Four reasons why filling our urban spaces with food growing places is a good idea

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Four reasons why filling our urban spaces with food growing places is a good idea
1. We need to find ways to do agriculture differently
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- Food is a major contributor to climate change
- How we grow food makes up the majority of emissions
- And a big chunk of this is land related
1. We need to find ways to do agriculture differently

Agricultural land use is a major driver of environmental degradation, and land/soil degradation is a threat to the future sustainability of agriculture.
1. We need to find ways to do agriculture differently

How many harvests left in our soils?

• 16% of soils in our recent global study had <100 years left
• Soils with lifespans shorter than humans found all over the world
• Soils are an almost non-renewable resource – it can take 100s-1000s of years to form an inch of topsoil
1. We need to find ways to do agriculture differently

Current dominant modes of food production are unsustainable

What might urban spaces have to offer?
- Food with less land take and deforestation?
- Food with less biodiversity loss?
- Food with less soil degradation?
- Food with more opportunities for water and nutrient use efficiency?

Our research: How much food (fruit & vegetables) could we grow in towns and cities?
2. Boosting availability of fresh fruit and vegetables is a good idea
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- Vulnerable supplies: 84% of UK’s fresh fruit and 50% of veg imported

![Diagram showing average UK vegetable imports (excluding potatoes), 2013-2017](image1.png)

![MailOnline article](image2.png)

Fresh food is being left to rot undelivered as supermarket shelves and restaurant plates sit empty due to nationwide HGV driver shortage, fruit and veg boss says:

- Supermarkets are finding it increasingly difficult to replenish their shelves.
- A shortage of truck drivers in the UK is causing problems across retail firms.
- Tim O’Malley of Nationwide Produce said fresh food is rotting in cold storage.
- He said tax changes, Brexit, and Covid are all contributing to the current crisis.
2. Boosting availability of fresh fruit and vegetables is a good idea

- Fresh fruit & vegetable consumption needs to double globally
- ~30% of adults in the UK eat 5 a day
2. Boosting availability of fresh fruit and vegetables is a good idea

How much food (fruit & vegetables) could we grow in towns and cities?

*Not including exotic fruit & veg

Walsh, Mead, Hardman, Liu, Falagan, Kourmpetli, Evans & Davies (manuscript in prep.)
3. Urban food growing can be good for our health
Does urban food growing lead to better dietary health?

- Quite possibly! Urban food growing associated with better dietary quality
- Caring more about what we eat: Urban food growing was linked to wanting to eat healthier and more sustainably
- Not only growers – but those near to growing
3. It can be good for our health

What effect did urban growing have on individuals during lockdown?

• During lockdown 1 those engaged in, or exposed to urban food growing:
  • Felt less stressed
  • Lower levels of food insecurity
• Urban food growing can support our well-being during extraordinary times

4. Urban food growing can be good for ecosystems (and in turn for us)
4. It can be good for urban ecosystems

- Nature provides us with all sorts of services
- Introducing green spaces in urban areas brings these benefits nearer to where most of us live
- Our research suggests that growing spaces provide as wide a range of ecosystem services as non-edible greenspaces
- There may be boosts to benefits where edible and non-edible planting is combined
Rurban Hope Spots Lancaster

• Finding the hope spots – the places that are good for food growing, good for people, good for ecosystems
• Building on Friends of the Earth and Lancaster City Council work and piloting in Lancaster District
• We’ll be sharing the results in the Autumn
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...and many more
Join the Rurban Revolution!

• Get in touch with us
• Get involved and support North Lancashire Food Futures and The Plot:
  • https://foodfutures.org.uk/
Thank you

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