

ROSARIO, ARGENTINA:

Urban Agriculture as a Force for Renewal

Circular strategy:
RETHINK



Introduction

In 2001, Rosario, Argentina, was faced with unemployment and food security crises following the collapse of the city's industrial economy. In an effort to simultaneously tackle poverty and food insecurity, the city collaborated with local and national NGOs to create its highly successful Urban Agriculture Program (UAP).

UAP, which provides equipment, training, seeds and other inputs, initially planned to work with only 20 farmer groups. However, by 2004, the program had expanded to around 800 urban farming projects. Fruits and vegetables from the city's community gardens would go on to help meet the nutrition needs of around 40,000 urban residents.

Concerted efforts on the part of the municipality, including through provision of funding, implementation of supportive policies, and forward-looking city planning, coupled with ongoing support from both national and international entities helped the program grow and evolve alongside the city.





Context & Key Actors

In the 1990s, Rosario, the third-largest city in Argentina, had a booming industrial economy. However, by 2001, a changing economic landscape shuttered many of its factories. High levels of inflation and unemployment pushed more than half of the city's population into poverty and drove food insecurity to crisis levels.

As part of its response, Rosario's municipal government collaborated with two organizations to found UAP in 2002. The first is the Centre for Agro-ecological Production Studies (CEPAR), a Rosario-based NGO that had already been supporting urban agriculture activities in the city's poor and marginalized communities since 1987. The city also collaborated with Argentina's National Food Security Programme, Pro-Huerta ("Pro-Garden"), which is oriented toward supporting small-scale food production and food sovereignty in low-income urban communities.



Intervention

UAP supports urban agriculture and benefits urban-dwellers on multiple fronts. Firstly, it provides gardening supplies and equipment to low-income people in marginalized communities. The program particularly targets groups that may be excluded from formal economies, including women, seniors, youth, and migrants. In addition, it hosts workshops and trainings, promotes innovation by linking gardening initiatives with the local university, and grows the local economy by supporting farmer's markets and community businesses.

Just two years after the program was founded in 2002, around 800 community gardens had been created. At the program's peak, around 10,000 poor families worked in connection to urban farming activities. People working in urban food production in Rosario were able to earn around 150 USD each month, which put them above the city's poverty line.

Strategic, long-term planning on the part of the municipality was a vital contributor to the program's rapid expansion and sustainability. Rosario's municipal government envisioned urban farming not only as a way to solve problems in the present, but also as a defining feature of future life in the city. The city worked hard to make this vision a reality; for example, multiple municipal departments collaborated with the University of Rosario on a surveying project that identified vacant spaces that could be converted to gardens. In 2004, Rosario's mayor went a step further by approving mechanisms to formalize land tenure for urban gardeners. Urban agriculture was even included in the city's 2007-2017 land use plan.

These efforts allowed the program to grow and evolve alongside the city. As of 2014, the program's budget was almost 400,000 USD and it had around 25 professional staffers. The program receives ongoing financial and capacity support from a variety of international, national, and local entities, including RUAF Foundation, the University of Rosario, and the Rosario Foundation.



Success Factors

- **Long-term vision:** interventions have had a lasting impact due to the municipality's strategic planning and implementation of supportive policies. Incorporation of the program into urban planning has allowed it to adapt to the population's needs over time.
- **Financial sustainability:** the program is financially sustainable for participants; farmers are able to earn a living selling produce and, due to their inclusion in the National Registry of Family Farmers, receive social benefits.
- **Broad base of support:** the program has received financial and capacity support from national actors and local NGOs as well as from international entities, including UN-Habitat, RUAF, IDRC, McGill University of Canada, and others.

Impacts

- **Food security:** at their peak, the city's urban farms were providing healthy, sustainably grown produce to around 40,000 people.
- **Urban restoration:** agro-ecological practices allowed the program to rehabilitate and revitalize urban spaces that were previously considered unusable, including brownfields and former waste dumps.
- **Social opportunity:** Rosario's urban gardens provided employment opportunities for poor and marginalized families and people excluded from formal economies while also increasing social capital and improving community cohesion.





Author

Angelica Greco, ICLEI World Secretariat

References

1. FAO, *Growing Greener Cities in Latin America and the Caribbean*, Rome, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2014, <http://www.fao.org/3/i3696e/i3696e.pdf>, (accessed 26 February 2021).
2. 'Urban Agriculture Programme (UAP)', *Urban Sustainability Exchange*, Metropolis, n.d., <https://use.metropolis.org/case-studies/urban-agriculture-programme-uap#casestudydetail>, (accessed 26 February 2021).

Images

[FAO](#), © Silvio Moriconi

[FAO](#), © Sergio Goya

[FAO](#), © Marie Monique Robin

