

Urban farming in the informal settlements of Atteridgeville, Pretoria, South Africa

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Abstract

The objectives of the study were to provide quantitative information on the material benefits generated from urban farming in order to assess the contribution of this activity to the food security and nutrition of participating households and to explore the meaning of urban agriculture in the livelihood of participants. The study was conducted in five informal settlements of Atteridgeville, Pretoria and involved a pilot study, a household survey and multiple case studies using participants in the different types of urban farming projects as units of data collection and analysis. More than half of the households in the study area participated in urban farming which consisted of home gardening, group gardening and dryland farming in open urban spaces. Active participation was predominantly by women. The contribution to total household income and food security of the different types of farming found in the study area was generally modest but the livelihood benefits derived from urban farming extended far beyond material gain, reducing social alienation and the disintegration of families associated with urban poverty. Lack of space and limited access to water for irrigation were the main constraints that affected participants in urban farming.

Keywords: urban agriculture, home gardening, group gardening, dryland farming, irrigation, crop selection, poverty, gender, food security, livelihood, multi-functionality.