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HAS PARTICIPATION IN URBAN AND PERI-URBAN AGRICULTURE CONTRIBUTED TO POVERTY REDUCTION AND FOOD SECURITY? THE CASE OF BAHIR DAR CITY, ETHIOPIA

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ABSTRACT

The alarmingly growing urbanization and its associated problems are worsening the lives of many urban residents in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Particularly, poverty and food insecurity, which used to be much related with rural areas, are becoming huge urban challenges. Against expectation, slums in towns are expanding and purchasing powers are falling. One of the possible ways of tackling these evils could be expansion of urban and peri-urban agriculture (UPA). Using the available urban resources, urban farmers may supply markets with vegetables, fruits, animal products, etc. in addition to satisfying their own needs. This study, therefore, aims to assess households' participation in UPA in Bahir Dar city and its vicinities and to examine whether that has played any role in reducing urban poverty and achieving food security. Data were collected from 112 random households using semi-structured questionnaires. The results of the study reveal that the participation rate in UPA in and around the City is very low compared to the potential. The logistic regression results show that UPA has not contributed to reduction of poverty. It is found, however, that households practicing UPA are more likely to be food secure than non-UPA households. With the current setting, where there is no official recognition and support to the sector, it seems difficult to use UPA as a means to reduce poverty. Containing constraints related especially to land and water resource utilization may help UPA repeat its food security attainment role on poverty reduction.

KEYWORDS

Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, Food security, Poverty, Urban and peri-urban agriculture.

INTRODUCTION

For the first time in the history of mankind, more people worldwide have started to live in urban than in rural areas since 2008. According to UNFPA (2007), the world's urban population will reach 6.4 billion in 2050, and 60% of people will live in cities by 2030. Developing countries, especially those in SSA, register the highest recent urban growth rates. East African countries, for instance, had 6-8 % of urbanization rates during the last four decades (Mireri *et al*, 2005). Urbanization in these countries has been viewed by some development theorists as an integral part of economic growth and distributional change, including poverty reduction (Ravallion *et al*, 2007). Nonetheless, the urban growth trend is alarming in areas with limited resources for providing the necessary urban services (Cofie *et al*, 2003). Against expectation, the urbanization of SSA has resulted in more poverty, food insecurity, inflation, food shortage, urban violence, etc. The problems of poverty and food insecurity are the most important evils of it. For instance, globally, the urban share of the poor increased from 18.5% to 24.2% between 1993 and 2002. The contribution to this figure of SSA was huge as it grew from 24.3 to 30.2% during the same period (Ravallion *et al*, 2007). The urban population share in the region rose from 29.8 to 35.2% indicating that urbanization is strongly related to intensification of poverty. In most cities and towns of SSA, urbanization has become virtually synonymous to slum growth. The slum population in these countries doubled between 1990 and 2005 and reached 200 million (UNFPA, 2007). Increasing urban poverty also goes hand in hand with growing food insecurity, which is often overlooked since at aggregate level, economic and social conditions in urban areas are much better than those in rural areas (de Zeeuw and Dubbeling, 2009). A number of other factors worsen the challenges of the urban poor. Rural-urban migration, coupled with fast urban population growth, raises the demand for urban food and the supply of labour. These have the impact of increasing food prices in the face of diminishing urban real wages, thereby endangering food access by the poor. Price increments and loss of jobs are also common when economic crises are set in. Another important factor is climate change (von Braun, 2008). Agricultural production and productivity could be reduced due to rainfall variability, temperature changes and losses in arable land. Eastern Africa will lose up to 15% of its cropland area within the next thirty years (Lotsch, 2007). City economies will suffer as agricultural production in the surrounding countryside is hit by storms, floods or water scarcity. The decline in agricultural productivity will thus not only affect the rural population but also the urban poor (de Zeeuw and Dubbeling, 2009).

One of the ways of reverting those urban challenges could be resorting to urban and peri-urban agriculture (UPA). The various contexts of production, resources and people involved make the precise definition of UPA difficult, leading to different definitions by different writers (such as Mougeot, 2000; Mlozi, 2000; Mireri *et al*, 2005). For this study, UPA is defined as the growing of plant and tree crops (vegetables, fruits, herbs and field crops) and raising of animals (dairy cattle, poultry, goats and sheep) for food or non-food purposes, including their processing and distribution, both within and around (peri-) urban areas. In most cases, UPA is a labour-intensive farming undertaken on vacant plots, outdoors, road strips, parks, etc. The current study, however, will concentrate only on vegetables. The role of UPA in the economy, particularly in SSA, is multifaceted. Some of the possible roles are summarized by Mougeot (2000): it helps to achieve poverty reduction, sustainable urban development and urban food security by improving urban food supply systems; and fosters adaptation to climate change through sustainable land and water use as well as waste management. The important ones that this study focuses on are reduction of poverty and attainment of food security as a possible contribution of urban vegetable production. Today, devaluated currencies, weakened purchasing power, frozen wages, retrenched public service and formal employment, and removed subsidies on food and other basic needs have curtailed the capacity of both the urban poor and middle class to purchase all the food they need (Mougeot, 2000). The urban poor, using labour and available land, may thus engage in various agricultural activities to produce for their own consumption and/or for sale to acquire extra income.

In Ethiopia, owing to the short history of urbanization, poverty and food insecurity have for long been related only with rural areas. However, the government's ignorance of urban areas until 2005, biased but less pragmatic focus on rural areas through a strategy called Agricultural Development-Led Industrialization (ADLI), stagnant industrial employment and rural-urban migration seem to contribute to the spiralling of those evils in urban areas as well. According to a recent report, the country's overall urban poverty incidence in 2010/11 is estimated as 26% and the urban food poverty incidence as 28% (MoFED, 2012). Over 40% of the population of Ethiopia is food insecure (Gebre-Selassie, 2004). With a population of over 210,000 in 2007 (CSA, 2008), Bahir Dar city is the sixth populous city in the country. The estimated poverty incidence in the City was 26% in 2000 (Gebremedhin and Whelan, 2005) and 44% in 2004 (Tadesse, 2012); no estimates of food in/security are yet available for the City. The fast urbanization rate of the City means that the pressure on the surrounding agricultural areas as

a source of food is on the rise. UPA may thus play a complementary role to that supply. Residents within the City and its peripheries may produce various types of vegetables and fruits and participate, even side by side, in animal husbandry. These, besides assisting households to become food-secure, may generate further income and thus help reduce urban poverty. One may say that Bahir Dar and its vicinities are suitable for UPA. Many *kebeles* (Kebele is the smallest administrative unit in Ethiopia) have idle lands, as can be seen from their low population density, and others are close to Blue Nile River (*Abay*) and Lake *Tana*. The surrounding areas have almost similar resource availability. The existence of cheap labour for the largely labour-intensive UPA is indisputable.

In spite of the many benefits of UPA and untapped potentials of the city of Bahir Dar, a number of challenges constrain its development. The most pressing challenge emanates from being in a vacuum of semi-official recognition with limited active support from the City Administration. There is neither a separate office in charge of UPA nor a clear policy/strategy/plan concerning UPA in the City. This has a practical problem in using or asking to use idle urban lands for certain agricultural activities. The other challenge is urbanization itself. The increasing demand for land by the long-drawn-out urban population creates scarcity of urban land, which is usually solved by displacing UPA engagements. Besides very few studies link UPA to poverty and food security (Egziabher, 1994; Tefera, 2010) in other urban places in Ethiopia, no study could be found for Bahir Dar. However, urban authorities, policymakers, planners and other stakeholders need more data and analysis on the various contributions of UPA so that they issue the sector the appropriate support. To this end, the central theme of this study is to ascertain whether households involved in urban and peri-urban agricultural activities are better off in terms of reducing poverty and achieving food security.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is ample literature on the theoretical significance of UPA in poverty reduction and food security at an aggregate level (Mougeot, 2000; Mireri et al, 2005; Chah et al, 2010; Mkwambisi et al, 2010). The mismatch in the growth rates of urbanization and economic growth East African countries have accelerated the growth of urban agriculture as a survival strategy by the poor urban households (Mireri et al, 2005). UPA has a significant share in the food supply of many cities in SSA and takes special care of urban diets, which include exotic or perishable vegetables, fresh milk and poultry products (Cofie et al, 2003). For instance, 60-75% of the vegetable consumption needs of two Nigerian cities, Lagos and Abuja, come from production within the cities (Egbuna, 2009). The livelihood of about 0.18% of the population of Addis Ababa depends solely or wholly on vegetable production (Egziabher, 1994). By 2020, at least 35-40 million urban residents in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia will depend on UPA to feed themselves (Mougeot, 2000).

Not much studies have applied econometric models to empirically test the significance of UPA in poverty reduction and food security (such as Yusuf et al, 2008; Mutonodzo, 2009; Tefera, 2010). Using a sample of 200 urban farmers in Ibadan metropolis of Nigeria, Yusuf et al (2008) run a logistic regression to ascertain the determinants of household poverty. They found an unexpected result that urban agriculture has a significant and negative effect in poverty reduction. According to their estimates, households engaged in urban crop farming activities have higher likelihood of being poor. Following their descriptive finding that lower poverty level is related to livestock farming and mixed farming compared to crop farming, they ended up recommending that mixed farming and livestock farming are antidotes to reducing poverty among urban farmers in the metropolis. According to Mutonodzo (2009), practising UA was found to be significantly related to energy adequacy, a proxy for food security, in Harare. Tefera (2010) also applied ordinary least squares estimation method to find the correlates of household food security, captured by dietary calorie intake, in Adama town of central Ethiopia. He estimates that ownership of both oxen and other livestock significantly influence the food security status of households positively.

In summary, the empirical microeconomic aspect of whether UPA significantly contributes to poverty reduction and food security attainment at household level provides mixed results. And very importantly, in Ethiopia, very little has been done so far. The few available literature (Egziabher, 1994; Tefera, 2010) do not provide in-depth quantitative relationships. Further, no study has yet examined the matter for Bahir Dar city and its peripheries. Hence, the present study will also be of a significant start-up contribution in that regard.

OBJECTIVES

- To assess households' participation in urban and peri-urban agriculture in Bahir Dar city and its peripheries; and
- To find out whether participation in urban and peri-urban agriculture has contributed to poverty reduction and food security.

HYPOTHESES

It is hypothesized that participation in urban and peri-urban agriculture significantly contributes to (i) poverty reduction at household level in Bahir Dar city and its peripheries; and (ii) food security attainment at household level in Bahir Dar city and its peripheries.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is made at a household level. It uses multi-stage sampling technique for selecting the representative households. Firstly, two strata were identified - urban Bahir Dar and peripheral Bahir Dar. Secondly, from the nine *kebeles* in urban Bahir Dar, four *kebeles* were randomly selected, namely, *Ginbot 20*, *Shimbt*, *Hidar 11* and *Belay Zeleke*; and from the peripheries of the City, one *kebele*, namely, *Jigina*, was selected. Thirdly, sample households were chosen using simple random sampling. A total of 125 households were eventually interviewed of which 112 were found analyzable, making the response rate to be 89.5%. Semi-structured questionnaire was used in the study and administered on cross-sectional basis. It asked, among others, about various household characteristics, household expenditure, income and asset ownership, engagement in UPA, possessions of resources suitable for UPA and general food security/insecurity questions. In analyzing the data, descriptive statistics are used to primarily assess the characteristics of sample households and the participation rates in UPA. The econometric analysis of the study consists of models estimated using logistic regression in an effort to find out whether participation in UPA has contributed to a variation in (i) household expenditure and asset ownership, which are used here as a proxy for socioeconomic status, thereby measuring whether a household is in poverty or not; and (ii) household food security status. Control variables in the above two estimations include gender of the household head, household size, educational achievement of the head, migration, employment status, etc.

The logistic regression models of the study take the general form:

$$Poverty = \alpha_p + \theta_p(UPA) + X_p\beta_p + \varepsilon_p \quad (1)$$

$$Food\ Security = \alpha_f + \theta_f(UPA) + X_f\beta_f + \varepsilon_f \quad (2)$$

Where

Poverty is a dummy for the poverty status of a household (=1 if poor), based on both average household consumption expenditure and assets ownership;

Food Security is a dummy for the self-reported food security status of the household (=1 if food secure);

UPA is a dummy for the participation of a household in urban and peri-urban agriculture (=1 if any household member participates); it is the variable of interest;

X is vector of control variables;

α and θ are parameters and β is a vector of parameters to be estimated;

ε is an error term; and the subscripts *p* and *f* are used to identify poverty and food security equations.

According to the above hypotheses, the coefficient estimate and the marginal effect of the UPA variable in the poverty equation are expected to be negative while those in the food security equation are expected to be positive.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SAMPLE HOUSEHOLDS

The study obtained analyzable responses from 112 households. Out of these, 75% were male-headed and the rest were female-headed (Table 1). In terms of marital status, the majority of the approached household heads (over 88%) were married during the time of the survey. Over a fifth of the household heads did not attend any formal school while some 30% went beyond high school education. The majority of the families could be regarded as big, with about three-fourth of them having four or more members. Exactly a quarter of the responding household heads was sidelined from work due to lack of it or old age. A good proportion of those who were working ran their own business, while the private sector employed only about a tenth of the working respondents.

Table 2 summarizes information on expenditure and ownership of some household assets and utilities. Measured relatively on their average daily expenditure, over 23% of respondents were among the bottom 20% poorest group while about 20% were in the top 20% richest. However, incorporating ownership of assets and utilities by households in the poverty variable calculation, we come to an absolute measure that some 29% live in poverty. This finding is comparable with the regional urban poverty incidence of 29% (MoFED, 2012). One household in six reported that they are food insecure. And yet, over a third and a fifth of respondents are deprived of the utility of having their own piped water and electricity respectively.

TABLE 1: SOME SOCIOECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SAMPLE HOUSEHOLDS (%)

Description	Group/Response	Percent
Sex of the household head	male	75.00
	female	25.00
Marital status	single	4.46
	married	88.39
	divorced	2.68
	widowed	4.46
Educational achievement of the household head	illiterate	21.43
	primary	30.36
	high school	17.86
	above high school	30.36
Household size	1-3 members	25.89
	4-6 members	51.79
	6+ members	22.32
Household head currently working?	no	25.00
	yes	75.00
Employment type	own business	47.06
	civil servant	38.82
	employee of private sector	9.41
	employee of an NGO	4.71

Source: Field survey, October 2012

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF POVERTY, FOOD SECURITY AND UTILITIES OWNERSHIP INDICATORS (% OF HOUSEHOLDS)

Description	Group/ Response	Percent
Quintiles of daily per capita consumption expenditure (household average)	poorest	23.21
	2nd poorest	18.75
	middle	19.64
	2nd richest	18.75
	richest	19.64
Poverty	poor	29.46
	non-poor	70.54
Household food secured (self reported)	no	16.07
	yes	83.93
Household owns piped water	no	32.14
	yes	67.86
Household owns electricity	no	21.43
	yes	78.57

Source: Field survey, October 2012

PARTICIPATION IN URBAN AND PERI-URBAN AGRICULTURE VERSUS POVERTY AND FOOD SECURITY

The study finds that the UPA participation rate of households in Bahir Dar city and its fringes is minimal. Only 23% and 17% of the sample households practice urban vegetable production and livestock/poultry keeping respectively (Table 3). These figures are low given the potential of the study areas and compared to some other African cities, for instance, Kumasi (57%), Accra (46%), Lusaka (45%) and Nairobi (30%) in overall UPA (Cofie et al, 2003). In the City and its peripheries, there are vacant lands, at least temporarily, here and there; youth labour is also cheap; the water sources of rivers *Abay* (Blue Nile) and *Gumara* as well as Lake *Tana* are very close to the study areas. Quite lacking, however, seem to be societal awareness, institutional commitments and supports which help efficiently utilize the available resources.

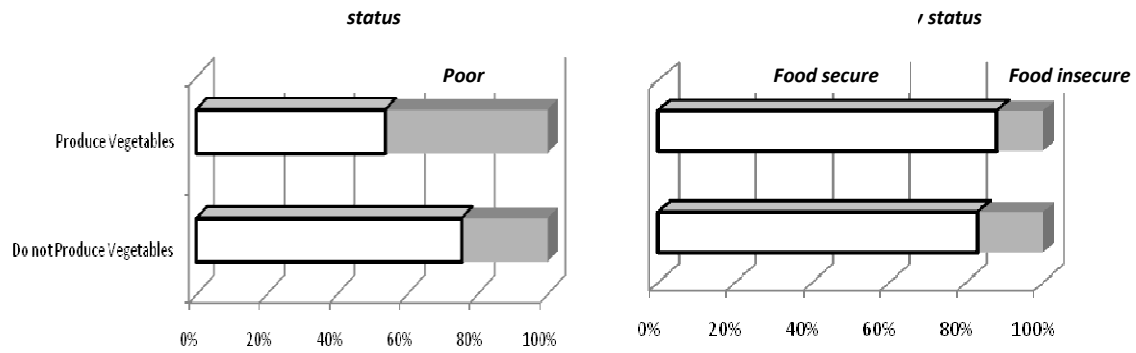
TABLE 3: PARTICIPATION RATES IN URBAN AND PERI-URBAN AGRICULTURE (% OF HOUSEHOLDS)

	Any member participates in vegetable production?		Any member participates in keeping of livestock/poultry?	
	No. of households	Percent	No. of households	Percent
Yes	26	23.21	19	16.96
No	86	76.79	93	83.04
Total	112	100.00	112	100.00

Source: Field survey, October 2012

The disaggregation summaries of participation in vegetable production by socioeconomic and food security status are presented in Figure 1. Not much difference seems to exist between the producing poor (46%) and non-poor (54%) households. It is found also that the majority of non-participating households are those that are non-poor. Though over 80% of UPA participating households self-reported to be food secure, they are only slightly better off compared to non-participants.

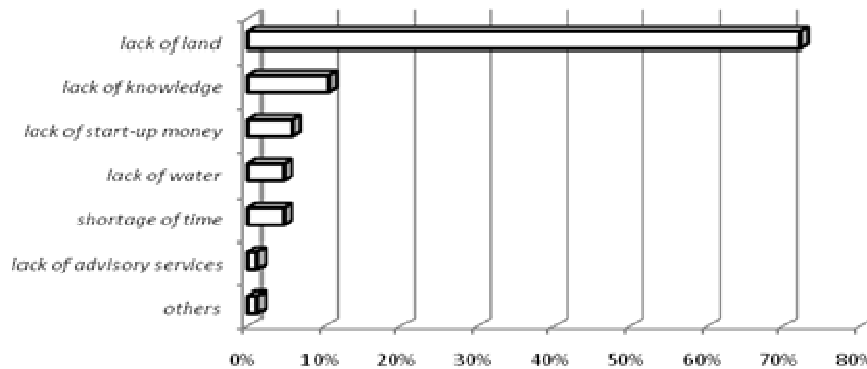
FIGURE 1: DISAGGREGATION OF PARTICIPATION IN UPA BY POVERTY AND FOOD SECURITY STATUS



Source: Field survey, October 2012

Households that did not produce vegetables were asked what major factors hindered them not to participate. Accordingly, the vast majority (72%) of the 86 households responded that the problem of land was their significant reason (Figure 2). The problem may be a huge constraint since certain households are do not have their own house and even those owning houses may not have adequate land to undertake urban agricultural activities. This problem is also identified as one of the big challenges for Nigerian urban farmers as indicated by Kareem and Raheem (2012). Major constraints in Kumasi are security of land rights and quality and regular supply of water (Cofie et al, 2003). Some respondents were not able to produce vegetables because they did not have the required knowledge to do so. Other obstacles cited were related to lack of start-up capital, water, time and advisory services.

FIGURE 2: MAJOR REASONS FOR NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN VEGETABLE PRODUCTION (% OF HOUSEHOLDS)



Source: Field survey, October 2012

In what follows, we present the econometric analysis where two logistic regressions were run to measure the effect, if any, of a household member’s engagement in UPA on the probability of being in poverty as well as food secure.

Table 4 presents some of the covariates of poverty in and around Bahir Dar city and their corresponding marginal effects. The variable of interest - any household member participates in vegetable production - is statistically significant at the 5% level. This positive coefficient, however, is in disagreement with our expectation, at least theoretically, that people who engage in some sort of UPA are more likely to be out of poverty. It is found, other things kept constant, that participation in vegetable production in and the peripheries of Bahir Dar city even exacerbates an average household’s chance of becoming poor. The estimation shows that engagement in vegetable production has the highest marginal effect on the probability of being in poverty compared to all other covariates included in the model. In fact, such a finding is not unique to our study. Yusuf et al (2008) also estimated for Ibadan metropolis of Nigeria that households participating in crop farming have higher chance of being poor. Mkwambisi et al (2010) also noted that, at the current level of practice, urban agriculture is an underutilised strategy for reducing poverty in Malawi.

A great deal of factors may be held responsible for such a rather unexpected finding. One may be the very perishable and seasonal nature of vegetables. It could be the case that vegetables produced for market perish or receive a lower price before they result in an improvement in household expenditure or asset ownership. Urban and peri-urban farmers may even bear costs to dispose their rotten vegetables off. Shifts in urban feeding habits may also be accounted for. Traditionally, vegetables in Ethiopia used to be pro-poor because of their cheap accessibility. But these days, many vegetables are increasingly becoming more pro-rich. As input costs of vegetable production are on the increase, even production for own consumption may be difficult for the poor. Vegetable production is highly water-intensive and partly land-intensive. These resources are hardly possessed by the urban poor. The poor could be renting private or public houses and/or purchasing water from other households. Further, stating their major reason for not to participate in vegetable production, the vast majority of the poor claimed lack of land as an obstacle. Even those poor who could use natural water sources and some vacant public lands may not do so due to lack of complementary inputs or official support. Such things could make the production to disproportionately be in favour only of the non-poor thereby eclipsing the roles of such a UPA in pulling people out of poverty.

TABLE 4: LOGISTIC REGRESSION RESULTS FOR THE EFFECT OF UPA ON HOUSEHOLD POVERTY

<i>Dependent variable: Household in poverty (=1 if poor)</i>			
<i>Independent variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>z-value</i>	<i>Marginal effect</i>
<i>Any household member participates in vegetable production</i>	2.582	2.65	0.3933**
<i>Any household member keeps livestock or poultry</i>	0.166	0.14	0.0151
<i>Household head is female</i>	3.584	2.85	0.1631**
<i>Age of the household head</i>	-0.253	-5.14	-0.0218***
<i>Log of household size</i>	1.00	0.99	0.0865
<i>Log of years of schooling of the household head</i>	-2.406	-2.79	-0.2081**
<i>Household head is not a migrant</i>	0.831	0.95	0.0832
<i>Monthly household saving</i>	-0.0015	-3.64	-0.0001***
<i>Household head is currently working</i>	-2.480	-2.29	-0.3721*
<i>Household is food secure (self-reported)</i>	-2.276	-1.81	-0.3537
<i>Constant</i>	18.15***	4.28	
<i>No. of observations</i>		88	
<i>Log pseudo-likelihood</i>		-25.00	
<i>Wald chi2(10)</i>		39.87***	
<i>Pseudo R²</i>		0.5151	

*, **, *** means significance at 10%, 5%, 1% levels respectively.

Control variables found significantly explaining the probability of a household to be in poverty include sex, age and years of schooling of the household head, monthly household saving as well as the employment status of household the head. The other UPA activity incorporated in the model – participation in urban or peri-urban keeping of livestock and poultry – is found to be statistically insignificant.

Despite the finding that participation in urban vegetable production has a negative impact on poverty reduction, we here find that it has the expected role of improving the food security status of households. The marginal effect of the dummy variable measuring the engagement in vegetable production of any household member, including the head, is estimated to be positive and statistically significant at the 1% level (Table 5). This implies that households allocating some time for such UPA activity have a higher likelihood, on the average, of reporting that they are food secure during the previous year. Numerically, families participating in vegetable production are about 11% more probable in being food secure compared to non-participants. This positive contribution of UPA to food security goes in line with the findings of Mutonodzo (2009) and Tefera (2010).

Obviously, vegetables enter into the nutritional requirements of human beings and producing them at home or nearby facilitates their access and consumption. This goes in line with a descriptive finding that households producing vegetables do so primarily for their own consumption and for both own consumption and market. Many also express the role of their participation on their families' food security status as either just good or very good. Participating households may also enjoy the benefit of exchanging their agricultural products with other food items which they do not produce. It is therefore possible to argue that vegetable production caters household food security in Bahir Dar city and its peripheries.

TABLE 5: LOGISTIC REGRESSION RESULTS FOR THE EFFECT OF UPA ON HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY

<i>Dependent variable: Food security status of a household during the previous 12 months (=1 if self-reported to be food secure)</i>			
<i>Independent variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>z-value</i>	<i>Marginal effect</i>
<i>Any household member participates in vegetable production</i>	8.105	3.79	0.1088***
<i>Any household member keeps livestock or poultry</i>	-3.578	-2.89	-0.3243**
<i>Household head is female</i>	-2.923	-2.02	-0.1892*
<i>Age of the household head</i>	-0.185	-4.03	-0.0041***
<i>Log of household size</i>	-1.138	-1.21	-0.0253
<i>Log of years of schooling of the household head</i>	-0.085	-0.11	-0.0019
<i>Household head is not a migrant</i>	1.072	1.27	0.0201
<i>Monthly household saving</i>	0.00042	0.71	0.0000
<i>Household head is currently working</i>	-1.735	-1.65	-0.0263
<i>Household has own water</i>	6.283	4.74	0.5912***
<i>Constant</i>	10.19**	3.20	
<i>No. of observations</i>		88	
<i>Log pseudo-likelihood</i>		-21.46	
<i>Wald chi2(10)</i>		28.29***	
<i>Pseudo R²</i>		0.4176	

*, **, *** means significance at 10%, 5%, 1% levels respectively.

On the other hand, however, participation in animal husbandry and poultry contributes inversely to household food security. This might have happened because the livestock are only oxen in the case of the peripheries. Further, it is estimated that the likelihood of household-level food security is expectedly and significantly higher, ceteris paribus, for those headed by males and the young as well as for households having access to own piped water.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In an attempt to assess households' participation in UPA and its contribution to poverty reduction and food security in Bahir Dar city and its vicinities, this study has analysed data from 112 randomly-selected households. The study identifies that there is a shallow participation in urban and peri-urban agricultural activities in the study area. It is also found that UPA in the form of vegetable production is not pro-poor at the current practice. The sector, nonetheless, has been found to have a significant role to play in making urban residents to be food secure. Under the current setting in which there is no official recognition and support to the sector, it seems difficult to use UPA as a poverty-reducing means. It is, therefore, imperative that the country in general and the City Administration of Bahir Dar in particular have a clear policy on urban and peri-urban agriculture. It would be good to establish a separate office for urban agriculture under the City Administration and also to publicize its activities.

The study finds that the scanty participation in UPA of urban residents in the study area is greatly resource-related. As long as there is the determination and willingness to cultivate, and the necessary official support, the potential for maximum use of the existing vacant lands in the City and its fringes could be enhanced to satisfy the basic food needs of the majority of the population in the City. In this connection, the City Administration might be expected to facilitate the use of idle urban lands (such as those reserved for *green areas* in many *kebeles*) to the youth together with credit and advisory services. It may also be vital to search for and maintain non-governmental organizations' projects that target the poor to participate in UPA. Creation of public awareness (for example through entrepreneurial training) on the utilization of available resources such as land and water might also do well. Supporting wealthier ones participating in UPA to increase employment opportunities in the sector cannot also be ruled out. Generally, coordination of efforts of the government, stakeholders and the

society aimed at reducing resource- and knowledge-related constraints might bring the desired outcome of repeating the food security attainment roles of UPA on poverty reduction as well.

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