

Editorial Note

Cities of India have been the face of “development” with a range of mega-projects like metro, road infrastructure, riverfronts, etc. but at the same time cities are also riddled with rising unemployment, malnutrition, poverty, pollution, etc. A huge amount of food is consumed by the city dwellers but the same food is sourced and imported from neighbouring states. Cities are consuming a lot but hardly producing any. At the same time, every year, a number of people migrate to cities mostly in search of livelihood opportunities which can inadvertently put tremendous pressure on already drained resources.

With the rise of the climate crisis and other problems related to waste management, environmental pollution, and public health which have afflicted our urban centres, now is the time more than ever to think of urban sustainability in terms of integrating green spaces, creating eco livelihoods and being cognizant of climate justice. Environmental sustainability needs to be complemented with social and economic sustainability. Urban agriculture can especially be a means to achieve the same. Apart from helping contribute to urban sustainability by efficient natural resource management and greening the city, it can be a resource for the urban poor. It can tackle urban poverty and unemployment. It can complement the livelihoods of the urban poor, especially women as the food produced in households can be sold for earnings and help minimise food expenses. It can tackle food insecurity by providing a constant supply of fresh and nutritious food. It can create a space for the utilisation and preservation of indigenous knowledge possessed by the farmers, which is often lost in cities.

The kind of “development” taking place in the cities of India is very narrow in scope and is built on the idea of taking over land, uprooting the urban poor from their homes, destroying natural resources etc. rather than integrating it into their idea of development. Farming in the city creates is a step towards eco-livelihoods, localising food production, tackling urban poverty, and making our urban centres more sustainable. This edition of Beejpatra is an effort to bring

together contributions from cities across India where urban agriculture has been or can become a means to creating sustainable livelihoods and urban centres.

Swarnika and Maitreyi from the Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS) highlight how urban and peri-urban agriculture (UPA) can address urban issues of food security, reduce ecological footprint and also create sustainable livelihoods by sharing the case of two farming initiatives, Abhinav Farmers Club in Pune and Farmizen in Bengaluru which are helping farmers strengthen their production and supply chains, using direct to consumer model.

Pornima shares ideas for a city-based programme to promote urban agriculture based on participatory planning and indigenous knowledge, suited to local needs and integrated with the local architecture, with the hope of countering the effects of rapid urbanisation.

Apart from these original contributions, this edition also features excerpts from the case studies of urban agriculture in Mumbai, Pune, Indore and Ranchi by Geetanjali Gurlhosur, Rosamma Thomas, Jayshree and Manoj Singh respectively, from the series “State of Urban Agriculture in Indian cities” published by the People’s Resource Centre. These excerpts give a detailed account of farming along the tracks of Mumbai local by migrant farmers, an emerging urban farming network in Pune bound together by mutual support and flow of knowledge, the case of De Farm in Ranchi and the haats of Indore.

The final piece in this edition is an excerpt from the report “Role of Farm Labourers in Urban Farming” by Aakiz, a member of People’s Resource Centre. In this, he highlights the relationship of migrant labourers with urban farming as it provides them with a meaningful utilisation of their skills and in turn, urban farming relies on labourers to perform various agricultural activities.

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