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Opinion

Urban farming: growing green in the concrete jungle

John Musyaffa*

Informatics Engineering, Faculty of Computer Science, Brawijaya University, Indonesia

Email: jhn@musyfa.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

In the heart of bustling cities, where skyscrapers dominate the skyline and space is a luxury, a quiet revolution is taking root: urban farming. This innovative practice brings agriculture to cityscapes, blending greenery with gray to promote sustainability, health, and community engagement. Urban farming isn't just about growing food; it represents a paradigm shift towards more resilient urban environments in the face of climate change, food insecurity, and economic challenges (Boyko.,et al 2008).

Modern cities face a range of challenges, from limited access to fresh, nutritious food to environmental degradation caused by sprawling development. With the global population expected to reach nearly 10 billion by 2050, and with over 70% of people projected to live in urban areas, food production must evolve to keep pace. Urban farming offers a solution, reducing the ecological footprint of traditional agriculture by growing food closer to where it's consumed (Bräutigam.,et al 2013).

By cultivating fruits, vegetables, and herbs in urban areas, cities can reduce "food miles"—the distance food travels from farm to table. This minimizes greenhouse gas emissions associated with transportation and helps address urban food deserts, where access to fresh produce is limited.High-rise buildings and flat roofs are transformed into lush green spaces. These gardens not only produce fresh produce but also improve insulation and reduce urban heat island effects.Leveraging vertical space, this method uses stacked layers and advanced hydroponic or aeroponic systems to grow crops indoors (Chang.,et al 2020).

Shared plots in neighborhoods foster collaboration, where residents collectively grow and harvest crops.These soilless systems allow plants to grow in nutrient-rich water, maximizing yield in small spaces.Using LED lighting and controlled environments, urban farmers can grow crops year-round, independent of weather conditions.Urban farming contributes to environmental sustainability by recycling urban waste, conserving water, and reducing the carbon footprint of food production.By growing food locally, urban farms ensure a steady supply of fresh produce, especially in times of global supply chain disruptions. Urban agriculture generates jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities, from farming to selling produce at local markets (Chinnusamy.,et al 2009).

Community gardens and farming initiatives strengthen social ties, promote cooperation, and educate people about nutrition and sustainability.Green spaces foster habitats for birds, bees, and other pollinators, enhancing the city's ecological balance.Dense cities offer little room for large-scale farming. Innovations like vertical farming and micro-gardens are helping, but space remains a constraint.Setting up and maintaining urban farming systems, especially advanced technologies like hydroponics, can be expensive. Zoning laws, building codes, and other regulations may restrict farming in urban areas (Forestan.,et al 2020).

Known for its lack of arable land, Singapore has turned to vertical farming and rooftop gardens to enhance food security. Sky Greens, a vertical farming company, uses a rotating vertical system to grow vegetables efficiently. Rooftop farms like Brooklyn Grange produce thousands of pounds of organic produce annually while providing community engagement opportunities (Grativol.,et al 2012).

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Havana turned to urban farming to address food shortages, creating a robust network of organic urban farms.Urban farming is poised for growth, driven by technological advances, increasing awareness of environmental issues, and the pressing need for sustainable food systems. Governments,

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private sectors, and non-profits are investing in research and infrastructure to make urban farming more accessible and efficient (Kinoshita.,et al 2009).

Incorporating urban farming into urban planning can create greener cities, enhance public health, and improve resilience to climate change. By reimagining how and where we grow food, urban farming transforms cities from concrete jungles into thriving ecosystems (Lämke.,et al 2017).

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CONCLUSION

Urban farming represents hope and ingenuity in a world grappling with challenges of sustainability, food security, and urbanization. It reconnects people with their food sources, strengthens communities, and brings a slice of nature into urban living. As cities grow, so does the opportunity to grow green in the concrete jungle, building a more sustainable and equitable future for all.

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