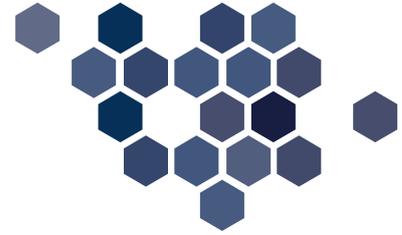


# POLICY SUMMARY: GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR URBAN AND COLLECTIVE GARDENING



## OVERVIEW

This policy summary provides recommendations on why and how to provide support for urban and collective gardening with organic methods. It outlines options for providing this support, followed by examples from various countries. Collective gardening projects may be urban or non-urban. They may be accessible by all community members or target certain groups and social objectives.

- zoning to provide for urban/collective garden use;
- dedicating of specific public land for garden use;
- remediating polluted land;
- facilitating and coordinating public gardens and their organic management;
- providing infrastructure for dedicated garden sites.

## SUMMARY OF POLICY OPTIONS

National and provincial/state governments can establish enabling frameworks for urban and collective gardening. At these levels, options include:

- creating favorable land policy frameworks for public lands;
- remediating or providing funds to remediate polluted public lands;
- establishing grant programs for lower levels of government to establish urban and collective gardening.

Municipal and other local governments can play a significant role, including:

## RATIONALE

There are many reasons to support urban gardening and collective gardens, from a policy point of view. They produce local food with a very low carbon footprint and contribute to local sustainable production. They reconnect people with their food and contribute to food security. They encourage people to consume more vegetables in their diet. They contribute to city landscaping by maintaining green space. They provide community-building, and productive social activity for people of all ages, backgrounds and economic situations. Collective gardening programs address an additional set of social objectives, such as rehabilitation of prisoners, integration of refugees, and vocational development for people with mental or physical disabilities.



## SCOPE

Government support to organic urban and collective gardening can be implemented in any context (any stage of development of the organic sector, any organic regulatory framework, and any culture of government intervention). Community gardening is a worldwide phenomenon with main support often coming from the local levels of government.

## POLICY OPTIONS

### Local levels

Municipalities have a strong role to play in terms of urban zoning policies, in making public land available, in remediating contaminated land, and in providing financial and other types of support for kick-starting urban/collective gardening projects.

### National and Provincial/State Levels

State or national governments can establish enabling frameworks, from a land policy perspective, but also with special grant programs linking, for example (organic) urban/collective gardens to care for disadvantaged groups such as the disabled, unemployed, immigrants, seniors, homeless, formerly incarcerated residents, etc. In this way, urban gardening can be a tool to achieve broader social policy goals.

The large and diverse array of policies and policy measures related to this topic preclude detailed treatment in this summary. However, a comprehensive toolkit, *“Seeding the City – Land Use Policies to Promote Urban Agriculture”* was developed in 2012 by ChangeLab Solutions, a US NGO, to provide a framework and model language for land use policies that local policymakers can tailor to promote and sustain urban agriculture in their communities. Apart from providing specific model legislation related to urban agriculture promotion, the toolkit also reviews other laws affecting Urban Agriculture. The concepts in this toolkit may be adapted for other countries. Also from the US, a PolicyLink report entitled *“Growing Urban Agriculture: Equitable Strategies and Policies for Improving Access to Healthy Food and Revitalizing Communities”* is another practical resource.

Aside from the general actions and policies supporting urban and collective gardening, governments can develop specific policies and actions to encourage specifically organic gardening. For example, organic gardening projects can be given priority access to funding or access to plots of land, or the municipality may require users of public plots of land to garden organically.



## COUNTRY EXAMPLES

**Cuba:** This nation, particularly Havana, is a premier case for urban gardening. The urban garden system has developed from a combination of bottom-up and top-down initiatives emerging in response to the food crisis after the fall of the socialist bloc in the 1990s. Private and small government initiatives in the 90's were followed by a comprehensive set of policy interventions. At national level the National Urban Agriculture Group, created in 1998, has oversight responsibilities for urban agriculture in the country and includes four ministries and 15 scientific institutions and agencies linked to the agricultural sector. Provincial councils were charged with developing urban vegetable production, including identifying land for production. This included a major push for production in Havana. The current Havana urban agriculture policy consists of a legal framework of over 18 Ministerial Resolutions, Decrees, Circulars and Laws that address various issues of urban agriculture such as the social organization of urban farmers in the various types of cooperatives, and the transfer of vacant land to urban farmers. Supporting policy measures also include the provision of training, technical support, and provision of basic resources such as water and supplies. The government established subsidized agricultural stores, compost production sites, artisanal pesticide labs and urban veterinary clinics. Additionally it introduced of a

wage incentives to encourage people to engage in urban farming. Havana's urban agriculture accounts for more than 35,000 ha of land, employs more than 22,000 urban farmers and contributes significantly to the country's food production.

**Spain:** In the Municipality of Barcelona, the Department of Environment conducts the Barcelona Urban Gardens' network, which aims to involve people over the age of 65 in organic gardening. The municipality provides 12 gardens within the city center, including water and tools for gardening, to retired people living close to the gardens. Users of the gardens must grow organically and are not allowed to sell products obtained from their gardening activity.

**France:** Paris created in 2016 a new legal instrument called a "Permit to grow" to encourage residents to help greening of the city by setting-up their own urban gardens. The instrument is part of Paris's 2020 target of adding 100 hectares of vegetation on the city's walls and roofs, with a third dedicated to urban agriculture. Any resident can apply for a renewable three-year permit to start his or her own urban garden project in a public space. The city also provides planting kits with topsoil and seeds. Gardeners are not allowed to use pesticides and can plant only local species.



**United States:** The city of Seattle was an early adopter of policies supporting community gardens. The municipality approved a resolution making community gardens part of city's Comprehensive Plan in 1992.

Many States in the US have enacted legislation or provided allocation of funds for programs that promote urban agriculture. For example, in 2009, North Carolina, Montana, Oregon, Vermont, and Minnesota enacted legislation supporting local and regional food systems.

**Republic of Korea:** Seoul's "Urban Agriculture Promotion Act" enacted in 2011, enabled community gardens and local produce sales stations to flourish throughout Seoul. The

community gardens are often divided into several sections, allowing individual families, community organizations, and professional farmers to take part in farming. The produce is sold at local sales stations with clear traceability. The Seoul city government is injecting about US\$ 46 million to transform unused spaces at schools, parks and even apartment rooftops to activate urban gardening. By 2018 it plans to establish 1800 vegetable gardens within a ten-minute walking distance from all homes in the capital.

A special farm zone will also be set up to train Seoulites to become professionals in urban agriculture.