

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Imagining a future where urban vertical farming becomes an important driver of the food production industry, the consequences on a social and political level would be difficult to predict, but they would be substantial.

Major shifts in food distribution networks would ensue and therefore changes in political trade balances between nations and regions. Urban farms would compete and most likely gain the upper hand in the production of the majority of food in urban regions, leaving agricultural land to be used for more specialized uses, or to be returned to a natural state. Of course, the production of food crops on land will quite likely remain financially beneficial its primary investments are low, but as oil and energy prices rise, the transportation of these crops will gain an increasing share in the cost of traditionally cultivated food.

On a sociological level people in dense urban environments would be partially reconnected with the cycle of resources that exists in the natural world. Waste would be locally treated and used to grow nutrients that are then consumed locally. The requirements of the vertical farms in terms of labor and maintenance would mingle a modern agrarian work force with that of more typical urban dwellers, which might prove for an interesting cultural interchange.

It might serve to re-establish a certain respect and understanding for natural processes in the educational system as farms and schools can be co-located and other functions are integrated as well. It would not be a large stretch of the imagination to envision the merger of public places and food production, after all if Chinese gardens did it in ways we admire now, why not apply it to a new urban development? For developing worlds, the farms could be a center for development, and substituting some high technology solutions with labor intensive solutions provide for employment for a substantial number of people.

For developing areas, it would mean a more reliable source of food, a more solid

infrastructural foundation to build a society upon and a basis for a more solid economy. In addition, it would likely reduce the amount of food related traffic within the city, although that is difficult to quantify. The quality of food could be regulated better and the water filtration properties of a vertical farm are paramount to healthy future development, this being a major issue in many developing areas. It could assist in providing employment for women in countries where women have lower (agricultural) social status and provide for a framework of reintegration of these classes and an emancipation of this status.

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