

URBAN GARDENS AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD PRODUCTION IN THE CITY OF ROSARIO, ARGENTINA

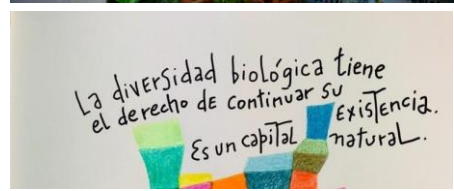
In June 2021 the [City of Rosario in Argentina](#) was awarded with the grand Prize for Cities 2020-2021, recognizing the results of the urban agriculture program implemented by the Municipality for building inclusive climate resilience and improving access to healthy, local food.

The urban and peri-urban Agriculture Programme presented by the Municipality of Rosario and winning the Prize, has been initially launched during the Argentinian economic crisis of 2001, and has evolved to become a cornerstone of the city's response to increased flooding and heat events. Originally designed to help improve food security and nutrition for low-income residents by strategically repurposing public land and private peri-urban spaces, the Programme now helps improve resilience to extreme events and reduce carbon emissions via shorter supply chains

In 2021, across the city of Rosario, the third-largest city in Argentina, 75 hectares of land are now dedicated to agroecological production and urban gardens, with another 800 hectares preserved for agriculture in the peri-urban area. This prevents urban sprawl and provides jobs and food to hundreds of residents. More than 2,400 families have started their own gardens, and seven new permanent market spaces have been created. Shorter, localized food supply chains help the city reduce carbon emissions by producing 2,500 tons of fruits and vegetables each year, reducing food import dependency and food insecurity. Greenhouse gas emissions associated with the delivery of vegetables, for example, are estimated to be reduced by 95%.

[The document published in the Prize for Cities' website tells the story of the evolution of this programme](#), which has been involving an ever-increasing number of institutions, associations and citizens and has entailed progressive and determined measures by the municipal government to make urban gardens as a substantial part of the sustainable development plan of the city. Some aspects of this process are particularly significant and can inspire other cities to undertake similar sustainable urban planning paths.

A first aspect is that the family gardens created in Rosario by the *Municipal urban agriculture programme* in order to face the emergency situation have managed to generate a new great demand for fresh produce that can be purchased directly from producers. The gardens have been installed on non-buildable urban spaces (sides of streams, sides of railroad tracks and roads, etc.) ceded by the Municipality to productive groups of citizens through agreements. These gardens have quickly become spaces for direct marketing, generating short channels that favor direct encounters between consumers and producers, within the framework of a social and supportive economy.



In addition, [as highlighted on the website of the Urban Agriculture Program](#), these gardens have been adopting agroecological techniques to produce vegetables free of pesticides of high biological value. A new city market has been created enabling growers to sell fruits and vegetables directly and provide new sources of affordable and healthy local produce to residents.

Also taking into account this new demand for quality products generated in the city, an inventory of vacant and underutilized urban land that could be repurposed into agricultural plots has been realized with the support of the University of Rosario. The inventory found that 36% of the municipal area was suitable for agriculture conversion, including land along railroads and highways, low-lying, flood-prone lands, and designated greenbelts. In 2004, the Municipality approved an ordinance allowing the city to grant temporary tenure of vacant land for urban agriculture. This measure has helped to significantly expand the impact of urban gardens in the city of Rosario.

A further significant step was implemented by the Municipality in 2007, when a record-shattering rainfall forced the city to evacuate over 3,000 people, recognizing that the conversion of underutilized land to green spaces could help absorb excess water generated by atmospheric events and prevent floods representing an increasing risk related to climate change. Recognizing that the city's resilience depends not just on converting land in inner neighborhoods but also on protecting its rapidly urbanizing surroundings, the Department of Water Management created a flood risk map to identify problematic zones and to design the development priorities in the Urban Plan of Rosario 2007-2017.

Based on the inventory of vacant and underutilized urban land realized in 2004, the city quickly opened two Vegetable Garden Parks, bolstering the city's flood resilience while providing additional land for urban agriculture. In 2011 the Municipality passed an ordinance designating 800 hectares of peri-urban land to be used for agroecological production as well. The strategic plan formally launched in 2015 helps contain urban sprawl while restoring land in an ecologically sensitive manner, increasing Rosario's resilience to floods and expanding the total land available for food production.

The Rosario Urban Agriculture Program website presents the whole wide range of [institutional, academic and associative actors involved in the management of this innovative approach to urban planning](#). It also highlights that the community gardens, nurseries, seed banks, aromatic and medicinal plants, social agro-industries generated by the Urban Agriculture Programme represent a green route that crosses the city, showing how the managers of these activities can change the landscape, improving the neighborhood and city environment, recovering degraded or abandoned places and turning them into spaces for meeting and exchanging knowledge.

The Grand Prize for Cities awarded to the city of Rosario by the [Ross center del World Resources Institute](#) recognized the value of the strategies and methods adopted and their significant contribution to the global challenge of making cities more sustainable, inclusive and climate resilient. The Prize for Cities is a global award organized to celebrate and spotlight transformative urban change. It seeks to inspire urban change-makers across the globe by telling impactful stories of sustainable urban transformation. Rosario has been selected to receive The Grand Prize from a pool of 262 submissions from 54 countries on the theme of "inclusive cities for a changing climate".



To know more

[Prize for Cities 2020-2021 website](#)

[Rosario Urban Agricultural Programme in Prize for Cities website](#)

[Article in WRI website](#)

[News in Agricultura Urbana Rosario website](#)

[Actors participating in the Urban Agriculture Programme](#)

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[Finalists Prize for Cities 2020-2021](#)

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