

Crop–Livestock–Waste Interactions in Nakuru’s Urban Agriculture

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Abstract

As a complement to the research in Nairobi presented in the previous chapter, which mapped materials and market flows of nutrients in Kenya’s capital city, this chapter presents a more in-depth picture of sources and types of waste generated by farmers in an urban area and the management practices involved. Both studies are aimed at informing policy. Whereas the Nairobi study focused on the handling of nutrients by community-based organizations, this study of Nakuru focuses on how urban farming households handle waste, including that generated by livestock. Some of the health risks involved are examined in Chapter 12 of this book. Nakuru is close to the Equator, about 60 km northwest of Nairobi in the Rift Valley, a major geological feature of the African continent. It lies on the north shore of Lake Nakuru, a protected World Heritage site adjoining a National Park. At 1700– 1850 m above sea level, the town has a sub-humid equatorial climate with bi-modal rainfall of about 950 mm per annum and had a population of 239 000 in 1999 growing at the rate of 4.3 percent annually (Republic of Kenya 2000). Its main economic activities are commerce, industry (including a Union Carbide factory), agriculture and related tertiary services. Commerce is mainly concentrated in the town centre, with informal commercial activities on the increase. Vendors and small-scale businesses crowd transport termini and the reserves of major roads (MCN 1999). Nakuru has both large- and small-scale farming within its boundaries. Large farms are located in the west of the town and include the giant farm owned by the Rift Valley Institute of Science and Technology (RVIST). Small farms are steadily increasing in numbers, especially in the peri-urban areas. Many farms have been sub-divided into urban residential plots where smallholder farming is practiced. Together, these urban farms supply 22 percent of the basic food intake of farming households, and 8 percent of the overall food and nutritional needs of the town, with most of the rest coming from the rich agricultural hinterland (Foeken 2006).