

Urban Agriculture among Households of Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State, Nigeria: Key Challenges

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Abstract : Agriculture was primarily a rural activity in Nigeria, but due to increasing demand for food and jobs for many urban dwellers, it became necessary for urban households to embark on farming as a means of improving household food security and additional income for economic empowerment. Urban agriculture serves as a veritable tool for poverty reduction among people living in urban areas mostly low-income earners and unemployed. The survey was conducted to identify key challenges encountered by households in Makurdi metropolis of Benue state, Nigeria who are engaged in urban agriculture. A well-structured questionnaire was used to collect data from a sample of respondents used for the study. Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean score and standard deviation. Results show that a greater percentage (46.0%) of the respondents engaged in cultivation of leafy vegetable, 22.0% cultivated cassava, 21.0% planted sweet potato, 18.0% cultivated tomato while 56.0% reared poultry, 23.0% kept goat, among others. Sources of agricultural information indicated by the respondents were family members/relations (85.0%), friends/neighbours (73.0%), radio (68.0%), extension agents (57.0%), etc. Major challenges encountered by the respondents in urban agriculture include inadequate size of farmland (M= 2.72), lack of access to credit facilities (M= 2.63), lack of funds (M= 2.50), high cost of labour (M= 2.49), insecurity of lands (M= 2.46), theft of crops at maturity (M= 2.38), lack of farm inputs such as improved varieties of seeds, fertilizer and exotic breeds of livestock (M= 2.23), destruction of crops by stray farm animals (M= 1.96), among others. The study recommends that there is a need for adequate provision of farm inputs by the government at all levels at a subsidized rate in order to reduce the cost of production and enhance optimum productivity.

Keywords : urban, agriculture, household, challenges, Makurdi, Nigeria

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