



# Community Supported Agriculture

GETTING YOUR SHARE



# FOREWORD

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*The Association of Conscious Consumers, a Hungarian NGO, and AGRIDEA, a Swiss NGO, launched a joint programme in 2012 aimed at raising awareness of the theory and practice of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and providing support for the spread of such initiatives in both countries.*

*CSA is not the only solution to confront and solve the problems and difficulties related to marketing, living and purchasing conditions in agriculture. However, it is a powerful model for producers and consumers who seek reliable, sustainable food resources and alternative ways of consuming and marketing.*

*Through this publication we hope to support the efforts made to promote local foods and local production. Since we cannot provide a single “recipe for success” that would provide every detail for each potential situation, we have created the following framework that outlines various important considerations. We hope it will be valuable guide for understanding and setting-up CSA initiatives.*

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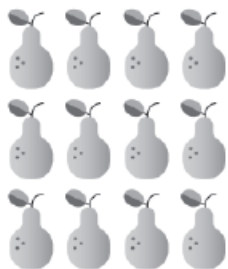


Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is an economic model based on partnership, long-term commitment and participation between farmers and consumers. CSA provides an alternative to traditional food marketing methods: unlike retail, it focuses on engaging the consumers and maintaining the small scale farms.

In practice, a CSA consists of committed cooperation between a farmer or multiple farmers and a group of consumers, often reinforced through bilateral contracts.

Consumers pledge to buy farm products, generally for a pre-determined price, for a whole season/year, while the farmer(s) focus on producing to the best of their ability for the consumers' community during the agreed upon period.

### *Many different types of CSA exists, for example*



**SHARE FARMS:** members **SHARE** and divide up the whole harvest and all costs of the farm.



**BOX SCHEMES:** consumers only commit themselves to buy (preferably subscribe for) the farm's produce, which is distributed to them in boxes during a given period. This should not be confused with box delivery services ordered from a trader, since one does not know the real source of their products.



Though CSA can be interpreted as a direct trading initiative, it is more than that. While farmer–consumer communication and interaction are important features of CSA, when compared to direct marketing initiatives (e.g., farmers markets, pick-your-own sales, roadside and on-farm stands, farm shops, farmers’ shelves in local stores) CSA is more focused on the service than product. Although CSA consumers are also interested in what they get for their money, they **DIRECTLY PAY FOR THE COSTS OF PRODUCTION** rather than paying for fluctuations in market prices.

CSA focuses on the **SUSTAINABILITY OF FARMS**, hence putting special emphasis on fair pricing to make sustainable farming worthwhile. The prices consumers pay should cover both production costs and guarantee wages that ensure an acceptable livelihood for producers.

**FOR REASONS OF SIMPLIFICATION, IN THIS PUBLICATION WE DEAL MAINLY WITH THE SHARE FARM MODEL OF CSA.**

## *CSA is characterised by mutual advantages.*

### FOR PRODUCERS

Shares production risks, better prices for products.

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Higher financial security, assures production costs are met.

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Higher level of autonomy in production techniques crop varieties.

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Demand based production leads to less waste.

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Simplified marketing with lower costs and minimal risks.

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Promotes more diversity on the farm (more types of production and products).

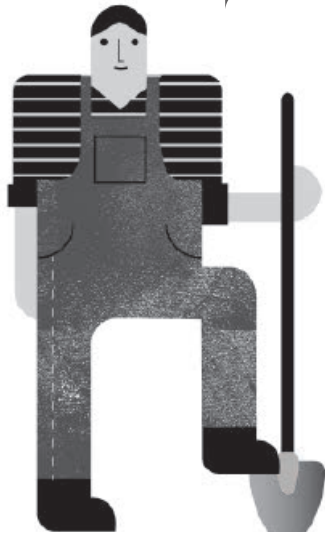
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More time for producing, family and, sometimes, for holidays.

*"The biggest advantage is that it brings farmers and consumers together. It supports mutual understanding and helps share both the responsibilities and risks."*

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*Matthew Hayes, organic farmer, Zsámbok, Hungary*



## FOR CONSUMERS

Access to high-quality, healthy food at reasonable and fair prices.

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Awareness of food resources (what, how and by whom it is produced).

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Reconnection to the land, farmers and other consumers, and participation in food production.

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Living one's environmental, economic and social beliefs.

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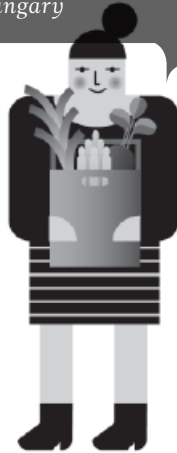
Higher level of food sovereignty/ autonomy: even consumers' special needs can be met.

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Discovery of old local varieties and new ways of cooking.

*"It is important for us to purchase seasonal vegetables from a local farm. With Aron's [AMAP] we began to eat vegetables we had never had on our table before (like swiss chard, or parsnips). Processing everything the day after the pickup is not a simple task, but this is how we can have quality vegetables even during wintertime."*

*Zsuzsi Panyi, Szentendre, Hungary*



## The short history of community supported agriculture

The roots of CSA can be traced back to at least three original sources.

**1** The Japanese "TEIKEI" distribution system that was initiated by housewives looking for authentic, healthy and reliable sources of food in the 1960s



**2** The concepts of associative economics (all stakeholders of the food supply chain – producer, consumer, trader, engrosser and creditor– are equals) and biodynamic agriculture (oldest organic agricultural movement) thought up by **RUDOLF STEINER**, the Austrian philosopher.

**3** The practices of Southern American co-operative from the early 1970s.

The latter two were the main influences behind the formation of the first European CSA in Switzerland (Les Jardin de Cocagne) and Germany (Buschberghof) during the 1970s and 1980s.

Since then it has spread throughout the



continent, which has led to a rich diversity of CSA (e.g., **AMAPS** in France, **ASATS** in Romania, **GASAPS** in Belgium and **RECIPROCO** in Portugal). According to the international CSA network **URGENCI**, there are currently around 4,000 farms following CSA principles in Europe with roughly 400,000 members.

In Hungary, the first recorded CSA box scheme was the **OPEN GARDEN** near Gödöllő, which operated between 1998 and 2006. Other “early birds” were the BAZ county “**BIOÉLÉSKAMRA**” and the Bionium in Újlengyel. In 2011, the “**HUNGARIAN ECO-PARTNERSHIP**” bought land and hired farmers for its community-led CSA. Meanwhile, the “**ELEVEN FÖLD**” social cooperative was established in Miskolc. The same year a few other organic farms, inspired by the **FRENCH AMAPS**, also set up their own CSA schemes (notably **ÉVKERÉK ÖKOTANYA** near Kistelek, **HÁROMKAPTÁR ORGANIC GARDEN** in Tahitótfalu, the “**BIOKERT**” in Szigetmonostor and Nemes Mátyás’ farm in Fülöpjakab). The number of initiatives is growing promisingly: in 2012 the Pro Cserehat Association set up “**PRIVÁT LECSÓ**”, and box schemes were organised by **TRANSITION WEKERLE** and the **TRANSITION DANUBE BANK GROUPS**. The prospects for 2013 are also promising: new initiatives will likely be setup.

## Tasks on a CSA farm

### 1 THE PRODUCER AND CONSUMERS PLAN TOGETHER



### 2 SIGNING CONTRACTS AND AGREEING ON PAYMENT

### 3 THE PRODUCER MAKES A PLAN FOR THE YEAR



### 4 WORKING ON THE FARM



### 5 WEEKLY DELIVERY OF THE SHARES



### 6 THE CONSUMER COOKS WITH THEIR SHARE





#### **ABOUT TVE**

*Since 2008 the Hungarian Association of Conscious Consumers has been inviting farmers and consumers with experience in CSA from all over the world to help spread CSA in Hungary. So far we have had guests from Austria, France, Germany, Switzerland and the UK who have shared useful theoretical information and practical experience with us.*

**HTTP://TUDATOSVASARLO.  
HU/ENGLISH**









**T**he foundation of CSA is, unsurprisingly, a community where individuals dedicate themselves to common interests, goals and norms that are manifested in mutual **SOLIDARITY AND PARTNERSHIP**.

In the CSA context, community refers to the group of consumers who ally with a farmer to support their agricultural activity or to employ them for the sake of further social, environmental and cultural benefits (see Chapter 1).

***In fact, CSA is a value-driven community venture which aims at the following.***

Providing environmentally sound, sustainable alternative to the current food system.

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Providing more employment and ensuring a livelihood for rural populations.

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Preserving artisanal production methods.

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Maintaining higher levels of diversity in nature and crops.

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Contributing to the conservation of natural landscapes.

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Ensuring the transparency of price and farm techniques.

*"What matters is that it is Hungarian, local, nearby. We know the farmer and can meet her –I believe and see that she is doing her best. Besides, it is also important that we have a say in what there has been too much of, and what do we need instead?"*

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*Dániel Szelényi, Budapest*

## ***Solidarity in CSA means mutual respect and fairness.***

### **FOR CONSUMERS**

Pay a fair price covering all the costs of the production and CSA operations.

Share the risks: e.g., accept shortages due to bad weather or pests,

Accept the seasonal, technical and other limitations of production.

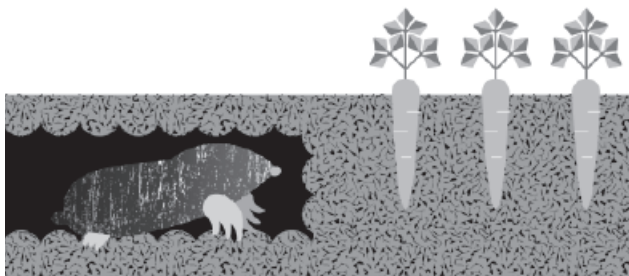
Be open to discussing problems with other members of the community and have a role in finding solutions.

### **FOR FARMERS**

Ask for reasonable price for their products, making high quality food more affordable.

Share the benefits: provide more during abundant harvests.

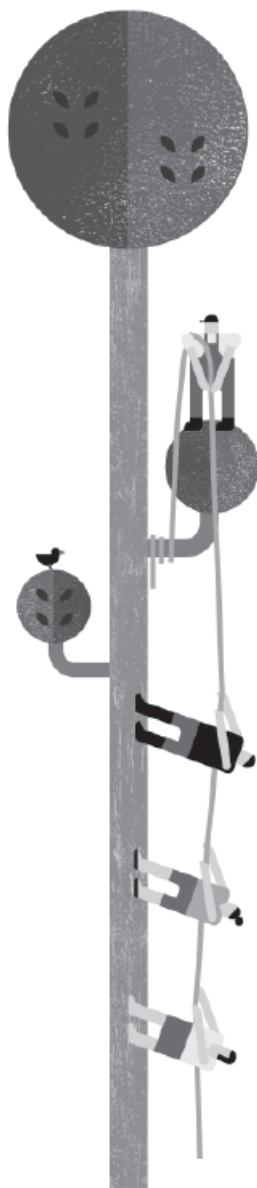
Integrate the needs of the CSA-community into their planning, production and distribution.



**PARTNERSHIP** is key to CSAs' effectiveness and long-term viability. This partnership relies on the **LONG-TERM AND MUTUAL COMMITMENT** between farmers (to supply) and consumers (to receive). Perhaps even more important is that it is built upon the synergies of community participation in planning, farming, distribution and financing. Building and maintaining a strong, healthy farmer-consumer partnership can ensure satisfaction for both parties and good business performance.

However, CSA requires the **REVISING AND EXPANSION OF TRADITIONAL FARMER AND CONSUMER ROLES**. In the case of CSA, a consumer is a "**MEMBER**" or "**SHARE-HOLDER**" who, depending on the CSA-system, participates in the process of farming, which relies on the whole community and not just the farmer.

Finally, partnership is about finding and accepting **COMPROMISES**. Consumers accept the limitations of production and accept the inherent risks of agriculture: excess from an extraordinarily good yield or losses from a poor one are equally shared. At the same time, farmers take the needs of consumers into greater consideration and let them have more influence than they normally would.



On the other hand, the farmer is no longer forced to produce according to the standards and formal requirements of vendors and customers. The farmer-consumer alliance that emerges in the context of CSA depends on the feasibility of the farm's operations, shared common interests and the flexibility to accept and adapt to changing circumstances.

*"The CSA's relationship to members is completely different when compared to the relationship of consumers to the market. In our case we share everything and have no opposing interests. In the market consumers and retailers are always confronted by price: one of them always comes out badly or believes they have. This does not happen with AMAP. However, I do not consider my products to be commodities nor distribution as a sale. I regard this as a process: a group of people charged us with providing their food-supply."*

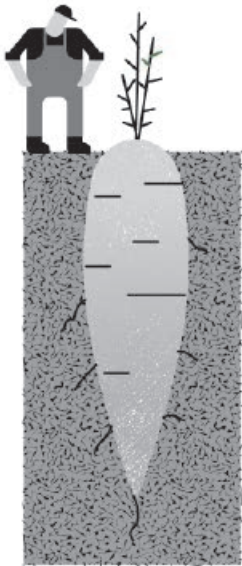
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Áron Pető, Biokert,  
Szigetmonostor, Hungary

## *Community: we are one team through thick and thin*

To maintain the support of consumers, CSA farmers need to look beyond merely recruiting a sufficient number of consumers and operate in a community context. The best outcomes and strongest communities require **CONTINUOUS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT.**

*Therefore, it is important to understand and consider that CSA is not only about consuming. It is also about...*



Participating in meaningful, productive and important activities.

Creating a real, active community with a sense of belonging.

Reconnecting people to the land and farming; providing possibilities for learning and personal development.

Having healthy and nutritious food from safe and reliable sources.

***Necessary to continuously engage in community development.***

Emphasising that "we are one team", creating a shared vision and identity.

Ensuring good communication between farmer – consumers and consumers–consumers.

Organising regular personal meetings, gatherings and celebrations.

***Consequently emphasise the importance of partnership and sharing the "mission":***

Building relationships: the farmer has to know the members and vice versa.

Involving members in various duties and sharing responsibilities.

Creating clear definitions and building consensus on rules and responsibilities.

Giving and receiving feedback; planning with the community.

Staying transparent and accountable in order to strengthen trust.

Being flexible and open to change and adaptation.





03



**T**rust and commitment are important underlying principles for the long term success of CSA; they are the glue that holds farmers and consumers together. Without trust and commitment failure is inevitable, only a matter of time.

Commitment arises from the intention of consumers and farmers to cooperate. This cooperation is often reinforced by a bilateral agreement or contract signed for a given period (usually a whole year or a season).

***The aim of such a contract is to clearly define the responsibilities and duties of both parties.***

## THE CONSUMER

Paying a set price for their share/ products on a schedule and method of payment.

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Accepting that harvest usually cannot be modified for individuals' preferences.

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Accepting the seasonality of products.

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Respecting and accepting the special knowledge and skills of the farmer.

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Cleaning and returning boxes and other containers used for distribution.

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Taking part in specific tasks (e.g. help in delivery, harvesting).



**SWISS SOLITERRE'S** box scheme ([www.soliterre.ch](http://www.soliterre.ch)) supplies 200 families with fresh food on a weekly basis. Delivery points, mostly located in Bern, are managed by volunteers who are present when the boxes are delivered. They also take care of any boxes not picked up by their owners.



## THE FARMER

Farming to the best of their abilities to satisfy the needs and expectations of consumers.

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Following special farming methods (e.g., organic, biodynamic, kosher, permaculture).

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Defining quantities supplied by one share.

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Defining the method and frequency of distribution.

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Setting the number and size of farm events.

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Setting a price for a share or half-share.

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Determining opportunities for and manner of voluntary farm work.

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Ensuring transparency related to the production.

*"Sometimes it is a problem that consumers do not understand the system. We had someone, for instance, who did not show up for their delivery several times and was unreachable by phone or email. Afterwards, of course, they complained about having to pay. In such a situation one must stand their ground. If a share is not paid in advance at the beginning of the month, it will be not delivered. The contract also defines consumer responsibility for pickup, and if a share is not taken, we carry it back home"*

*Orsolya Kiss-Kovacs,  
"Évkerék" Ecofarm,  
Hungary*

Though a contract or agreement can play an important role, the most significant feature is mutual **TRUST**. Consumers must believe that the farmer(s) will really do their best and that they will receive a fair share of the harvest. On the other hand, farmers must believe they can rely on their consumer communities for risk-sharing, help with operations and problem solving.

Though both parties need to have a certain amount of trust in advance, **TRUST CAN AND MUST BE INCREASED**. In this respect, direct person-to-person contact plays the most crucial role. Farmers need to be transparent regarding their farms' operations, needs and limitations. At the same time, the needs and requirements of (future) consumers need to be assessed; a discourse on planning, options and limitations must be started. The agreement defining the framework and rules of the CSA community must be the result of a consensus building process.

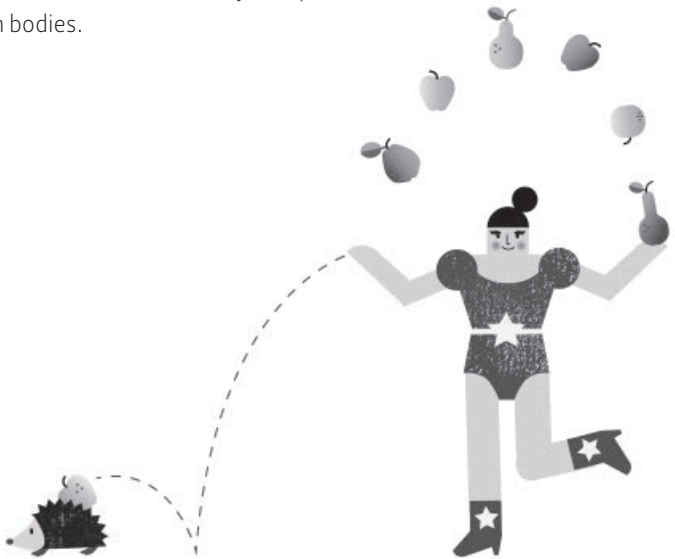
In the case of existing, operational CSAs, both consumers and farmers need to be and remain honest, credible and, to a certain degree, accountable. Community evaluation is just as important as community planning: successes, failures, worries, expectations and new ideas have to be

equally shared and exchanged within CSA communities.

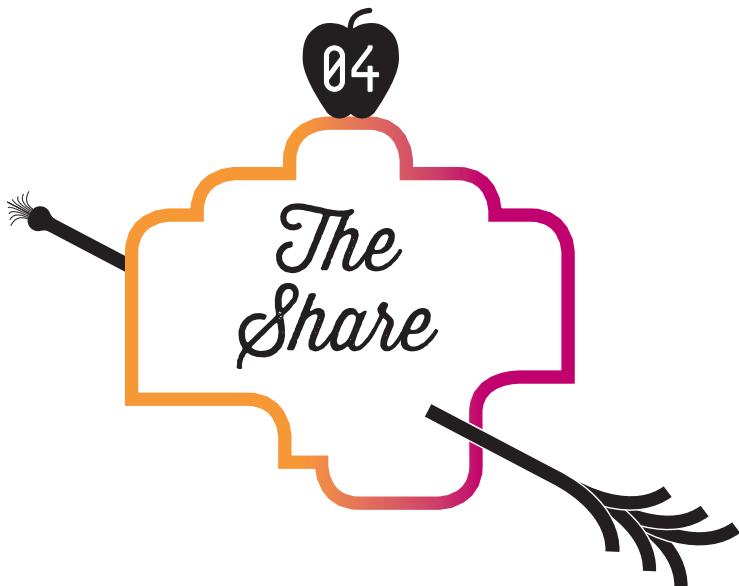
Farmers should never be afraid to ask for help from their community, even if it is for additional financing or extra help. Trust is a major asset that must not be squandered!

### ***Participatory Quality Assurance/Guarantee Scheme***

Consumers of CSAs have a unique opportunity for confidence in their food sources. They can visit the farm regularly and find out what is going on there. This kind of participatory quality assurance differs from other non-participatory, abstract guarantee schemes. In CSA standards are defined by farmers and consumers, not just by certification bodies.







In CSA consumers cannot generally choose the contents of their share and must take it as is, though they have some say during the common planning process. Hence, successful and stable operations require farmers to satisfy the needs of their communities. To accomplish this, a continuous, high-quality, abundant and diverse supply needs to be provided during the period of the contract.

## ***A continuous supply requires the following:***

Thoughtful **PLANNING** that considers seasonal conditions and crop diversity.

**A BALANCED AND SATISFACTORY** supply throughout the year/season.

Accurate **TIMING** of planting and harvesting for distribution.

Always having **FRESH** products.

The flexibility to react intelligently to **UNEXPECTED DIFFICULTIES** (e.g., heavy rainfalls, frost.)

### **SAVED PRODUCTS**

For example, deep frozen peas or tomatoes processed as sauce.

### **MANAGE SURPLUSES**

Process food from extraordinarily good harvests to save for later when less fresh produce is available.

The readiness **TO WIDEN THE RANGE OF PRODUCTS.**

### **IMPROVE AND BALANCE SHARES**

Fruits, herbs, flowers, honey, preserves, pickles, chutneys, juices, syrups.

Systematic collection, evaluation and integration of **CONSUMER NEEDS.**

**CONSUMER FRIENDLY PRODUCTION.**



Improvements should be made but must remain realistic. In all aspects of CSA, a practical **BALANCE** must be found between the ideal and the realistic options: the system should be inexpensive and simple to run! An example of this would be the burdens and costs of processing: if the monetary and labour costs are too high, it might be better to leave the processing of surpluses to individual members.

A share should not be excessively large either: in such a case, consumers might tend to choose half shares instead of full ones, which might have a negative impact on income and increase the burden of administrative tasks (more members would need to be recruited and served, resulting in more time spent making shares and managing contacts).

### ***What about adding variety to shares with products from other farmers?***

Incorporating products from other producers in the share might be a good idea – especially because it might attract more consumers. However, the extra tasks relating to it (purchasing, packing, invoicing, etc.) should be always considered: these could reduce the cost-benefit balance.

*"Even the box is composed to be easy-to-use: it contains equal amounts of items that should be eaten fresh and others that are suitable for storing. This must be learned and accepted – which to eat first and how long each vegetable can be stored."*

---

*Zsuzsa Katona,  
Göd, Hungary*

Furthermore, other difficulties can emerge: sharing the profits, handling complaints etc. Collaboration between several farmers to provide a wider range of products can work very well when the rules of collaboration are clearly defined and well communicated. If a producer cannot provide a wide enough range of demanded products, he should work with other local farmers rather than buy from commercial dealers.

Consumers of a CSA, on the other hand, must be patient and tolerant. Because consumers cannot choose what their share contains, they must overcome some ordinary consumer attitudes: they must learn and plan to cook from what they have rather than what they spontaneously want. Furthermore, to be able to eat/use everything they get without wasting it, they have to change the way they cook, live and manage their kitchen.

*"Compared to our earlier practice, when I could only take 8 to 10 kinds of vegetables to the market to sell, we now produce around 40 different varieties. This is a great challenge to our way of gardening that requires an increased level of care. For instance, our members asked, for 'naked' [husk-free] table oats and turnips, none of which we had dealt with before"*

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Áron Pető, Biokert, Szigetmonostor, Hungary

## *Adapting to this new way of cooking can be assisted with various tools.*

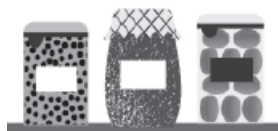
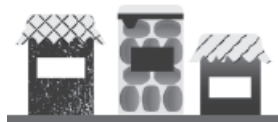
**RECIPES** for the processing of products (sometimes experimental or unusual) and ways to avoid food waste.

**INSTRUCTIONS** and tips for the storage and processing of products not used immediately.

**EXCHANGE TABLE** or box at the delivery point where unwanted items can be left for others to take (it may be useful to note some rate of exchange).

**SPREADSHEETS** circulated among members for long term and **REGULAR EXCHANGES**.

It is important that CSA members should not wait on the farmer for solutions; they should also be responsible for finding solutions and implementing them.



For example, the "Háromkaptár" Vegetable Community previously distributed the following summer and winter shares on a weekly basis:

January 2013



*1 big parsnip*



*2 kg potatoes*



*6 pieces of  
parsley roots*



*1 jar of  
rosemary leaves*



*1 kg dried beans*



*2 heads of cabbage*



*600 g carrots*



*1 big jar of sprouts  
(red trifol, sunflower seeds,  
buckwheat, fenugreek)*



*1 kg sunchokes*



*2 jars of  
pickled cucumber*

July 2012



1 big parsnip

800-800 g potatoes  
of "Sarpa" and "Golden Apple" varieties

700 g carrot

1 piece  
of sweet anise

2 pieces of parsley roots



1 piece crown

2 bouquets  
of Swiss chards10 pieces of  
cooking onion

400 g cucumber



2 bouquets of garlic



400 g spinach



2 kg tomato



2 bouquets of basil

1 big jar of sprouts  
(lucerne, red trefoil,  
radish)

1 piece courgette



500 g sweet pepper





CSA is not about cheap food. It is about fair and reasonable pricing for food, though it often provides cheaper food than from other sources (especially if quality and other values are taken into account). The main aim of income is to sustain the CSA, not to make a profit. Since it is not necessary to make a profit, the prices only have to cover the yearly costs of supplies and labour.

## ***Pricing in CSA is...***

### ***fair;***

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The ultimate goal is to ensure sufficient income for the farmers, which enables them to live a dignified life and have a reasonable standard of living.

### ***reasonable;***

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The prices are based on the overall costs of CSA farming operations.

Due to "direct trading/selling", the costs related to marketing (working time, money and loss) may be lower.

Mitigating and sharing the risks of production and marketing lowers prices too.

### ***and independent of actual market prices.***

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CSA producers are free from everyday competition and price fluctuations. Because of this, market distortions have little influence on pricing.



In the classic CSA model (share farms), the price (per year or season) is determined by share according to the number of share-holders:

$$\text{PRICE} = \frac{\text{CSA PRODUCTION COSTS} + \text{CSA SALARIES} + \text{OTHER COSTS OF CSA OPERATIONS}}{\text{NUMBER OF MEMBERS}}$$




The **PRICE OF SUBSCRIPTIONS** must be set at the beginning of the season and included in the contract/agreement. It is beneficial to have pricing based on planning carried out with the involvement of the community. It allows consumers to understand what they pay for is “**MEMBERSHIP**”. Though low prices might be attractive to recruit more members, no compromises should be made that would damage financial sustainability and stability: income must cover production and operational costs. To have reserves is especially important for long-term maintenance of the operation.

Besides money, price can also include a certain number of working hours. For instance, members often have to take part in distribution by managing the drop-off site a few times per season.


Payment methods can include cash, bank transfers or bank cheques, depending on the situation. The timing and number of payments are also important considerations. Ideally members pay for their share upfront in one installment after signing the contract/agreement. This ensures sufficient operating capital and stability for the farmer since they don't have to invest and then wait for a return. Many CSAs in Switzerland also divide the payments into several installments, for example once every four months.

### ***Paying with cheques***

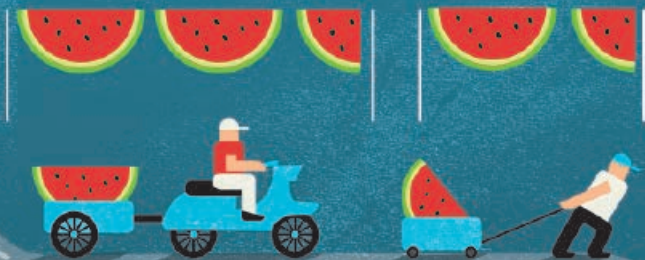
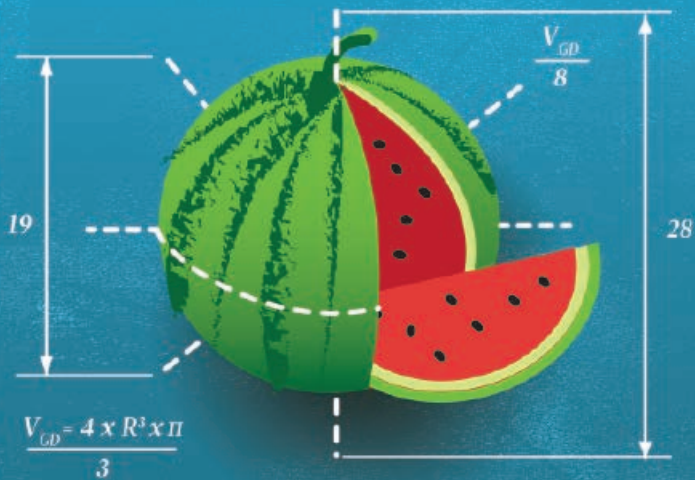
In case of the French AMAPs, consumers can pay upfront in cash or by writing cheques when signing the contract. If they do not want to or are unable to pay in one installment, they can write multiple cheques with smaller amounts and define when they are to be cashed. Though they don't have the pay in advance, farmers still have a form of guarantee that they will receive payment.



*The boxes of the German **GARTENCOOP**, near Freiburg, have no fixed price. Farmers share the yearly operating budget with the consumers at the annual general assembly. Each member offers as much as they can afford to pay. Solidarity is so important for Gartencoop that, despite members paying different amounts, each member receives the same amount of produce in their share. To this day, this voluntary contribution scheme of paying what you can has managed to cover the budget.*







## *Distribution* DELIVERY AND PICKUP

The everyday operation of CSA farms is limited by the system of distribution. Products are usually delivered once a week to one or more distribution points. Because the place and time of the distribution is fixed, accurate planning and logistics are needed on the farmer's side to ensure all of the products are delivered fresh and on time, even during the hot summer months.

## ***Distribution requires special attention and effort.***

**THE MANNER OF DISTRIBUTION** must be chosen with careful consideration of the following points: where should the distribution points be located (convenient for members yet practical) and with what hours of operation.

**PRODUCTION** must be linked to distribution to ensure that fresh yields are distributed. It is worthwhile to involve members in the distribution process (e.g., they can rotate responsibility for performing certain duties necessary for distribution).

The use of reusable containers (boxes, glasses, bags etc.) depends on the environmental considerations of the community.

**DISTRIBUTION** can provide occasions for farmers and consumers to meet. Personalised delivery can be especially useful when combined with other activities (signing contracts, collecting payment, receiving feedback, etc.).

## ***Most widespread types of delivery***

### ***Farm pick up***

Members come to the farm to collect shares at specified times.

Works if members live nearby or delivery events only occur occasionally.  
Favours community development.

### ***Drop-off points***

Products are left at safe places where members can go to collect them.

Favourable if members live further away or if they cannot agree on a single pickup time.  
No chance for meeting, everybody arrives at different times.

### ***Delivery events***

Products are provided by farmers at certain times and places for personal pickup.

Can be very effective but less flexible.  
An occasion for personal meeting and community development.

### ***Home delivery***

Products are delivered to members' homes.

Works only if members live in close proximity; important for certain products (e.g., bakery, milk.)  
Might be resource intensive for the farmer.

### ***Postal delivery***

Products are sent by post/courier service.

Only suitable for certain products and might be costly.  
Lack of personal contact, but favours cooperation with far away members.

***Products can be arranged (and transported) for pickup in two main ways.***

	<b><i>Arrangements</i></b>	<b><i>Pickup</i></b>
<b><i>In bulk</i></b>	Farmers or members arrange sufficient quantities of crops by kind in large cases.	A sign tells members the portions they can take home and helpers can assist in quickly distributing the correct amount to members.
<b><i>Pre-sorted</i></b>	Farmers sort portions in boxes.	Members simply pick up their boxes.

In certain cases (e.g., in case of home delivery) the pre-sorting of products, possibly into boxes labelled by name, is inescapable. It might also be that some consumers prefer not selecting their own, ensuring that everyone gets the same. However, pre-sorting increases the burden on the farmers, and the use of hygienic bags and boxes may raise costs too. Therefore, it might be better to transport products to drop off points in bulk and let the consumers collect their shares on their own.



If transporting in bulk, it is worthwhile to take a little extra produce to prevent conflict; this way nobody gets stuck with something they don't like based on appearance or quality.

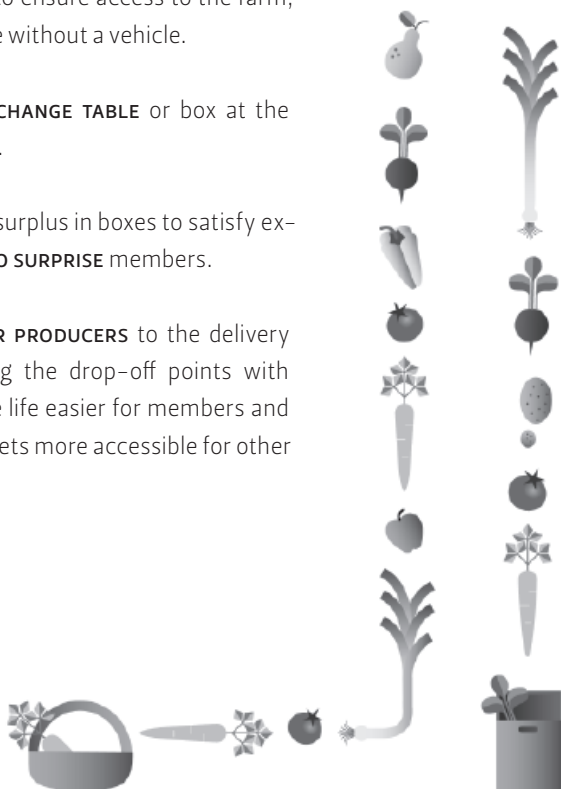
***To have an effective and user-friendly distribution system, it is useful to consider implementing the following:***

**CAR POOLING** to ensure access to the farm, even for those without a vehicle.

Having an **EXCHANGE TABLE** or box at the delivery point.

Having some surplus in boxes to satisfy extra needs or **TO SURPRISE** members.

Inviting **OTHER PRODUCERS** to the delivery events/sharing the drop-off points with them to make life easier for members and to make markets more accessible for other producers.



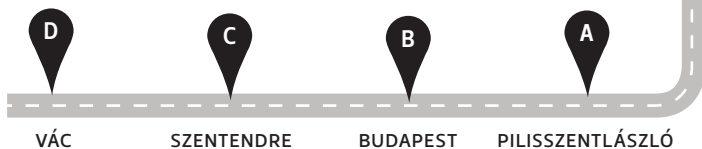
## *Distribution at the "Háromkaptár" Vegetable Community (Tahitófalu)*

**MONDAY:** Checking cases and other distribution tools, organising the preparation room.

**TUESDAY:** Arranging less sensitive vegetables (harvest, cleaning, measurement).

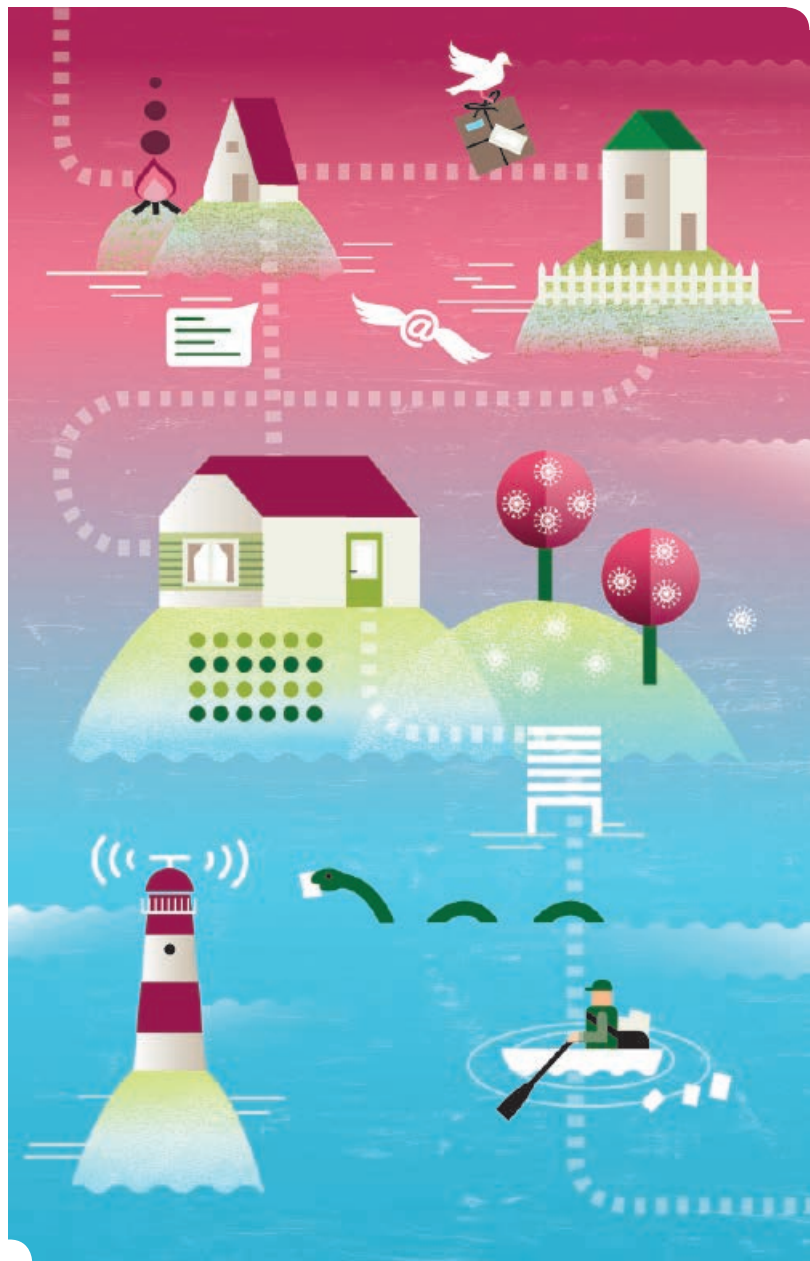
**WEDNESDAY:** Harvest at sunrise of the most sensitive vegetables. Portioning out of weekly shares into boxes that are labelled by name.

**AT 5PM DEPARTURE TO THE PILISSZENTLÁSZLÓ** drop-off point (boxes can be picked up here by members at any time) and **BUDAPEST** (delivery is to a private house with pickup between 6pm and 8pm). On the way a stop is made at a delivery point in **SZENTENDRE** (pick-up is Thursday morning). **AT 6.00PM DEPARTURE TO VÁC** (pick up point is at a private house between 6.30 and 8.30 pm on Wednesday or the following morning).



**THE NEUCHATEL RAGE DE VERT**  
([www.ragedevert.ch](http://www.ragedevert.ch)) supplies 110 families with fresh vegetables every week. Consumers can pick up their shares, which consist of a box to fill with products left in bulk, at various drop-off points. They also have an option for environmentally friendly home delivery: two bike couriers deliver shares to certain families in exchange for two weekly boxes.







Communication is a crucial aspect of CSA. It forms the basis for trust and partnership, creating a shared identity. Consistent, frequent communication is necessary in the handling of both internal and external issues. Communication is especially important in case of serious problems: without talking about these problems, communities cannot continue to exist in the long-term.

## ***Communication is especially important in three areas:***

- 1** Regarding impressions in general and in dealing with special issues – the representation of the farm and the issues of CSA.
- 2** In community building and the strengthening of farmer–consumer and consumer–consumer relationships.
- 3** Concerning operational tasks and their performance –regular feedback is crucial for consumers and farmers.

We can utilise several different communication tools in all three of these areas – see the table below. However, when using these tools do not forget about characteristics of individual members: do not presume that everyone uses the internet.

Though CSA farmers must communicate frequently, they needn't be responsible for all communications: consumer members can and should play an active role in this regard. Ideally, a few community members take over certain communication tasks (e.g managing recipe blog or waiting list) and relieve some of the burden from the producer.

Finally, do not expect communication to be easy. It is likely that in many cases your communication will be one-sided as answers and responses do not arrive when or how you intended. Accept this fact and **DO NOT DESPAIR:** even though most people appreciate information, they do not have the time or willingness to actively communicate. Most members simply cannot or are unable to move out of their passive role.

### ***Internet tools***

The latest electronic communication solutions provide great potential for CSAs:

**E-MAIL LISTS** that can be created in most mailing programmes.

Web-based groups like Yahoo or Google **GROUPS** can provide many valuable and integrated features including email lists, file sharing, calendars, surveys and so on.

**SOCIAL NETWORKING** platforms like Facebook also provides good and free, though less private, options.



## *Availability*

It is vital for CSA farmers/communities to publish their availability. It is a common problem that interested consumers are often unable to find, join or contact suitable farmers.

Association of Conscious Consumers collects CSA related information on [WWW.TUDATOSVASARLO.HU/CSA](http://WWW.TUDATOSVASARLO.HU/CSA) (currently only in Hungarian). Contact: [TVE@TVE.HU](mailto:TVE@TVE.HU)

Contact information for our Swiss Partner, AGRIDEA: [KONTAKT@AGRIDEA.CH](mailto:KONTAKT@AGRIDEA.CH)

## *The table*

The following table summarises the needed communication tools for setting-up and operating a CSA farm.



**MOST IMPORTANT  
FUNCTIONS**

***outreach,  
visibility***

**1**  
***recruiting  
members***

being visible to the world

utilisation of social networks

advertising

keeping in touch with those interested

choosing an appealing name

communication with other farmers

preparing/being ready to talk if asked

**TOOLS (PERSONAL, PAPER BASED, ELECTRONIC)**

blog, website, social media, (local) media, public meetings, farm visits, video, photos

snowball method, word-of-mouth marketing

flyers, posters, information meetings, email and web-based electronic calls, newspaper ads

contact and waiting lists, phone calls, emailing, opportunities for personal meetings

brainstorming

mutual farm visits, "peer interviews"

prepare answers for interviews (radio, magazine, TV, daily newspapers and farm reports)

**2**  
***source of  
knowledge***

**3**  
***explaining  
the issues***

**MOST IMPORTANT  
FUNCTIONS**

**community  
development**

**1 trust building**

**2 knowledge  
development**

**3 transparency**

**4 building  
group  
identity**

**TO-DOS**

talking to farmer/members frequently

collecting, organizing and sharing information

letting members know details about the farm

taking and sharing photos, memories

providing opportunities for personal meetings

celebration

**TOOLS (PERSONAL, PAPER BASED, ELECTRONIC)**

presence at pick-up events, farm visit possibilities, share information about products, challenges, worries etc. via newsletter, blog, emailing, social media group

tips, know-hows, interesting data, recipes etc. via farm events, email list, social media group, newsletter, etc. joining in or founding an umbrella organisation

reporting regularly back to community about costs, challenges, performance via farm visits, newsletters, emails, presentations

website/blog, webgallery, social media group, newsletters, frequent emailing,

regular farm events, presence at pick-up events, other gatherings

harvest festival

**MOST IMPORTANT  
FUNCTIONS**

**operation of CSA**

**1**  
**planning**

collecting ideas and advices

**TOOLS (PERSONAL, PAPER BASED, ELECTRONIC)**

emailing, paper- and web-based surveys

involving the community

planning sessions

**2**  
**management**

distributing tasks, tracking sub-  
scriptions

contact list, emailing, phone calls, calendar, account-  
ing tables

**3**  
**feedback**

letting know if satisfied/ disap-  
pointed with anything

personal talks, email list, emailing, social media group,  
box for anonymous complaints at drop-off points

collect feedback regularly

paper- or web-based surveys

**4**  
**evaluation**

based on the feedback and survey  
findings, evaluate together with  
the community

evaluation meeting, evaluation report/minutes

**5**  
**conflict resolution  
and problem solving**

consensus building

personal meetings and talks

speak up if there are problems

emailing, personal talks





**B**elow is an overview and orientation about CSA on the best practices, necessary tasks and important questions. The list does not cover all of the planning issues, so it should take local needs and issues into consideration. It should also be kept in mind that planning will only be successful future members are also involved in the process.

## 1 Learning CSA

Contact existing initiatives.  
Information from CSOs, research  
bodies etc.

*Is there a successful example I can  
follow?*

*What are the risks and potential  
pitfalls?*

*How are they dealt with by others?*

## 2 Consideration of needs and capability

Measure the land and choose the  
manner of production.

*How many consumers can be sup-  
plied from my land?*

Recruiting potential farmers and  
consumers.

*Which kind of products can be  
harvested? How? (e.g. organic, no  
pesticide, conventional)*

Think over the community-based  
operations.

*Where are conscious consumers  
and how many? Where are suitable  
farmers likely to want to open a CSA?*

*Who might be interested in this  
model?*

*Am I comfortable with managing a  
community?*

*Is there any “key person” who will  
be responsible for organising our  
CSA system?*

### 3 *Setting up a management plan*

Synchronisation of production capacity and consumer needs.

Am I able to produce the basic food items for all of the consumers?

Careful consideration of the possibilities and limitations of different CSA schemes.

Can I supply the consumers only for a season, or for a year?

Short and long term plans.

Does my farm ensure enough food diversity for the consumers?

Getting into the details (especially regarding prices and volumes).

Do unusual products take up only part of the box?

### 4 *Contacting the farmer/ first consumers and forming a "core group"*

Elaboration of common principles, joint planning and sharing of responsibilities.

*Who is responsible for particular tasks?*

Sharing the tasks which are important for the start-up and operation.

## 5 *Creating the budget*

List the advantages and disadvantages of various operational forms (e.g. cooperative, small-scale producer).

Determination of yearly supply, calculating the yearly operational costs and the price of the “share” for a year.

Taking into account the long-term costs (e.g. investments, reserves) and incorporate these into the price.

*What are the production costs?*

*Do I need additional income? What percent of the costs can be covered by the CSA?*

*How many consumers/members do we need to cover all of the costs?*

*How much should the consumers pay?*

*How much will the weekly “share” cost?*

*How many working hours are needed for operations (production and organisation)?*

*How will you make the system simple and economical?*

## 6 *Choosing the name*

Choose an easily understandable name.

*Is the name meaningful?*

*Is it easy to remember?*



## 7 *Recruitment*

Utilization of existing social networks (recommendations, word-of-mouth and viral marketing).

Sending personal “invitations” (e-mail, Facebook).

Organise events on the farm.  
Utilization of marketing tools (e.g. website, leaflet, advertisements).

Listing the interested consumers.

*Why will consumers choose us?*

*Which kind of platforms are used by the potential consumers?*

*Which kind of information should be shared with consumers?*

*What will the frequently asked questions likely be?*

*How can we convince consumers that we are reliable?*

## 8 *Adjustment of plans*

Common planning events, clarification of consumer needs, what goods can be grown and choosing how to farm.

Finalisation of the distribution system.

Correction of prices (if needed).

*When should it start?*

*What needs have not yet been touched upon? What can be done in the short term?*

*How will distribution actually work?*

*What responsibilities can be given to the consumers?*

## 9 *Contract/agreement*

Sign the bilateral contract with members.

*The contract includes:*

- the timeframe (seasonal/year),*
- the responsibilities of each party,*
- the payment amount and frequency,*
- how risks are shared,*
- the regulation of volunteer work,*
- the conditions for joining or leaving the community,*
- and, sometimes, the common principles.*

## 10 *Community building and communication*

*Organising on-farm events, harvest festivals (with a special focus on children).*

*Do I know everybody's name?*

*Opening up to members and continuous communication (email, Facebook, etc.).*

*What is most fascinating about our CSA?*

*Subscription management (especially in relation to payments).*

*How can the potential consumers be reached? Why will they feel a connection to our initiative?*

*Documentation (e.g. photos, blog).*

*Are there any other problems that need to be solved?*

## 11 *Regular collection and evaluation of feedback*

Openness to and regular interest in the members.

*Level of satisfaction...*

*Expectations.*

Asking for regular feedback from the members during and after the season.

*Additional requirements .*

Sharing the results of the feedback with the consumers (e.g. in the planning stage).

*New ideas related to the products, events, community based operation, distribution etc.*

Discuss and address problems immediately as they arise.



# *Legal structures* FOR SWISS CSA

## DIFFERENT FORMS OF ORGANIZATION

Several legal forms exist for CSA initiatives. Each initiative must find the form that best suits them.

---

Be careful not to get lost in discussions about a complex organization that is more likely to hinder than promote the project.

---

The legal forms "cooperative" and "association" require the

establishment of a legal structure. These help to strengthen the "democratic functions" of the CSA initiative, to define the legal responsibilities and to appoint people with certain responsibilities and decision making powers.

---

Individual initiatives require no special legal structure.

1

## COOPERATIVES

Producers are usually employees of the cooperative while consumers are cooperative members.

---

Investments in production and distribution are provided for by the shares brought by cooperative members.

---

Annual fees generally ensure the cooperative remains functional.

---

Cooperative members are stakeholders in the process of decision making and generally participate in the various activities of production and management.

---

The content of the contract contains specifics on the delivery of products as well as about the working hours of cooperative members.

---

Cooperatives usually offer vegetable boxes every week.

2

## ASSOCIATIONS

An association of consumers and or producers that organize the distribution of products from one or more farms.

---

The products are either intended for consumers within the same organization or for consumers that are not organized.

Producer Association members generally have farm status and receive direct payments. Income from CSA usually represents a small part of their turnover.

A

### A GROUPING OF PRODUCERS

> Producers want to offer a basket of various products.

> The committee sometimes consists of producers and consumers.

> Consumers do not take part in the committee and are not part of the organization.

## **B A GROUP OF CONSUMERS**

- > Consumers want to have various regional products in their baskets.
- > The producers delivering their products for these baskets are sometimes organized in a structure (e.g. as a single company) or are an integral part of the association;
- > The committee can consist of an equal number of producers and consumers or of a majority of consumers.

### **3**

#### **INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVES**

A farmer offers products to consumers under contract.

---

Consumers are not organized in an association nor is the farmer.

---

The contract usually lasts for a year and focuses on the delivery and distribution of products and, very rarely, includes work on the farm.

The producer usually has the status of a farm and is eligible for direct payments.

---

The management of the initiative is fully controlled by the farmer.

---

The products traded in this type of initiative tend to be perishables such as vegetables, dairy, fruit, fresh meat, etc.

#### **COORDINATION IS NECESSARY**

Coordination is essential to the smooth running of a CSA initiative.

---

The coordination may be provided by the farmer in cases where a CSA has a single producer (individual farms).

---

In the cases where a CSA has several producers, there must be a coordination structure (committee of the association or cooperative, etc.).

---

The coordination may be delegated to a member or other party who is compensated for this task.

An evaluation of the past season by the consumers and producers working together can help adjust the baskets for seasons to come.

### THE ROLE OF A COMMITTEE

A committee is legally mandatory for associations and cooperatives.

---

It is useful for all initiatives, even for individual initiatives.

---

The committee is composed of:

- > Cooperative members (= consumers) and employee-farmers or farmers associated with the cooperative;
- > consumers and producers in an association;
  
- > In the case of individual farms, farmers and consumers.

---

Recruit a committee quickly and make sure it is large enough to avoid the entire workload falling on and exhausting a few people.

In addition to the legal roles (General Assembly, accounts, etc.), the committee has the following tasks:

- > to inform members about the situation of the association or cooperative;
- > to establish links between producers and consumers;
- > to adjust the contents of the baskets from one season to the next;
- > to discuss prices (search for a fair and profitable price) and present them to the General Assembly if necessary.



## FURTHER RESOURCES

### *Useful publications and supporting materials about CSA and product marketing:*

<http://tudatosvasarlo.hu>

<http://www.vedegylet.hu>

<http://www.bacsagarhaz.hu>

<http://www.elotiszaert.hu>

**URGENCI – [HTTP://URGENCI.NET](http://URGENCI.NET)**

**UNITERRE:** [www.uniterre.ch](http://www.uniterre.ch)

**FRACP:** [HTTP://WWW.ACPCH.CH/WEBSITES/ACP/INDEX.PHP/ACCUEIL](http://WWW.ACPCH.CH/WEBSITES/ACP/INDEX.PHP/ACCUEIL)

### *Best practices/Lessons learnt:*

#### *Well established CSA initiatives in Hungary:*

<http://atalakulodunapart.blog.hu>

[evkerek.blogspot.hu](http://evkerek.blogspot.hu)

[www.haromkaptar.hu](http://www.haromkaptar.hu)

**[HTTP://BIOELESKAMRA.HU](http://BIOELESKAMRA.HU)**

<http://elevenfoldblog.blogspot.hu>

[www.okotarsulas.hu](http://www.okotarsulas.hu)

[www.nyitottkert.hu](http://www.nyitottkert.hu)

<http://www.biokert.info/>

<http://www.bffd.hu/projektek/privatlecso.html>



## ***Websites of Swiss CSA initiatives:***

**WWW.COCAGNE.CH**

**WWW.AFFAIRETOURNEREVE.CH**

**WWW.PANIERA4PATTES.CH**

[www.cueillettes.org](http://www.cueillettes.org)

[www.charrotons.org](http://www.charrotons.org)

[www.lejardinpotager.ch](http://www.lejardinpotager.ch)

[www.lagrihotte.ch](http://www.lagrihotte.ch)

[www.lesjardinsduflon.ch](http://www.lesjardinsduflon.ch)

[www.lumiere-des-champs.ch](http://www.lumiere-des-champs.ch)

[www.lopinbleu.ch](http://www.lopinbleu.ch)

[www.fontaine-andre.ch](http://www.fontaine-andre.ch)

[www.clef-des-champs.ch](http://www.clef-des-champs.ch)

[www.saveurs-de-saisons.ch](http://www.saveurs-de-saisons.ch)

[www.lesaresetvous.ch](http://www.lesaresetvous.ch)

[www.vergers-epicure.ch](http://www.vergers-epicure.ch)

**WWW.NOTREPANIERBIO.CH**

[www.soliterre.ch](http://www.soliterre.ch)

**WWW.RAGEDEVERT.CH**

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Getting your share*

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[www.nfu.hu/swiss\\_contribution](http://www.nfu.hu/swiss_contribution)

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