

SURVEY OF URBAN AGRICULTURE IN DELHI

Aakiz Farooq, Nishant

Delhi is commonly viewed and known as a highly urbanized city region. Since urbanisation is synonymous with the shift to non-agricultural activities, planners and people alike find it hard to believe that agriculture remains a significant source of livelihood despite the mounting challenges. Agricultural activities in Delhi include cultivation, fisheries, animal rearing (dairy, poultry, piggeries, etc.), nursery, and agribusiness start-ups.

Urban and peri-urban agriculture activities help meet around 10% of the city's total food demand, which is roughly estimated to be 9 million tonnes, and significantly reduces the dependent extraction of resources from distant places. . According to the Economic Survey of Delhi (2019-19), around 0.7 of all the workers in Delhi are involved in agricultural works. Much of the urban agriculture happens in the villages of Delhi and on the contested lands of Yamuna floodplains. Chilla Khadar, Nangli Khadar, Badarpur Khadar, Madanpur Khadar, Najafgarh Jheel, Tikri Khurd, Tikra Kalan, Bela Estate are some of the prominent locations for cultivation in Delhi.



Photo 1: Madanpur Khadar; Picture: Aakiz

Rapid urbanization has made urban and peri-urban agricultural activities more challenging than ever and have driven our public consciousness. Large buildings, shopping complexes and mega-infrastructure have replaced the commons in the city by evicting and dispossessing the communities in the name of public interest. Due to the omission of agricultural activities from urban planning and livelihood policies in Delhi, the land rights of farmers and welfare of tenant farmers and fishers have also remained unrecognized.

Pioneering research by People's Resource Centre has brought recognition to the existing farming practices in Delhi and various policy and planning challenges being braved by urban agriculture community. Yet, some crucial gaps have remained in the existing understanding of urban and peri-urban agriculture in Delhi. One of the issues is lack of an estimate of overall food production within the boundaries of the NCT of Delhi. While some rough estimates exist based on the data released by FAO, primary data collection and analysis could provide vital support to narratives for recognition and encouragement of urban agriculture. A quantitative study of urban agriculture in Delhi would also help gain an institutional

perspective, with focussed engagement on planning and development practitioners and policymakers. The findings from a quantitative study would be beneficial in critically evaluating the potential of urban agriculture as a sustainable activity from a livelihoods perspective that explores how the urban context impacts and shapes traditional skills and indigenous knowledge of the agricultural communities. Further empirical research to explore the economic linkages between urban agriculture and food security, and the production and consumption of fruits and vegetables among urban migrant farmers, would contribute to assessing the direct and indirect benefits of urban agriculture on households through self-consumption or increased income and savings.

To address these gaps, People's Resource Centre is conducting a survey to supplement the current understanding of urban agricultural in the rapidly urbanizing context of Delhi. Our group is collecting data related to cultivation, fishing, animal husbandry, women farmers and small agricultural businesses to understand the socio-economic characteristics of urban and peri-urban farming in Delhi, patterns of produce distribution, connection with waste management and seasonal variations. The survey follows a scientific methodology with stratified random sampling guided by the existing research. The survey will collect responses from Badarpur Khadar, Jagatpur Khadar, Chilla Khadar, Fatehpur, Bakkargarh, Jaunti, Najafgarh, Tajpur Khurd, Punjab Khod, Sonia Vihar, Jagatpur Khadar, Gharoli, Harit Vihar, Gautam Puri, Madanpur Khadar, Ghazipur, and Jharoda. This study will explore the various facets of urban agriculture and bring to the forefront what has been lodged in the back time and again by the emerging notions of urbanization. We have also benefited from valuable feedback from the researchers

at Lokniti, CSDS, a reputed research institution with years of expertise in survey-based studies. We hope to bring interesting and helpful insights in the next leaflet of Beejpatra. Please get in touch with us to know more about or contribute to SUAD or other research activities of PRC.



Photo 2: Madanpur Khader; Picture: Aakiz

Authors are members of People's Resource Centre, Delhi and part of the research team conducting SUAD.