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Food Supply in Cities under the Shadow of War: An Examination of the Role and Potential of Urban Agriculture

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Dear editor,

In today's world, large cities have become vital economic, social, and demographic centers; however, this concentration has also made them heavily dependent on long, complex, and often vulnerable food supply chains (Marzban *et al.*, 2024). The outbreak of wars, economic sanctions, environmental crises, and logistical disruptions has turned this dependence into a strategic weakness, posing a serious threat to the food security of millions of urban residents (Khankeh, 2025, Marzban *et al.*, 2023b). In this high-risk context, urban agriculture emerges as an environmental, social, and economic approach with considerable potential to enhance flexibility and resilience within urban food systems. Beyond meeting a portion of food demand, this mode of production can function as a defensive buffer against external shocks (Gebretinsae *et al.*, 2026).

Urban agriculture, through its capacity to produce food at the local level and proximity to consumers, can significantly reduce dependence on imports and ensure more stable access to fresh and nutritious foods during times of crisis (Marzban *et al.*, 2024). This approach not only contributes to strengthening food security, but also improves quality of life by creating employment opportunities, promoting public health through access to healthier products, and increasing per capita urban green space (Aktar and Islam, 2025).

An analysis of findings from case studies and successful operational models across different parts of the world confirms that urban agriculture can substantially reduce dependence on external supply chains, and consequently, vulnerability to disruptions (Aktar and Islam, 2025, Marzban *et al.*, 2024). By ensuring more stable access to fresh and nutritious food resources during crises, this approach plays a critical role in safeguarding the health and well-being of communities (Marzban and Sadeghi-Nodoushan, 2024). In addition to its direct benefits for food security, this study highlights important co-benefits, including improved urban environmental health through reduced carbon footprints associated with food transportation, strengthened social capital through

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increased civic participation, and enhanced food self-sufficiency at both micro and macro levels (Marzban *et al.*, 2023a).

Given the rising trend of geopolitical tensions and the unpredictability of global crises, it is essential for policymakers, urban planners, public health professionals, food security stakeholders, and research institutions to seriously consider the multifaceted potential of urban agriculture (Marzban and Sadeghi-Nodoushan, 2025). The formulation and implementation of supportive strategies, targeted investment in necessary infrastructure such as modern irrigation systems, urban greenhouse facilities, and local processing capacities and the promotion of public acceptance and participation in urban agriculture initiatives are essential steps toward strengthening the foundations of sustainable food security and increasing the resilience of urban communities to future threats. Accordingly, urban agriculture-based approaches should be recognized and prioritized as one of the key pillars in comprehensive crisis management and sustainable urban development planning (Aktar and Islam, 2025, Gebretinsae *et al.*, 2026, Marzban *et al.*, 2024, Marzban *et al.*, 2023b).

This study was conducted with the aim of providing a comprehensive assessment of the strategic role and potential of urban agriculture in ensuring food security and enhancing food resilience in megacities facing increasing challenges, particularly in crisis scenarios and wartime conditions. The findings indicate that the sustainable development and integration of urban agriculture into urban ecosystems represent more than a nutritional solution; rather, they constitute a multidimensional strategy for addressing the vulnerabilities of modern food systems.

Yours sincerely
Ameneh Marzban

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