

## Urban Community Farming

**Objective:** To engage residents with farming in park spaces and give access to fresh, healthy, organically grown vegetables to residents.

**Vision:** The larger public purpose is to lead cities to a balanced holistic living making agriculture coexist with urban lifestyles.

**Context:** Urban farming cannot fulfill the complete food needs of the community but it can foster appreciation for organically grown food. Secondly, urban farming would help utilize parks and empty urban spaces that tend to be used as waste dumps, in more ecofriendly ways, serving the dual purpose of greening and growing food locally. Children who have no connection with food sources and farming will also get an opportunity to understand and learn how food is grown. Lastly, parks often become source of excess water use and are difficult to maintain. This will encourage good use of parks, composting in colonies and community engagement.

The produce can be sold in local farmer markets at nominal prices. The opportunity could also be to engage farm hands in the same and hence provide livelihoods. Living with nature, eating fresh, and creating appreciation for creation of cultivation, will make city residents more aware and build greater demand for organic produce from farms.

This is unlikely to make farmers lose business, on the contrary this should encourage them to sell directly where ever possible in local kisan haats organized by communities. Yes, chances are middle men will realise that retail prices will need to be more rationalised.

### **Broad guidelines**

Colonies having more than 4 parks can take this up. Each block with a park can convert half of the park into a farm belt growing seasonal vegetables. Colonies like sector 10A in Gurgaon where GAP is conducting a pilot project has over 32 parks. Most of them need water and gardeners for maintenance and it puts pressure on the locality's resources. Instead an experiment to make 10 parks into farms with walking and sitting spaces intact, lined up with trees could be a good model to experiment with.

Colony compost will be used as fertilizer and natural methods of pesticides will be taught to the gardeners and community. Even a mini gaushala can be maintained on one of the parks if agreed. The elders and children could be given responsibility to help in tending the mini farms. On weekends this could become a community activity. All produce then could be sold to the block residents. Just imagine the change we will see in healthy eco-friendly living and best use of park space!

### **How to start a community farming project**

- Initiate a community meeting with RWA
- Invite an expert on composting and home gardening
- Plan a budget
- Identify champions and volunteers
- Hire gardeners/farmers/labourers
- Create pricing guidelines
- Organize Saturday/Sunday markets and breakfast meets with community
- Pitch for CSR funding to scale up