



Heavy metal contamination and health in urban agriculture produce in Lusaka, Zambia: realities and perceptions

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This paper investigates the realities and perceptions of heavy metal contamination of food crops and the potential health problems in Lusaka the capital of Zambia. The sample site is Chunga, an urban agriculture area in NW Lusaka. Studies have found high levels of heavy metals present in both irrigation water used and food crops grown at an urban agriculture site at the Chunga study site. These studies raise a concern for the health of people consuming the food crops, as legislative limits have been exceeded in key food crops throughout the year for a variety of elements, including copper, lead and zinc. Here, the perceptions concerning the issue of heavy metal contamination of irrigation water, food and the related health problems have been investigated with urban agriculture practitioners and policy actors in Zambia. Urban agriculture practitioners perceive heavy metal contamination of food does not occur, with few illnesses occurring in the local population attributed to heavy metal contamination of food consumed. Policy actors perceive heavy metal contamination of the environment to occur in some areas of Zambia, but not in the capital Lusaka where the Chunga site is located. Policy actors do not perceive the health issues of heavy metal contaminated food to be serious in the context of Zambia's health priorities. There is presently a health concern due to measured heavy metal contamination of food in a representative Lusaka site in Zambia, whereas the perceptions work shows that the issue is not perceived to be a problem either by urban agriculture practitioners or policy actors.