

Ameliorating food and income insecurity for vulnerable urban households: A case of community gardens in Gweru, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Food and nutrition security is deteriorating among Zimbabwe's high and medium density urban households in the face of adverse economic fundamentals. As a way of addressing declining formal urban employment, food and nutrition insecurity and illegality of urban agriculture activities, community gardens were established through non-profit public initiatives in the city of Gweru. However, in the aftermath of the withdrawal of rendered assistance by the supporting institutions, some households discontinued membership of community gardens. Among farmers who are still members, utilisation of community gardens is either seasonal or all year round. The study therefore investigates the factors determining all-year use of the gardens and the extent to which the community gardens contribute to food and nutrition security. Results show that the majority of the households exposed to the community gardens are still continuing with the practice even after donor support withdrawal. Binary logistic regression was used and the odds ratio results show that gender of household head, age of head of household, years of schooling and urban agriculture outside community gardens significantly affect participation in gardening throughout the year. About 30% of the households in the community garden indicated that the gardens are now a major income source and that for the majority of participants, their nutrition had improved. The study advocates for community gardens as an effective way of improving food and security nutrition in urban areas and encourages their promotion by national and local authorities as well as multilateral institutions.

Keywords: Community Gardens; Food Security; Land Access; Nutrition Security; Urban Agriculture; Vegetables