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Title: Precariousness of the agricultural landscape at the edge of Walloon cities

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Abstract: Since 1985, Walloon agricultural lands have decreased steadily, reflecting their vulnerability. Regarding the increasing needs for residential and economic developments but also for the improvement of the living environment, for food and energy productions, we should reflect on the areas that should be preserved from artificialization. The research focuses on the precarious situation of agricultural lands on the edge of cities. Considering the Regional Policy Declaration of the Walloon Government that promote the development of quality and proximity food belts, the coexistence of human and economic activities with nature and the elimination of new land artificialization by 2050, these landscapes have and may play important roles in the urban metabolism, which are still unsuspected by numerous actors. After identifying and locating periurban agricultural lands in Wallonia, several case studies were selected in order to carry out a complete analysis. Based on satellite images, agricultural parcel data, field observations and interviews with stakeholders, we identified the services provided by these agricultural lands and the different pressures that they face. The research improves our understanding of the role(s) played by the agriculture within, or at the edge of, cities, underlines the thorny issue of land ownerships, points out the diversity of situations encountered, and propose adaptations and ways to sustain peri-urban agricultural activity while preserving environment and developing their social and educational roles.

Keywords: Agricultural land; Multifunctional farming; Landscape function; Peri-urban space; Belgium.