

For market-oriented farmers, the agriculture production plan should be derived from a proper marketing plan, not vice versa. The issue for farmers is not which crops can be grown, since this may be many, but what can be profitably sold. However, sound market development and advice, is a more difficult task than transferring production skills. This is the reason why market extension is often lacking or not a priority.

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African Food Basket garden, Toronto, Canada

# Commercial Horticulture

## *appraising the potential*

The marketing choices of market-oriented gardeners are the product of a dynamic interaction between producers, a varied body of consumers, and an array of formal and informal agencies that regulate market access. These interactions between farmers, consumers, and regulating agencies take place in a cultural and historical environment unique to each location.

This paper describes an Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture Rapid Appraisal (UPARA) for the assessment of social, economic, and technical factors affecting market gardeners. The UPARA, which is still under development, identifies market interactions between consumers and producers, and the opportunities to effect change through policy adjustments and

targeted interventions. The current version of the UPARA consists of about 35 questions along five lines of inquiry. The individual questions currently focus on horticulture, but in some locations, market access issues may be similar for fruit, vegetable and meat producers.

The UPARA is not a structured survey but rather a guide for data collection. The information shaping the final rating should be derived from as many sources as possible. The resulting information will not be consistent and, as in many rapid appraisals, particular attention should be given to the abnormal and inconsistent: why have some farmers been unsuccessful in their market gardening activities, or who are the marginal consumers and what do

they want? The analysis with the UPARA is intended to illuminate development activities that will be necessary if growers are to take advantage of local and, to a certain extent, export market opportunities.

The final report of the UPARA rates the different components in peri-urban production and marketing, as described in table 1 and 2, in which illustrative ratings from Washington, DC and Yerevan, Armenia are presented. Comparing the ratings across locations results in 15 possible configurations (3 level rating system of 5 factors). Fifteen configurations are probably too unwieldy for everyday use. However, further field-testing might reveal that some of the combinations are unlikely to occur in the real world. The UPARA is presented as a planning tool, which may also be used for the comparison of locations, and as such, the taxonomy of urban agriculture should not be seen to be a goal in itself.

As yet, the descriptive terms WEAK, MEDIUM and STRONG could be specified in greater detail, since they do not offer the problem and subsequent formation of a plan of action clearly enough. A better system would be to have beneficial and detrimental forces at opposite extremes of a scale. Comments are welcome.

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Farmer at the local market selling cauliflower and spinach in China

FAO

**Table 1. Rating for periurban areas of Washington, DC, 1999**

| Factor  | - | +/- | + | Rating   | Comments  |
|---|---|-----|---|----------|---|
| <b>National vegetable distribution system</b> |   |     | ● | +        | Marketing system well developed. Low-income areas less well served.       |
| <b>Competition</b>                            |   |     |   | +        | Strong competition for staples but many niches yet unfilled.              |
| ❖ Current production                          |   |     | ● |          | Many market gardeners, well differentiated.                               |
| ❖ Marketing situation                         |   |     | ● |          | Excellent access to most channels. Well-developed farmers.                |
| ❖ Consumer demand                             |   |     | ● |          | Very strong. New farmers' markets under development.                      |
| ❖ Business climate                            |   |     | ● |          | Excellent   |
| <b>Regulatory support (business)</b>          |   |     | ● | +        | Farmers' markets exempted from many business regulations.                 |
| <b>Public opinion</b>                         |   |     | ● | +        | Wildely supportive  |
| <b>Means of production and Transport</b>      |   |     |   | +        | Excellent   |
| ❖ Land availability                           |   |     | ● |          | Very high land prices but many areas are only just being developed        |
| ❖ Land quality                                |   |     | ● |          | Very fertile, level soils   |
| ❖ Water availability                          |   |     | ● |          | Summer irrigation recommended. Water prices moderate.                     |
| ❖ Water quality                               |   |     | ● |          | No reported problems.   |
| ❖ Transport availability                      |   |     | ● |          | Excellent road system for private vehicles. No public transport for goods |
| ❖ Transport quality                           |   |     | ● |          | Vehicles widely available for purchase. Specialty vehicles available.     |
| ❖ Input situation                             |   |     |   |          |   |
|   | - |     |   | = Weak   |   |
|   |   | +/- |   | = Medium |   |
|   |   |     | + | = Strong |   |

**Table 2. Rating for periurban areas of the city of Yerevan, Armenia, 1997**

| Factor  | - | +/- | + | Rating   | Comments   |
|---|---|-----|---|----------|--|
| <b>National vegetable distribution system</b> |   |     | ● | -        | Current system does not meet basic needs. Many opportunities   |
| <b>Competition</b>                            |   |     |   | -        | Both staple and niche products sell at high and low prices.  |
| ❖ Current production                          |   |     | ● |          | Spotty. Standards are low.   |
| ❖ Marketing situation                         |   |     | ● |          | <i>Ad hoc</i> markets and vending routes are popular but may be restricted                                 |
| ❖ Consumer demand                             |   |     | ● |          | Market for fresh produce is large but mostly price driven  |
| ❖ Business climate                            |   |     | ● |          | Former socialist state. Restricts and taxes business. Cronyism and mafia.                                  |
| <b>Regulatory support</b>                     |   |     | ● | -        | Farmers are restricted from direct marketing by public law.  |
| <b>Public opinion</b>                         |   |     | ● | -        | Public fears unrestricted marketing, but wants fresh, wholesome food.                                      |
| <b>Means of production and Transport</b>      |   |     |   | -        | Technology is scarce. Transport poor. Industrial pollution in many areas. Water supply often contaminated. |
| ❖ Land availability                           |   |     | ● |          | Each Armenian was given land under post-communist reforms.   |
| ❖ Land quality                                |   |     | ● |          | Land is often very rocky. Industrial contamination in some areas.  |
| ❖ Water availability                          |   |     | ● |          | Limited in summer. Water metering is inadequate.   |
| ❖ Water quality                               |   |     | ● |          | Possibility of industrial and biological contamination.  |
| ❖ Transport availability                      |   |     | ● |          | Public and private transport limited and dangerous.  |
| ❖ Transport quality                           |   |     | ● |          | Roads are dangerous. Vehicles too small. No refrigeration. No packaging.                                   |
| ❖ Inputs                                      |   |     | ● |          | Self-saved seeds, inputs expensive and not readily available   |
|   | - |     |   | = Weak   |  |
|   |   | +/- |   | = Medium |  |
|   |   |     | + | = Strong |  |