

Urban Agriculture For Food Security

After the three very famous "**tion**" words i.e **liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG)**, one more word is now talk of the town which is Urbanization. **Urbanization** is the physical growth of urban areas as a result of rural migration and even suburban concentration into cities, particularly the very large ones.

When talking of urbanization there is an interesting fact that in 2008 for the first time in history, the world's urban population (more than 3 billion) surpassed the total rural population.

"According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), by 2020, the developing countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America will be home to some 75 per cent of all urban dwellers."

Conditions are same throughout the world and we are no exception to it. According to census 2011 more than 34 percent of total population of India resides in urban areas. With time India is experiencing shift from agriculture base economy to service and manufacturing economy.

The threat lies beneath this whole statistics. Previously there was more people to grow food and less to consume but now the table turned. More migration of people to urban areas creates a dearth of one who grow food than one who consume. This created world wide food insecurity and urban poverty also increases.

"According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates, by 2050, global food demand will increase by 70 per cent in order to feed the global population of 9.3 billion."

This is going to put tremendous pressure on already scarce land and water resources implying an urgent need for an alternative way to combat food shortages.

What is Urban Agriculture ?

According to FAO urban agriculture can be defined as:

"An industry that produces, processes and markets food and fuel, largely in response to the daily demand of consumers within a town, city, or metropolis, on land and water dispersed throughout the urban and semi-urban area, applying intensive production methods, using and reusing natural resources and urban wastes to yield a diversity of crops and livestock."

Urban Agriculture has now taken a new shape from unprofessional and informal timepass activity to formalised and professional business. Kitchen gardening, Organic gardening, Nurseries , Terrace gardens are few of its forms.

Urban Agriculture- Benefits

Urban Agriculture, an emerging trend has many upper hands in terms of easy access to fresh and nutritious food from the backyard of kitchen. Moreover it is having income generation

potential. It can be a lucrative option for supply of fresh fruits and vegetables and keeping our pockets heavy.

Water harvesting, water re-use and recycling of urban wastes can also be done to fulfill requirements of urban agriculture. It also helps in reducing pollution and global warming in cities and improve lifestyle of people.

Scenario in India

Talking in context of India, Urban Agriculture is quite at a nascent stage but as a part of initiative some of the cities now are practicing it in a small scale.

Hyderabad is one such city where we can see this new culture catching up and horticulture department also supporting them with subsidies for the same. More than 4000 households in the outskirts of the city currently are self-reliant for the vegetable needs of the family. In Hyderabad, it was found that households that produce vegetables saved 20 per cent of their total food expenditures by retaining part of the produce for household consumption.

Mumbai is also experiencing comparative more growth in terrace farming making many households self-sufficient in terms of their requirements for vegetables and fruits.

Urban agriculture, although not a panacea for food insecurity, has the potential to provide millions with some secure access to food.

Thus the practice of urban agriculture is getting attention globally opening new doors for food security for the whole world.