

Urban Agriculture: Need, Benefits and Challenges

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The pandemic COVID-19 has raised the concern about the extreme vulnerability of urban settlement to unprecedented global risks and crises. The limited and restricted mobility due to the lockdown within the city or across the borders has led to the realization of the need to strengthen the local food production beside the long conventional channels of food supply system. The current scenario is motivating the discussion to encourage shorter channels for food supply system, creating a platform for the Urban agriculture.

The approach of urban agriculture has been well recognized and encouraged by the scientific communities worldwide. The urban agriculture contributes in fostering healthy dietary options, pro-environmental behaviour, better food security, curtailment in wastage of food due to logistic reasons, reduction in the use of preservatives and most importantly small-scale local units can be inclined efficiently toward organic production, resulting in improved soil health and associated ecosystem. Moreover, during the lockdown, bloggers, journalists, and influencers have written explicitly about the therapeutic values of being in nature like gardening, growing vegetable and fruits etc. The increasing pro-environmental behaviour can also be evaluated by the flood of social media posts related to nature and gardening in the reference to the better overall health, significantly including mental health.

The challenges in Urban agriculture lies in the fact that Urban landscapes are spatially restricted. The Urban agriculture systems could be a community-based farms, kitchen or terrace garden to any edible landscape which can be productive features of cities and contribute to essential environmental services. High urbanization rate will result in greater struggle for space in cities, making it burdensome to sustain biodiversity-supporting habitats. The Urban

environment significantly affect the agronomic conditions essential for food production including water availability, nutrient level, soil degradation etc. The challenges, environmental constraints, and knowledge transfer should be further researched for methodological development and deeper understanding of people's participation in small-scale urban agriculture may provide substantial insights beneficial for the food supply management which must briskly adapt to a prevailing and persistently changing environment.

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