent an important perspective change by a national and municipal government.





## PROACTIVE SUPPORT TO ENCOURAGE URBAN FARMING

The Ugandan government's approach to urban agriculture does not only focus on regulation—it also promotes urban farming practices. Since 2001, the national government has promoted farming in Uganda's rural areas through the largely donor-funded National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS). NAADS is a vehicle to transfer funds from the central government to impoverished farmers. The funds are used to purchase agricultural inputs and generate commercial farming activities.

Last year, NAADS expanded to assist urban farmers in Kampala. For instance, in July NAADS allocated 870,000 Ugandan shillings (US\$340) to a woman in a periurban community to enter into poultry farming. The subsidy paid for 200 chicks, feed, and supplies. The farmer raises the chicks until they are 4 months old and then sells them to restaurants. This farmer is beginning her third cycle and has increased production to 500 chicks. She plans to increase to 1,000 in the next cycle. Similarly, the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA, the legal entity charged by the Ugandan Parliament to administer Kampala) will begin a program that supports pig farming by supplying pigs. The goal of the KCCA program is to source high-quality piglets and sell them at a subsidized, affordable price to city residents interested in pig farming.

## RESEARCH-DRIVEN POLICYMAKING THAT LEVERAGES A CHANGING POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

The passage of Kampala's urban agriculture ordinances was the result of the confluence of academic research, committed local and international nongovernmental organizations, sympathetic government officials, and an advantageous political climate.

Two political shifts enabled the ordinances to become viable. First, decentralization by the Ugandan Parliament devolved lawmaking to the city level, thereby making politicians accountable to municipal voters. Second, poverty reduction became the policy imperative of both national and local government. Toward this end, politicians were eager to support practices enhancing poor people's livelihoods. Still, many remained hostile to urban agriculture because of perceived nuisances and public health risks. Further research swayed them by suggesting the role city farming plays in food security and income resilience. Researchers also presented both socioeconomic and technical evidence, thereby demonstrating to city leaders both the rationale for a legal framework and the technical know-how for its implementation.

**ABOVE:** Small motorcycles dart everywhere around Kampala, delivering people and goods—even those as fragile as this stack of eggs.

**COVER:** In Kampala, Uganda, bicycles serve as more than just transportation for people. This man is using his to make a delivery of bananas.



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## THE FUTURE: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

### OPPORTUNITIES

**AFRICAN LEADERSHIP** The widespread and diverse practices of urban agriculture in Kampala offer important lessons not only for Africa, but for the rest of the world. In the US, for example, the demand for farmers markets and locally sourced, safe food is increasing. There is a vibrant and growing movement to increase urban agriculture—symbolized in the eyes of many by US first lady Michelle Obama's urban garden at the White House.

This is an area of agriculture where Africa could provide remarkable leadership. Because widespread industrial agriculture is not commonplace in most of Africa, the continent has the opportunity to “get it right” if investments are made in agriculture and urban planning. City dwellers in North America and Europe could well be turning their attention to cities like Kampala as they imagine their futures.

**EMPOWERING WOMEN** In Kampala, farmers are using innovative techniques in small areas to meet food security demands and turn small-scale agriculture into an income and livelihood strategy. Women are especially empowered by urban agriculture. Through entrepreneurship, women are growing crops and raising livestock for sale at market. The profits are used to pay for school fees, and they provide economic independence to women. A 2003 study confirmed that women make up the vast majority of urban farmers, and that female-headed households were more food secure than male-headed households.

### CHALLENGES

**PUBLIC EDUCATION** In practice, urban agriculture—even in Kampala—has not had much impact yet. The KCCA replaced the former Kampala City Council as Kampala's governing body in 2011. This shift changed Kampala's governance from a local body to an entity under the national government. This transition has undermined the effectiveness and potential of a legalized urban agriculture regime in Kampala. For instance, the KCCA has done little to educate the public about the ordinances. When asked, many people report that the ordinances sound like a good idea, but they lacked any depth of knowledge about them.

**TRANSPARENCY** The ordinances under the KCCA also suffer from transparency issues. It is difficult to get a copy of the ordinances from officials or the internet, and obtaining copies from the KCCA entails a fee.

**CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT** When the KCCA became empowered, many of the officials with intimate knowledge of Kampala's urban agricultural needs were dismissed. The KCCA has yet to fill those positions. Urban agriculture proponents now face an important challenge: to re-engage civil society and pressure the KCCA to fulfill the mandate established by the ordinances under the previous government authority.

**FARMER REGISTRATION** Not surprisingly, few commercial urban farmers are registered with the city. In addition to poor public education about the permit process, farmers must pay a permitting fee, which may deter registration. In terms of enforcement and farmer interaction, the city is extremely underresourced. Because there are so few agricultural extension agents compared with the number of city farmers, accounting, training, and regulation are nearly impossible.

In short, Kampala's ordinances hold out the possibility of transformative change, but—thus far—not enough has been done to create an environment that nurtures this innovation.



**ABOVE:** In their own small sacks of earth, seedlings in a school garden in Kampala reach for the sun. **LEFT:** Students at the Kimera Road Nursery & Primary School in Kampala learn the art of getting things to grow in an urban environment. Water is key.



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the land we have.**

**HARRIET NAKABAALÉ  
KAMPALA, UGANDA**





# PROFILE: HARRIET NAKABAALÉ

At Camp Green, Harriet Nakabaale shares details on how to turn city yards into gardens that can feed families.

Fifty feet by 32 feet: as far as farms go, that's probably one of the smallest in the world. But that hasn't stopped Harriet Nakabaale from turning her hard-packed chunk of Kampala into something of a miracle. In a city where overcrowding chokes many neighborhoods and nothing, it seems, can grow in them, Nakabaale's Camp Green is like a beacon. It bursts with living things, all of them edible—an important survival tactic in an urban area where the high cost of buying food can saddle a family with relentless poverty.

Here are pomegranates and strawberries, eggplants and cauliflowers. There are the herbs: rosemary, lavender, thyme. Leafy greens mix with root vegetables. And here? Chickens, turkeys, guinea fowl, and geese.

What makes all of this possible?

Passion, water, and a work ethic that keeps Nakabaale, a single mother of two children, busy every minute of the day.

"There is time for everything," she says simply. "Whenever you waste time you are losing money."

## Lifelong habits

But drive is just one part of Nakabaale's makeup. Her urge to coax green from the earth goes back to her childhood in the village of Kasaka, about 80 kilometers from here. The youngest of 12 children, Nakabaale says growing things has always been a way of life for her—a habit that too many people have forgotten or never acquired.

"In Africa, we get hungry because we don't know what to do with the soil we have, the land we have," says Nakabaale. "It's very important to people in urban areas to use the small space they have. If they use it profitably, it would help you cut the cost of living in town, which is very high. If you don't cut costs, you'll always buy and be poor forever."

It was the prohibitive price of medicine to treat the sickle cell anemia of her late daughter that prompted Nakabaale, years ago, to try her hand at growing herbs in

the city as an alternative treatment. Today, at Camp Green, as she has dubbed her vibrant enterprise, Nakabaale's mission is to share the vast knowledge she has accumulated on urban agriculture. Though her own formal education ended early, Nakabaale hosts visitors from divisions across the city, not the least of whom are professors and students from Makerere University, Uganda's largest institution of higher education. Her dream is to one day buy a 10-acre plot and establish a large demonstration farm.

## A philosophy of recycling

In 2012, *New Vision*, Uganda's government-owned daily newspaper, gave Nakabaale the woman achiever award for the year, citing her exemplary service to the community through ensuring food security. Her philosophy is to reuse everything: the rainwater that flows from her rooftops into big tanks, plastic bottles that become planters, organic wastes—like banana peels—that she turns into briquettes that burn with a steady heat.

In a city that has recently adopted a series of ordinances regulating urban

agriculture, Nakabaale is the perfect model for how to do it right. But in an ironic twist, this urban farmer knows little about the new laws, other than that they exist. Kampala has not done much to get the word out.

"If they come and tell us what the laws are, I will put them into practice," she says.

When she learned that one of the ordinances regulates the roaming of livestock, Nakabaale pronounced that a good one: goats belonging to her neighbors had regularly come to dine on her greens, a problem that she was able to solve only after putting up a fence with the money she received from the *New Vision* award.

Goats aside, everyone else is welcome here, and Camp Green is often overflowing with people. Some come to fetch water for a small fee from the tap Nakabaale installed that connects with the national water system. Others come to buy vegetables or seedlings. And still others—the children—flock to her yard because, perhaps, they just can't resist. It's green. It's luscious. And it's right next door—a world so different from their own.



Harriet Nakabaale stands at the entry gate to her yard in Kampala—a place that is bursting with fruits and vegetables.