

# 10 facts about Urban Agriculture in **OUAGADOUGOU**

## About The City

Ouagadougou, the capital and the largest city in Burkina Faso, is located in the central plateau of the landlocked West African country. It experiences a hot, tropical climate, with two distinct seasons: a rainy season between May and September followed by a pronounced dry season. Burkina Faso is a relatively poor and less developed nation, in which around 40% of people live on less than 2 USD per day. These challenges are exacerbated by conflict in the northern Sahel region which borders Mali. Around a quarter of the inhabitants of Ouagadougou live in informal settlements, typically on the margins of the city, where infrastructure is inadequate and access to food is difficult.



*Watering amaranth plants on the site of "La Saisonnière", Ouagadougou - Burkina Faso.  
Photo: Dieudonné Edouard Sango/TMG Research.*

## Urban agriculture in Ouagadougou dates to the 1920s

Catholic priests began planting lettuce, tomatoes, cabbage, carrots, and potatoes around the city's dams, initially to meet their own food requirements and later as a strategy to spread Christianity to the local population who were interested in farming.

## Farming is widespread around the cities' dams

Small-scale production of vegetables takes place around the dams that supply water to the city, near sources of wastewater, in areas unsuitable for infrastructure development, and around the city's edges. Some city residents practice bag gardening in their backyards.

## Some data on farming in Ouagadougou

According to a 2020 mapping project by an Italian NGO and the Ministry of Agriculture, there are 52 market gardening sites occupying around 439 hectares in the city. These employ over 3,000 people, 52% of whom are women.

## Grand Ouaga project provides opportunities for urban agriculture

Although the former Agrarian and Land Reorganization Act (1996) prohibits urban farming, the Urban Development Master Plan for 'Grand Ouaga' (1999) allows it while retaining for municipal authorities the right to repurchase land for infrastructure projects. This urban development plan for Ouagadougou provides potential for sustainable food planning processes that are co-designed by authorities, academia and urban farmers.

## Market gardening accounts for 70% of the cultivated area in the city

The growing of vegetables as cash crops is the most prevalent form of urban agriculture. Horticulture and cereals take up the other 30% of urban production.

## Urban agriculture in Ouagadougou is mainly commercially oriented

Produce is sold at the farm gate, in the streets, or at local markets, including the city's livestock markets for livestock products. A handful of farmers sell to hotels and restaurants. Some products such as strawberries are exported to neighboring countries.

## A minority of urban farmers practice agroecology

Agroecology was encouraged by President Thomas Sankara during the Revolutionary period, 1983-1987. Farmers practicing agroecology are relatively well organized in cooperatives and have access to safe farming water compared to those who practice ordinary production using wastewater and pesticides.

## The non-recognition of urban agriculture poses challenges to farmers

Farmers are inadequately supported and face high costs for equipment and inputs, insecure access to land, scarce water and limited market access.

## Pesticide use is an environmental and human health hazard

The environment and water sources in Ouagadougou and in peri-urban areas are polluted by locally-used pesticides and chemical fertilizers. Some wastewaters contain traces of heavy metals.

## Covid-19 disrupted local food systems but farmers found ways to adapt

The closure of food markets caused many farmers to lose perishable produce. Some consumers struggle to access fresh food. Farmers improvised new selling techniques such as door-to-door sales using motorised cargo bikes, and online sales through platforms such as Zinbiss Yaar and Ouaga Yaar.

Over **3 million**  
people in Burkina Faso  
faced food insecurity in  
2020.