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ST ANDREW'S JUNIOR COLLEGE

JC2 Preliminary Examination



Name: _____ ()

Civics Group: _____

GENERAL PAPER

8807/02

Paper 2

26 August 2022, Friday

INSERT

1 hour 30 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Insert contains the passages for Paper 2.

- 1 Spending on ethical food and drink products – including organic, Fairtrade, free range and freedom foods – hit £8.4bn in the UK in 2013, making up 8.5% of all household food sales and by 2020, the amount was £14bn. By taking advantage of environmental credentials, such as local, sustainable and transparent production, a new wave of urban agriculture enterprises is justifying a premium price. While a higher price point might better reflect the true cost of food production and help build a viable business, it can also exclude lower income groups, fuelling the perception that local, sustainably produced food is the preserve of food elitists. Farms are springing up in cities across Europe, but the urban farming movement is doing little to help shift towards a permanent sustainable food system if there are few supporters. 5
- 2 A real challenge that urban farmers face is in keeping prices affordable for more people. Urban vertical farms can produce fish, salads and herbs concurrently in unused city spaces to sell wholesale – such farms can produce up to 20 tonnes of greens, salads, and herbs (enough for 200,000 salad bags) and four tonnes of tilapia. The main client base is wholesaling to local restaurants and grocers as food is after all a commodity and urban farming is a business that must be profitable to work. Most urban farmers may have taken to growing more expensive things with a bigger profit margin for the customer who has more to spend, but are equally mindful not to alienate their other customers. Such urban farms produce premium micro-greens for Michelin-starred restaurants, clients who can and want to purchase such produce, thus supporting the expansion of more affordable salads and herbs for the average consumer. By trying to grow other affordable things like mixed salad, which are then sent into big shop retailers, such produce can become more widely accessible. 10 15 20
- 3 Some urban farms evolve to become new entrants to the grocery retailing scene and sell themselves as ethical grocers specialising in responsibly sourced, homegrown and organic produce which sell hundreds of different items from organic pigs in blankets to recycled toilet paper. Their message is a 'feel good' one where individuals can still consume without guilt and spend ethically while doing good. However, this win-win situation is quite far from reality for most consumers, unless you can afford to purchase from such platforms. The cost of similar produce can vary depending on where it is bought. For example, customers can currently buy 50g of peashoots through these boutique retailers for £1.10, compared to £1 for the same weight in a regular local supermarket. 25 30
- 4 Apart from the prices and accessibility, urban farming sees issues in its "fields". Agriculture practices and urban growth have long been considered unhappy bedfellows, with arable land often sacrificed to build apartments and new roads. Similarly, since urban farming tends to be situated in most urban spaces, the perception that the spaces can be used for more economically productive activities has to be challenged alongside concerns regarding the commercial viability of such enterprises. This leads to another consideration involving the management of urban spaces and the optimal re-purposing of existing infrastructure to accommodate the growth of such farms. While farming near customers sounds sensible, to farm at scale efficiently means space is needed due to the large equipment needed for such exploits. Yet, one should not disregard the huge untapped areas in the centres of many cities, often abandoned and forgotten, that we could be using to make the food chain more resilient. One example is the Swiss aquaponics enterprise, Urban Farmers, which took over the derelict rooftop floors of De Schilde, a former Philips TV and phone set factory in The Hague. Through its converted space, it aims to produce 45 tonnes of vegetables and 19 tonnes of tilapia annually. We need to envision the opportunities in such unusual urban spaces and invest in their development to see the growth of such farms. 35 40 45

- 5 Still, the added cost of production comes from the purchase of indoor hydroponic growing systems, which do not come cheap. Thought must be paid to how growing technologies can be democratised to produce high quality produce at affordable prices. The ideal situation should be such that anyone – shops, restaurants, schools and hospitals – should be able to have their own farm and grow their own food. The first ones to do it are obviously the early adopters but, in principle, there is no reason for it not to become a standard. By implementing an indoor hydroponics growing system in store, the growing of herbs and greens can be available at a price comparable to other fresh goods. Eventually, companies can hope to expand globally and target businesses worldwide. 50
- 6 Critics are also quick to notice that urban agriculture entrepreneurs tend to be educated, white and middle-class which may reinforce the notion that urban farms, though well-meaning, are ultimately a hobby for urban elites to engage in. For urban agriculture to move beyond serving a niche group of people and make a real impact on the global food system, it will have to engage a wider demographic. Urban farming has the potential to be fashioned as a social enterprise, to revitalise blighted neighbourhoods with an excess of abandoned buildings, unused space and high unemployment. Investment in such projects can bring about possible social benefits: improving neighbourhood aesthetics, reducing crime and even increasing community cohesion. (That said, this can also raise thorny issues around gentrification and displacement in low-income areas as an unintended consequence.) In areas which have the highest youth unemployment rates, there is a real need for job opportunities with companies that are prepared to invest in training young people with a poor history of educational attainment. Thus, urban farming can be a platform to upskill youth as aquaponics technicians for commercial food production or develop their project management skills in planning crops and monitoring quality. Such skills can keep them employed and off the streets. 55 60 65
- 7 Proper investment and thought needs to be brought to the table for the empowerment that urban farming is supposed to bring to underprivileged neighbourhoods. Otherwise, urban farms will not always be as inclusive as they aspire to be – and there are often huge class divides. However, to merely reject this possibility as a fad or hobby is throwing the baby out with the bathwater. It must be acknowledged that the challenges around equality in urban agriculture are simply a reflection of the global food system's wider issues. It is a sad fact that many of those working in the food sector are still paid poorly and as a result, the people who produce our food cannot afford good food themselves. 70 75
- 8 Hopefully, the growing interest in urban food will end up benefitting the whole of society in the future. There is a whole generation for whom urban food growing is becoming a major interest. Such food revolutions tend to be led by people who have more information, and maybe more disposable income, but that is not to say they are not tapping into something of interest to all sections of society. What does the future hold for urban farms? Honestly, we cannot say for sure. However, with hundreds of millions of urban dwellers suffering from undernutrition, anything that helps to bring nutritious food closer to the urban table can only be worth pursuing. 80

Adapted from The Guardian- "Is urban farming only for rich hipsters?"