

# Draft Citizen's Policy for Urban Agriculture in Delhi

written by iasexam.com | 01/02/2023



**Context-** The “Draft Citizen’s Policy for Urban Agriculture in Delhi” was submitted to the Delhi government by Delhi-based research non-profit People’s Resource Centre.

## Key Highlights

- The policy aims at providing a holistic framework for urban farming.

### **Urban Agriculture in Delhi:**

- About 60 percent of Delhi’s demand for meat is fulfilled by city-grown produce, as is 25 percent of its milk and 15 percent of its vegetable needs.
- Yet policies on land use and farming in the National Capital do not acknowledge the role of cultivation and distribution of food in urban areas, as stated by the draft policy.

### **Recommendations:**

- The policy recommends building on existing practices, promoting residential and community farming through rooftop and kitchen gardens, allocating vacant land for agricultural use, creating a market, developing policies for animal rearing and spreading awareness.

## Significance

- **Food security:**
  - Issues such as rapid urbanisation, population explosion and climate change increases the risk of food shortage.
  - These recommendations are important to ensure food security for urban communities. This benefit has long been highlighted in arguments for urban farming.
- **Fulfilling nutrition demand:**
  - A 2010 report by M S Swaminathan Research Foundation, Chennai, notes that 50 percent of women and children in urban areas are anaemic due to lack of adequate nutrition.
  - The study recommends urban agriculture.
- **Poverty alleviation:**
  - Globally, in 2020, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization acknowledged that urban and peri urban farming can also contribute to local food and nutritional needs, enable jobs and reduce poverty.

## Initiatives in India

- In India, urban farming has seen some traction across states, prompting governments for introducing small-scale initiatives to promote the practice.
- **Pune:**
  - In 2008, Pune's civic administration launched a city farming project in order to train and encourage people to take up farming on allocated land.
- **Kerala:**
  - State of Kerala had been food dependent until 2012 after which the state government launched a vegetable development programme in order to encourage gardening in houses, schools, government and private institutions.
  - It offered subsidies and support for eco-friendly inputs, irrigation, compost and biogas plants.
  - According to Kerala State Planning Board, vegetable production increased from 825,000 tonnes in 2011-12 to 1.3 million tonnes in 2014-15.
- **Tamil Nadu:**
  - Similarly, in 2014, the Tamil Nadu government introduced a "do-it-yourself" kit for city dwellers in order to grow vegetables on rooftops, houses and apartment buildings under its Urban Horticulture Development Scheme.
- **Bihar:**
  - Since 2021, Bihar has encouraged terrace gardening in five smart cities through subsidy for input cost.

## Challenges

- **Lack of policy:**

- While such initiatives are welcome, their impact cannot be expected to be widespread without such strong policy for urban farming.
- For instance, Pune's 2008 initiative has failed to take off because of poor interest from people and the government.
- **Lack of recognition:**
  - Even the recently released draft Master Plan of Delhi for 2041, does not acknowledge the major role of the practice.
  - It aims at dividing 8,000 hectares of land along the Yamuna into two sub-zones and restricting human activity or settlement in areas directly adjacent to the river.
  - However, various communities on the floodplains practise urban farming.
  - As per critics, if this draft master plan comes into practice, informal settlements such as Chilla Khadar and Bela Estate will lose the agricultural land,
- **Lack of parallel benefits:**
  - Farmers are unable to avail benefits under any agricultural schemes such as crop insurance.
- **Issue of rapid development:**
  - Rapid development is also a hindrance in continuing with existing practices.

## **Suggestions & way ahead**

- **Practicing innovative techniques like Hydroponics:**
  - Studies show that broad use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides in urban farms can lower produce and soil quality.
  - However, urban farmers believe such hurdles can be overcome with certain innovative techniques.
  - Hydroponics, a method of soilless farming which uses nutrient solutions to sustain plants, offers a cleaner approach.
  - Compared to commercial farming, hydroponics requires 90 per cent lesser water that can be reused.
  - Although certain initiatives are still niche and at a nascent stage, one can grow more plants in the space given.
- **Small-scale farming - cushion in crisis:**
  - Kitchen gardening or small-scale community farming cannot sustain the huge population, but can act as a cushion to protect urban residents from inflation, vulnerabilities of weather or crises such as COVID-19.
  - Even though such innovations cannot match the scale of rural agriculture, before more villages become urban, early interventions can also result in a sustainable system.
- **Recognition & funding:**
  - There is also a need to bring in more institutional clarity and also multi-

disciplinary expertise to solve such challenges.

- In order to promote urban farming, governments must recognise informal practices and link them with agricultural schemes