

Communities And Local Food Systems In The Post Pandemic World: Lessons For Kerala

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Abstract : Communities play a vital role in mobilizing people and resources for the benefit of all. Since time immemorial, communities have been spear heading different activities ranging from disaster management, palliative care, local economic development and many more with laudable success. Urban agriculture is one such activity where communities can prove to make a real difference. Farming activities in cities across different developed countries have proved to have favorable outcomes in the form of increased food security, neighborhood revitalization, health benefits and local economic growth. However, urban agriculture in the developing nations have never been prioritized as an important planning tool to cater to the basic needs of the public. Urban agricultural practices are being carried out in a fragmented fashion without a formal backing. The urban dwellers rely heavily on their far-off rural counterparts for daily food requirements. With the onset of the pandemic and the recurring lockdowns, the significance of geographic proximity and its impact on the availability of food to the public are gradually being realized around the globe. This warrants a need for localized food systems by shortening the distance between production and consumption of food. The significance of communities in realizing these urban farming benefits is explored in this paper. A case-study approach is adopted to understand how different communities have overcome barriers to urban farming in cities. The applicability of these practices is validated against the state of Kerala in India wherein different community centered approaches have been successful in the past. The existing barriers are assessed and way forward to achieve a self-sufficient localized food systems is formulated with the key lessons from the case studies. These recommendations will be helpful to successfully establish and sustain farming activities in urban areas by leveraging the power of communities.

Keywords : community-centric, COVID-19, drivers and barriers, local food system, urban agriculture

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