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PROMOTION OF URBAN AGRICULTURE IS IMPORTANT TO THE AMERICAN FOOD SUPPLY (/full-blog/2012/03/promotion-of-urban- agriculture-is.html)



(http://lh6.ggpht.com/-uXoqHg7Ccpw/T3dILMoSOZI/AAAAAAAAAC4/MRZuVWSmmM0/s1600-h/lucasfoglia_rooftopfarm_065%25255B2%25255D.jpg)

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By: Clay Duncan, Staff Member

Typically, the mention of agriculture conjures up images of cornfields and sprawling farms in distant, rural areas. It therefore may come as a surprise to hear that a crucial, yet overlooked, segment of the American agricultural industry exists within and adjacent to metropolitan areas. This “urban agriculture” is “[t]he growing, processing, and distributing of food and other products through intensive plant cultivation and animal husbandry in and around cities.”^[1] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Duncan, Clay/2012/#_edn1) Despite the smaller scale on which its growers operate, it is a meaningful

tool for combatting hunger and achieving food security on a national scale.[2]

(file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Duncan, Clay/2012/#_edn2)

As a result of our highly industrialized and “corporate-controlled food system”, the United States suffers from harmful side effects in the form of environmental damage and health costs to the end consumer.[3] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Duncan, Clay/2012/#_edn3) Additionally, many poor Americans are food insecure in that they suffer from “hunger in the midst of plenty.”[4]

(file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Duncan, Clay/2012/#_edn4) Through the creation of sustainable farms with affordable produce near poverty-ridden cities, the poor are given greater access to the food they need.

In order for urban agricultural activities to endure, they must be resistant to the constant pressures to convert land to commercial uses. A recent study looked at 15 metro-area counties from the Pacific to the Atlantic coasts in an effort to see what can be done to preserve urban farmland and farming.[5] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Duncan, Clay/2012/#_edn5) Based upon the research, farmers are more likely to develop and maintain their land if they feel that the local government will side with them on disputes that may arise with non-farmers.[6] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Duncan, Clay/2012/#_edn6) In terms of land use, farmers were shown to respond favorably to farm-friendly zoning regulations and the promotion of land transfers to their descendants.[7] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Duncan, Clay/2012/#_edn7) Also, it was found that labor shortages in urban agriculture suggest a need to reform worker programs in an effort to increase the labor supply and allow farmers to maintain their operations profitably.[8]

(file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Duncan, Clay/2012/#_edn8)

Urban agriculture will never produce the same quantity of food that our current, nationalized system provides. However, it is still very important as it allows for food to reach those suffering from poverty and hunger in a more cost-effective way. Local city governments should make an effort to promote urban farms and prevent their conversion to other commercial uses.

[1] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Duncan, Clay/2012/#_ednref1) *Urban Agriculture and Community Food Security in the United States: Farming from the City Center to the Urban Fringe*, Urban Agriculture Committee of the Community Food Security Coalition (Feb. 2002), at 5, available at <http://www.foodsecurity.org/urbanagpaper.pdf> (<http://www.foodsecurity.org/urbanagpaper.pdf>).

[2] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Duncan, Clay/2012/#_ednref2) *Id.* at 4.

[3] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Duncan, Clay/2012/#_ednref3) *Id.* at 6.

[4] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Duncan, Clay/2012/#_ednref4) *Id.*

[5] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Duncan, Clay/2012/#_ednref5) Dick Esseks, Lydia Oberholtzer, Kate Clancy, Mark Lapping, Anita Zurbrugg, *Sustaining Agriculture in Urbanizing Counties: Insights from 15 Coordinated Case Studies* (Jan. 16, 2009), at 5, available at <http://www.farmland.org/resources/sustaining-agriculture-in-urbanizing-counties/documents/Sustaining-agriculture-in-urbanizing-counties.pdf> (<http://www.farmland.org/resources/sustaining-agriculture-in-urbanizing-counties/documents/Sustaining-agriculture-in-urbanizing-counties.pdf>).

[6] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Duncan, Clay/2012/#_ednref6) *Id.* at 179.

[7] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Duncan, Clay/2012/#_ednref7) *Id.*

[8] (file:///C:/Users/Steve/Dropbox/Education/Law Journal/Blog/Staffer Blog Posts/2L/Duncan, Clay/2012/#_ednref8) *Id.* at 181.

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