

Urban farming in Kharkiv: analytical report



FUSILLI PROJECT

This project is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under grant agreement No. 101000717.

Credits: Green for You

Introduction

Urban farming is a relatively new but rapidly developing area of urban research and practice. It combines not only environmental, but also social, economic and cultural aspects, becoming an effective tool for strengthening urban communities, maintaining food security and improving the ecological state of the urban environment. In global practice, urban farming has already proven its effectiveness in such megacities as New York, Tokyo, and London, and this trend is gradually gaining relevance for Ukrainian cities as well.

Kharkiv, as one of the largest cities in Ukraine, has faced numerous challenges as a result of the war, which have made it necessary to find alternative approaches to ensuring food stability and integrating local communities. In an urbanized space that suffers from infrastructure damage and social challenges, urban farming is an innovative approach to addressing these issues. In addition, it provides unique opportunities for urban space development, community unification, and job creation.



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Urban farming

It is the practice of growing food in or near the city, allowing residents of metropolitan areas to provide themselves with fresh food. This type of farming can include a variety of growing methods, such as vertical farms, greenhouses, hydroponics, aquaponics, as well as traditional methods on small plots, rooftops, or even in containers.

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Reducing food dependence.

Urban farming can provide citizens with fresh vegetables, fruits, and herbs, reducing dependence on large agricultural enterprises and supermarkets.

Saving water and energy.

The use of innovative methods such as hydroponics and aquaponics can save water and energy compared to traditional farming methods.

Development of urban ecology.

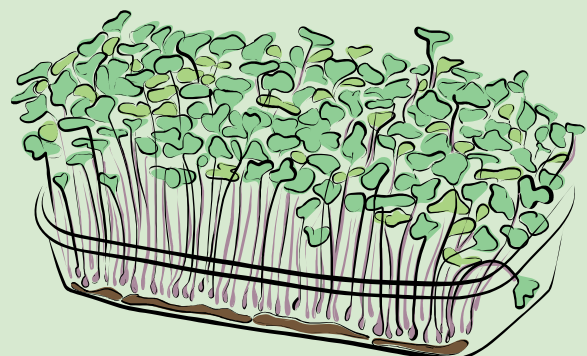
Urban farms can improve air quality, create green spaces, and contribute to biodiversity in cities.

Rational use of space.

Urban farming allows you to grow food in confined spaces using vertical gardens, greenhouses, and containers, which minimizes the need for large land plots.

Freshness and availability of products.

As production takes place close to consumers, food becomes more accessible and fresher, which promotes healthy eating and reduces the need for transportation.



Credits: open Internet sources

Farming in Kharkiv



Farming in Kharkiv and the Kharkiv region is an important component of Ukraine's agricultural sector. The region is known for its fertile soils and favorable climatic conditions, which allow it to grow a wide range of crops, such as wheat, barley, corn, sunflower, and others. However, in recent years, farmers in Kharkiv region have faced a number of challenges. In particular, due to the decline in grain prices and rising production costs, wheat production is becoming less profitable. Some farmers are forced to reduce their acreage or switch to other crops.

The hostilities have also had a significant impact on the region's agricultural sector. Many farms were destroyed and some land remained mined, making it difficult to cultivate. To support farmers in these conditions, humanitarian aid is being provided, including free seed for farms up to 100 hectares. Despite the difficulties, farmers in Kharkiv region continue to work and restore their farms, for example, the Jupiter farm in the village of Khotimlia, which lost part of its livestock during the occupation, is currently resuming milk production and plans to increase the number of cows.



Credits: open Internet sources

Urban farming in Kharkiv performs an important social function by promoting community integration and supporting vulnerable populations. Volunteer organizations and local activists engage IDPs, the elderly, and those in need of social support in such projects. This not only helps to solve nutritional problems, but also allows people to feel part of the community, interact with others, and participate in the city's recovery.

In addition to its social benefits, urban farming also contributes to improving the environmental situation in Kharkiv. Small gardens and vegetable gardens created within the city reduce the impact of the urban heat island effect, improve air quality, and promote biodiversity. Spaces such as green roofs, urban greenhouses, and parks reduce pollution, which is especially important in the context of military-related pollution.

Despite the successes, the development of urban farming in Kharkiv faces certain barriers. The main challenges are related to limited financial resources, insufficient number of qualified professionals, and difficulties with access to materials and equipment. However, with the support of international organizations and donors, as well as the enthusiasm of the local community, these difficulties are gradually being overcome. Initiatives such as urban gardens and community gardening projects have great prospects and can become the basis for sustainable urban development, environmental restoration, and community support in times of war.



De-occupation shop (Lavka Deokupatsii)

Credits: De-occupation Shop

In June 2024, the “De-occupation Shop” project, initiated by the Volunteer Charitable Foundation, was launched in Kharkiv. The aim of the project is to support farmers from the de-occupied territories of Kharkiv region, in particular from the villages of Studenok and Dovhenke, by providing them with the opportunity to sell their products in an urban environment.

The “De-occupation Shop” offers a wide range of fresh vegetables, such as cucumbers, potatoes, zucchini, cabbage, onions, and honey, grown and harvested by farmers from the liberated territories. This not only contributes to the economic support of local producers, but also provides Kharkiv residents with high-quality and fresh products.

The project also aims to restore agriculture, create economic independence for farmers and integrate their products into the urban market. Volunteers of the Volunteer Foundation provide farmers with the necessary assistance, including greenhouses and seeds, which allows them to restore and develop their farms after the occupation.

The “De-occupation Shop” is located on the territory of the 7th Warehouse in Kharkiv. The shop's working hours depend on the supply of products and demand among customers, but volunteers plan to work daily in the future.

Description of the organization's activities

The “De-occupation Shop” is a unique initiative that has become not only a platform for selling farmers' products, but also a symbol of the restoration of the de-occupied territories and support for local farmers.



Credits: De-occupation Shop

The “De-occupation Shop” actively cooperates with volunteer organizations and foundations that provide the necessary equipment, seeds and greenhouses to restore agricultural activities in the liberated territories. Volunteers help farmers start or restore their businesses, which helps ensure the stability of local communities. In the future, the project plans to expand its activities to include more farmers and establish regular supplies.

The products sold in the De-occupation Store are natural, high-quality and often organic, as farmers from the liberated territories have the opportunity to grow vegetables, fruits and other products on clean soils without using large amounts of chemicals. This attracts the attention of Kharkiv residents who prefer fresh and environmentally friendly products. The store sells cucumbers, potatoes, zucchini, cabbage, onions, honey, and other seasonal products, which contributes to the popularity of the store among locals.

Credits: De-occupation Shop



Green for You

"Green for You is a city farm located near Kharkiv that specializes in growing microgreens. Founded by sisters Valentyna Denysenko and Tetiana Chernikova, displaced from Donbas, the farm grows more than 20 types of microgreens, including peas, sunflower, radish, cabbage, flax, buckwheat, and alfalfa.

Credits: Green for You

Green for You products are sold under its own brand name in supermarket chains such as Silpo, Vostorg, Klass, Rost, Fozzy, and Chudo-Market. The farm also cooperates with restaurants, including the Syndicate Vkusa branch chain in Kharkiv. The company adheres to the principles of ecological production, not using chemical fertilizers and growth stimulants. In addition to microgreens, Green for You grows salad crops and macro greens such as kale. Green for you also conducts trainings and workshops for those interested in growing microgreens, offering training on various aspects of the business. In this way, Green for You combines the production of environmentally friendly products with active social activities, promoting healthy eating and supporting the local community. Social responsibility is an important component of the farm's activities. For three years, the company has been cooperating with children with Down syndrome, teaching them how to grow microgreens and eat healthy.



Credits: Green for You

Performance evaluation

An important aspect of Green for You is environmental responsibility. The farm does not use chemical fertilizers and growth stimulants, which makes the products as environmentally friendly and safe as possible. This positions the company as a participant in the sustainable development market, which emphasizes a healthy lifestyle and reducing harmful environmental impact.



A focus on environmental friendliness and the absence of chemical additives ensure high quality products that meet the requirements of consumers who choose healthy food.



The company's program of working with children with special needs and training for beginners create a positive image.



The company's presence in large supermarket chains and cooperation with local restaurants help it achieve stable financial performance and increase brand awareness.

As the trend of healthy eating continues to grow, more and more players are entering the microgreen market. This requires Green for you to continue to innovate and expand its product range.



The company should emphasize the benefits of its products through advertising campaigns and educational events to increase demand among consumers who are not yet familiar with microgreens.



The interest in healthy food products in the international market creates opportunities for the company to expand its operations outside of Ukraine.



Food for You

Food for you is the production of ready-to-eat meals in retort bags that are sterilized and stored for a long time without additional conditions. We use our own grown vegetables and quality products from local farmers in Poltava region. The production complies with the requirements of Ukrainian food safety legislation.

Our production is a continuation of the story of war, family, care and proper nutrition. By creating delicious long-lasting food, we take care of our dearest ones: our defenders, volunteers, doctors, men who temporarily live far away from their families, and people who are deprived of normal living conditions. In peacetime, our products will be of interest to hunters, fishermen, outdoor enthusiasts and workers in the field. The important thing is that we guarantee quality, convenience and great taste.



Credits: Green for You

Credits: Green for You

From microgreens to ready meals

After moving from Kharkiv to the village of Orzhytsia, the family began producing long-term storage foods that do not require special storage conditions and can be easily reheated even in the field.

These packages, which can withstand up to two years of storage, allow us to provide food to the Ukrainian military and residents of regions without access to electricity or gas.



Green For You Food creates products exclusively from natural ingredients, maintaining high quality and flavor even during long-term storage. The range includes cereals, stewed cabbage with mushrooms, zucchini and beetroot caviar, and delicious jams. The company also produces gluten-free cookies for children with special needs.



Credits: Green for You

A few words from the founders

The war has disrupted all logistics chains, so the product range of the Orzhytsia-based mini-enterprise does not include, for example, eggplant caviar, which is made with a lot of sweet peppers, onions, and carrots. All of these vegetables grow well in the south of Ukraine, which is partially under occupation, so last year the prices were outrageous.

This story is a symbol of how internally displaced persons can not only integrate into new communities but also actively contribute to their development. The Chernikovs show by their own example that, despite all the difficulties, it is possible to continue living, creating and dreaming of returning to their native land, which they believe will become Ukrainian again.

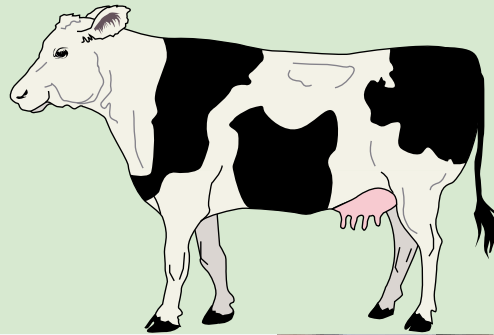


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WE HAVE DELICIOUS ZUCCHINI AND BEETROOT CAVIAR - TENDER AND SPICY. WE BAKE THE VEGETABLES FOR THEM. SIMILARLY, ONLY BAKED VEGETABLES ARE USED FOR THE VINAIGRETTE.

Credits: Green for You

“Yupiter” Dairy Farm



RESTORATION OF A FARM
IN THE DE-OCCUPIED
VILLAGE OF KHOTIMLIA IN
KHARKIV REGION

The Yupiter farm in the de-occupied village of Khotimlia in the Kharkiv region had about 700 cows before the outbreak of full-scale war and produced seven tons of milk daily that met European quality standards. Since the beginning of the war, the herd has shrunk to 500 cows, and due to a lack of feed, the animals have lost weight, making it difficult to reproduce. Milk production dropped to 2.5 tons per day. However, the farm is gradually resuming its production, providing quality milk for baby food. The company still faces difficulties with resources and does not achieve profitability.

Credits: Yupiter

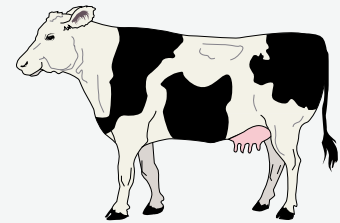


The state of the farm at the time of de-occupation

Before the war, the farm had about 700 cows and produced an average of seven tons of milk per day, which met European quality standards. The farm's products were used to produce baby food, which indicates a high level of milk quality.

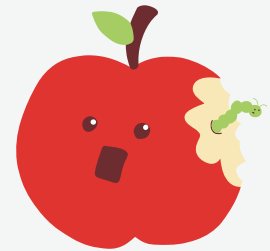
- **Reduction in the number of cows.**

Due to difficulties in providing feed and housing conditions, the number of cows was reduced to 500.



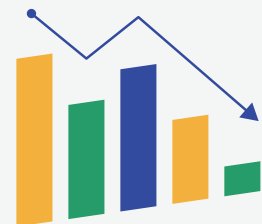
- **Decrease in the quality of nutrition.**

The lack of feed and its poor quality caused the animals to lose weight, which complicated the reproduction of the herd and affected milk production.



- **Decrease in production volumes.**

Milk production dropped to 2.5 tons per day, a significant decline compared to pre-war levels.



Credits: Yupiter

Snail farm

In 2023, the Gerasymenko family from Kharkiv, who had lost their previous business due to Russian shelling, started a snail farm in their backyard. This project has not only become a new source of income, but also an example of resilience and adaptation to war. The report discusses the main aspects of setting up the farm, challenges, and prospects for the development of such an unconventional business.

Yulia Gerasymenko and her husband decided to start a snail farm after meeting a man from Izyum who used to breed snails. The couple bought their first snails in Dnipro, learning the breeding techniques, conditions for care and rearing on their own. To create the farm, they set up a queen cell, providing the necessary humidity and temperature parameters.

Credits: Snail farm



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IN GENERAL, THERE IS NO CULTURE OF SNAIL CONSUMPTION IN OUR REGION YET, AND SO THE FIRST CHALLENGE WAS TO SELL OUR PRODUCTS.



Credits: Suspiine Kharkiv

About the farm

The snail business in Ukraine is a relatively new phenomenon, which causes different reactions among the population: from interest and enthusiasm to skepticism and prejudice.

For Yulia, starting a farm was not only a way to generate income, but also a method of psychological support. Working on the land helped her to keep calm, remain productive, and feel inner strength during the war. Today, the snail farm in Kharkiv continues to grow, although its activities are limited to the family's yard. The Gerasymenkos are planning expansion, exploring sales opportunities and researching demand for their products both in Ukraine and abroad.

To increase public interest in snail meat and dispel myths, the Gerasymenkos organized tours of their farm with product tastings. Visitors are told about the beneficial properties of snail meat, its dietary and hypoallergenic value. During the tastings, people have the opportunity to taste snail meat, which helps to change their perception of its taste and texture. The farm owners explain the process of growing and caring for snails, which allows visitors to better understand the specifics of the business.

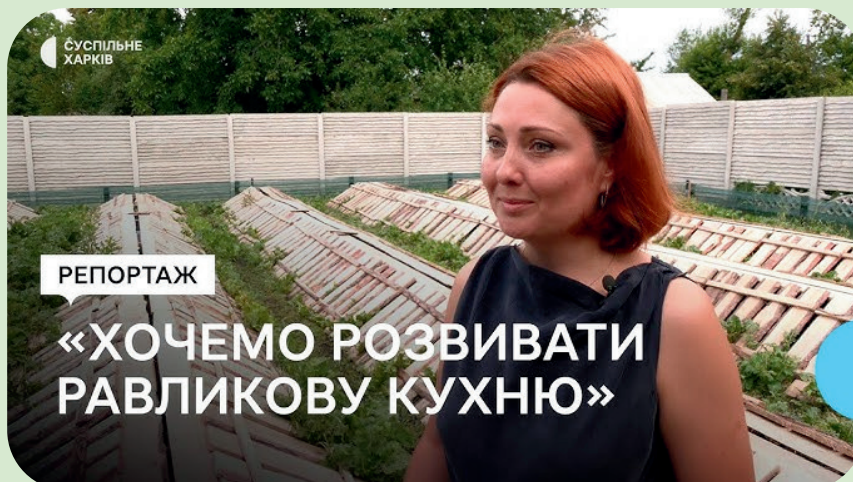
Studying and improving processes

The Gerasymenko farm demonstrates how small businesses can survive and even thrive in the face of economic instability and social challenges. Their experience shows that creative approaches, such as tastings and tours, can change people's attitudes toward new products and help overcome prejudices.

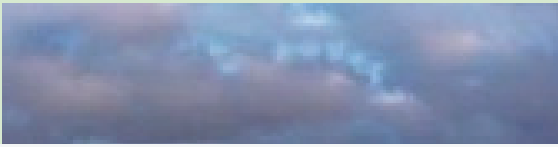
Credits: Snail farm

The year 2023 was the starting season for the Gerasymenko farm, in which they learned by doing, gained experience, and faced numerous mistakes. According to Yulia Gerasymenko, the farm went through many “mistakes of the world” that are typical for a new business. Based on this experience, they developed a plan to correct mistakes, which the owners plan to implement next season.

To overcome perception barriers, the Gerasymenkos launched educational tours with tastings, which have become a key element of their marketing strategy. Such events help to popularize the product and at the same time inform consumers about its nutritional value (snail meat contains high levels of protein, which is easily absorbed by the body, and has low calories).



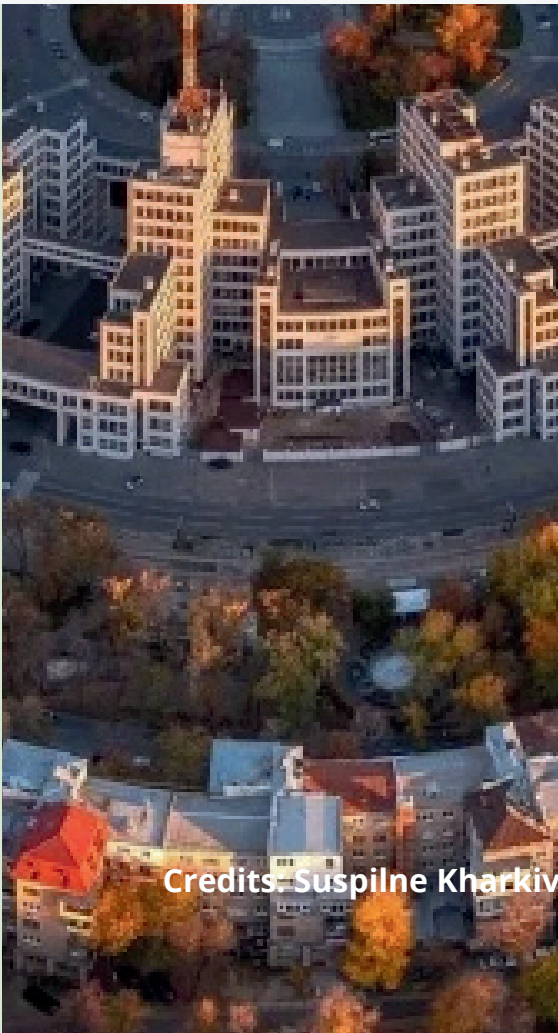
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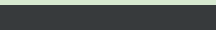
Key challenges of urban farming

Kharkiv is a densely populated city with a high building density, and allocating land for urban farming is a difficult task. Most areas are either built up or reserved for infrastructure projects, which significantly limits the possibilities of creating urban farms.

In Ukraine, the legal framework for urban farming is still in its infancy. The lack of clear regulations, in particular on land use and taxation for urban farms, creates administrative barriers for farmers and investors.



Credits: Suspilne Kharkiv



1. Financial difficulties and lack of investment.
2. Lack of experience and knowledge among the population.
3. Difficulties with infrastructure and logistics.
4. Problems with the city's environmental condition.
5. Low public awareness and insufficient demand.
6. Instability due to the military context.

Credits: Comments Kharkiv

5 steps to sustainable farming



1. Develop and implement city policies that regulate and support urban farming, including access to land, simplified leasing processes, and reduced tax burdens for small farms.
2. Introduce courses and trainings for the public to teach participants the basics of urban farming, including growing plants on balconies, rooftops, or courtyards.
3. Allocate space for community gardens and microfarms in urban areas. These can be abandoned plots or specially adapted spaces on the roofs and courtyards of high-rise buildings.
4. Encourage farmers to use vertical farming, aquaponics, hydroponics, and automated greenhouses, which can significantly increase productivity in limited areas.
5. Organize city fairs or create separate zones at existing markets to sell urban farm products.





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