

Athens: vegetable gardens (VG) in schools and nurseries

Even though urban allotments could have greatest impact in connecting residents to food, the municipality is not ready. By piloting at nursery level, can see who gets involved; possibility that the nursery VGs form a hub for spreading urban farming & sustainable food policy

Nursery VGs allow for everyday care of the gardens (by children, parents, teachers), and create sense of ownership. Resulting care about best possible management so gardens can be operational long term

VG creation is dependent on the municipality: food policy is not standard in municipal policy, so the interest in VGs may fluctuate with politics
 □ **need to come up with a process that introduces VGs as an issue needing long-term policy**



Green spaces that can be cultivated occupy 11% of the city; another 4% is coverage by trees that already exist. Of those, must identify what can be cultivated

Moved from urban gardening generically to VGs in schools and nurseries, where the municipality can intervene directly & quickly

Rooftop VGs are being set up in 11 schools

Set up of VGs started in 7 nurseries

Funding from municipality, private sector, CSR, and pro-bono work on behalf of Directorate of Green

Maintenance of nursery VGs performed by children & teachers as part of experiential learning process

Rooftop VGs maintained by Directorate of Green (DoG); not used for experiential learning due to safety concerns

Due to extreme heat on roofs during summer, small delays in watering was detrimental

Rooftop VGs did not allow for everyday care; hence, no strong connection or concern for future. As DoG staff became overloaded, could not regularly maintain the gardens

Searched potential funding sources (municipal funds unlikely). Two potential sources - National Green Fund and NGOs

Planned meeting b/w Dept. of Env. Education & NGOs to explore potential for synergies: so the municipality operates as a facilitator, rather than the agent who sets up VGs.

First search on where urban vegetable gardens (VG) can be created; unclear if spaces exist

Past urban VG did not have much effect and did not last long

Believe that rooftop VGs, or VGs in schools may provide solutions to the space and land use issue.

At this point, prioritising urban gardening according to feasibility and target groups

In parallel, examining the potential for VGs in schools, kindergartens, and nurseries

Inquiry on land-level VGs in nurseries had positive response from nurseries' president

Listed potential sources of funding for VGs in money and in-kind

Need to monitor rooftop VGs during summer, and any safety issues - children on roof tops increases the probabilities of accidents

Prioritisation based on feasibility is necessary to get results & lead to further action in the future. For now, focusing on the nurseries' VGs at land-level

Funding and political-will are the two great challenges for expanding VGs

Roof-top VGs could have more efficient uses (eg. with solar panels) but not for education or food production

VGs do not per se create connection b/w residents and food □ the direct and regular occupation with VGs creates sense of ownership and fosters connection to food

Due to elections in October, and as we had a new mayor elected who only started December '23, progress halted for now.

Past attempts were time consuming with minimal results. 2013: 30 VGs set up in primary & secondary schools; were not reinforced, then discontinued

Made a clear picture on Athens area; how much is the green area in the city?

How can residents **connect to their food** through production, while there is limited or **NO space for urban farming?**

How can **vegetable gardens in schools and nurseries** be set-up and maintained, while the **funding** for setting up vegetable gardens is **scarce?**

How can VGs be **maintained in summer time**, while schools are **closed** and plants do not get **watered adequately?**

How to **expand nursery VGs** to primary/secondary schools, while **decisions** pass through Attiki Region, **funding is sparse**, and operational scheme is **complicated?**

PHASE 1: EXPLORING NEEDS
2021



PHASE 2: PREPARATION
2022

PHASE 3: ACTION IMPLEMENTATION
2022

PHASE 4: ADAPTING
2023

PHASE 5: EXPANDING
2023

