AL Mustaqbal University
College of Arts and Human Sciences
Department of English Language and Literature

Select Reading (English Language for 1st class)

Chapter 7: The Growth of Urban Farming

By
Iltifat Aliwi Al-husseini

The Growth of Urban Farming

Chapter

7

Chapter Focus

CONTENT
Growing food in large cities

READING SKILL
Understanding the author's purpose

BUILDING VOCABULARY
Understanding word roots

"I'd rather be on my farm than be emperor of the world."

—George Washington, American president (1732–1799)

Chapter 7: The Growth of Urban Farming

Farming

For most people living in cities, buying fresh vegetables and fruits means a trip to the supermarket. But how far does the produce[1] have to travel to get to the store? In the United States, the average American produce has to travel 2,400 km to reach the supermarket where it is sold. And many other kinds of produce in the supermarkets are imported[2] from other countries, especially in the winter. It isn't hard to find fresh strawberries in the middle of January in Chicago. They have been flown in[3] from South America.

The United States isn't the only country that imports food. Most countries do. In fact, in Japan, 60 percent of supermarket food comes from overseas. In the United Kingdom, some studies say that 40 percent of food is imported. The city of London alone imports 80 percent of its food from as close as Europe and as far away as South Africa and New Zealand. If your bananas traveled 5,000 km to reach you, are they still "fresh?" 3

A lot of oil is used to grow and ships the food you find in the supermarket. Many studies say that ten calories of carbon energy……..

Introduction

In this lecture, we will explore the growing importance of urban farming, its environmental benefits, its impact on food security, and the innovative ways in which cities are adopting it. By the end of the lecture, you will have a clearer understanding of how urban farming is not only revitalizing urban spaces but also contributing to the sustainability of food systems around the world.

Urban Farming. This concept is reshaping the way cities think about food, sustainability, and the environment. As urbanization increases, urban farming is emerging as a solution to several challenges, such as the environmental impact of food transportation, the need for local food production, and access to fresh produce in cities.

1. The Current Food System: A Global Perspective

Before we dive into urban farming, let's first look at the current state of the global food system and the challenges it faces.

Food Transportation: In many countries, food is imported from around the world. In the United States, for example, the average produce travels over 2,400 kilometers to reach your local supermarket. This is not just limited to fruits and vegetables; it also includes other foods like meat and dairy products, which often travel thousands of kilometers.

Energy Consumption: Did you know that for every calorie of food you eat, approximately 10 calories of carbon energy are used to produce and transport it?

This is a highly inefficient system, contributing to greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation.

Imported Foods: Countries like Japan import 60% of their food, and in the United Kingdom, 40% of the food sold in supermarkets is imported. For example, the city of London imports a staggering 80% of its food. While this might seem convenient, it raises questions about the sustainability of this system, especially with climate change affecting global supply chains.

The Freshness Question: When you buy imported bananas that have traveled 5,000 kilometers, are they still considered "fresh"? The environmental cost, along with questions around freshness and sustainability, has led many to rethink where their food comes from and how it reaches them.

2. The Rise of Urban Farming

Now that we've established some of the issues in the current food system, let's explore how urban farming is providing solutions to these challenges.

Urban farming refers to the practice of growing food in city environments. This can range from small-scale community gardens to large vertical farms. Here are the key reasons why urban farming is on the rise:

- Local Food Production: Urban farming allows cities to grow food locally, reducing the need for long-distance transportation. This can lower carbon emissions and make food more accessible to city residents.

- Environmental Benefits: Urban farms are often integrated into existing spaces like rooftops, vacant lots, or abandoned buildings. This reuse of urban spaces helps reduce urban sprawl and the environmental footprint of farming. Moreover, urban farms can increase biodiversity, improve air quality, and contribute to stormwater management.
- Sustainability and Climate Change: With the looming effects of climate change on traditional farming (such as droughts, floods, and changing weather patterns), urban farming offers a more resilient way to produce food. It allows cities to become less dependent on distant farms and more self-sufficient.

3. Forms of Urban Farming

There are several innovative ways in which urban farming is being practiced across the globe. Some of the most common types include:

a. Rooftop Gardens: These are perhaps the most visible form of urban farming. Rooftops in cities are often transformed into productive gardens, where people can grow fruits, vegetables, and herbs. In cities like New York, rooftop gardens are becoming a common feature in both residential and commercial buildings.
b. Community Gardens: These are shared spaces where urban residents can grow food together. They are often found in neighborhoods where access to

fresh food is limited. Community gardens promote social interaction, education, and a sense of community ownership.

c. Vertical Farms: A newer innovation, vertical farming involves growing food in stacked layers, often in a controlled environment. This method allows farms to grow more food in less space and with fewer resources. Cities like Singapore and Tokyo have been experimenting with vertical farming, where hydroponics and aeroponics (soil-free growing techniques) are used to maximize space.
d. Food Forests: Food forests are public spaces where anyone can harvest fresh produce. These are typically designed as low-maintenance, sustainable ecosystems that provide a variety of fruits, vegetables, herbs, and nuts. They are an innovative way of providing fresh food while also creating green spaces in urban areas.
e. Food Forests: Food forests are public spaces where anyone can harvest fresh produce. These are typically designed as low-maintenance, sustainable ecosystems that provide a variety of fruits, vegetables, herbs, and nuts. They are an innovative way of providing fresh food while also creating green spaces in urban areas.

4. Urban Farming and Food Security

One of the most significant benefits of urban farming is its potential to address food security issues in cities.

Food Deserts: Many urban areas, particularly those in lower-income neighborhoods, are considered food deserts, where access to fresh and healthy food is limited or non-existent. Urban farming can help fill this gap by providing affordable, fresh produce directly in these neighborhoods.

Health and Nutrition: Urban farms often focus on growing nutritious food like leafy greens, fruits, and vegetables. This can improve public health by increasing access to fresh, healthy foods, which are often more expensive in supermarkets.

Economic Opportunities: Urban farming can also create job opportunities. These jobs range from farm workers to chefs, educators, and researchers in urban agriculture. In cities, urban farms can also serve as small businesses that sell directly to consumers, reducing the need for middlemen.

5. Challenges and Limitations

While urban farming has many benefits, it also comes with challenges:

Space Constraints: Urban areas are often crowded, and finding space for large-scale farms can be difficult. However, creative solutions like vertical farming and hydroponics are helping overcome these limitations.

Initial Costs: Starting an urban farm can be expensive, especially when infrastructure and equipment are needed. However, over time, urban farms can be profitable and sustainable.

Regulations: Zoning laws and building codes in many cities may not be conducive to farming. Advocates for urban farming are working to change these policies to encourage food production within cities.

Climate Conditions: Cities with extreme climates or little sunlight may struggle to support large-scale urban farming. However, technologies like indoor farms and greenhouses are helping to mitigate these challenges.

6. Global Examples of Urban Farming

Let's take a look at some inspiring examples of urban farming around the world:

1. Singapore: Singapore has been a leader in urban farming, with innovative projects like Sky Greens, a vertical farm that uses a rotating system to grow vegetables in high-rise buildings.
2. Detroit, USA: In Detroit, many abandoned lots have been turned into urban farms, providing fresh food to a city that has faced significant economic challenges. These farms also help revitalize the city and create local jobs.
3. Paris, France: Paris has implemented a plan to transform its rooftops into vegetable gardens, with a goal of producing more than 1,000 hectares of food by 2020.
4. Cuba: After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba embraced urban farming as a way to address food shortages. Today, urban farms in Cuba are still thriving, providing fresh food to the population.

Conclusion

Urban farming is not just a trend—it is a solution to the many challenges facing modern cities. As urbanization continues to rise and environmental concerns intensify, urban farming offers a promising way to grow food locally, reduce carbon footprints, and promote food security. The future of food production may very well lie in the heart of our cities, on rooftops, in community gardens, and in vertical farms. By embracing urban farming, we can make cities more sustainable, resilient, and equitable places to live. The next time you see a community garden or rooftop farm in your city, remember that it represents a small but significant step toward a healthier, more sustainable future.

Questions & Discussion

At the end of the lecture, asking them about anything related to urban farming, and ask them sharing their experiences with local food production.