

A WEB-SITE ON HOUSEHOLD FOOD PRODUCTION

Greetings

I am George Kent, professor of political science at the University of Hawaii. I have been working on the policy aspects of food and nutrition for many years. While I have spent most of my time working on grand ideas for dealing the world's major nutrition issues, here I would like to suggest doing something of immediate practical value. Maybe the Internet could be used to facilitate more systematic exchange of ideas about how households and communities in difficult circumstances could produce basic food in new and different ways.

Specifically, I would like to have a discussion about **whether and how a website should be created to facilitate the sharing of methods for producing basic foods at the household and community levels**. I am not talking about farming, but about small projects intended to supplement the food supplies in the household or in the local community.

There is a lot of information already available about home gardens, community gardens, roof gardens, sack gardens, small scale aquaculture, and so on. The problem is that it is very scattered. As I see it, the proposed website would not provide all this information directly, but rather it would provide links to it in an organized way.

Few poor people have direct access to the Internet. Therefore, the website should actually serve small nongovernmental organizations that can help to make the connections between people in their own countries, and also with people in similar situations in other countries. The NGOs could print out documents of interest to local people, and maybe translate or adapt them in other ways. They might arrange meetings to discuss and demonstrate different food production methods.

The website could also be used to link people together, especially to connect those who have questions to those who have answers. More experienced people could provide advice on how to get started with particular food production techniques, and suggest ways to apply the ideas in specific local situations. The website would be a place at which people can describe the circumstances in which they live, and others can suggest creative ways to produce food in those circumstances.

While we wait, hopefully, for governments and other agencies to address the issue of food security, we should find ways to support people with low incomes in helping themselves. Often this support can come from other people in comparable circumstances. A website of the sort considered here could facilitate that process. Therefore I would welcome hearing your views and insights on:

- Should this sort of website be established?
- How to move forward on implementing this idea?
- Where?
- Who would get this started?
- Who would keep it going?
- Could you point out relevant existing web-site/resource centers to which this website might refer and provided organized access?

Aloha, George Kent