

# Community Supported Agriculture

(Sourced from Organic Food Directory - <http://www.organicfooddirectory.com.au/general-issues/community-food-systems/community-supported-agriculture.html> , 15 September 2010)

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) projects involve the creation of a direct relationship between producers and consumers resulting in a mutual gain relationship. CSAs have been developed as a strategy to connect local farmers with local consumers; develop a regional food supply, strong local economy; maintain a sense of community; encourage land stewardship; and honour the knowledge and experience of growers and producers working with small to medium size farms.



Figure 1: Community Supported Farming

CSA is a relatively new socio-economic model of food production, sales and distribution. It is thought to have originated simultaneously in Germany, Switzerland and Japan in the 1960s. In Japan a group of women concerned about the increase in food imports and the corresponding decrease in the farming population initiated a direct growing and purchasing relationship between their group and local farms. In Japan this system is called 'teikei' – translated to 'putting the farmers' face on food'. In Europe many of the CSA style farms were inspired by the economic ideas of Rudolf Steiner.

CSAs encourage a food production system that includes the production of high quality foods using ecological, organic or [biodynamic farming](#) methods, and includes the involvement of consumers and other stakeholders. CSAs usually focus on a system of weekly delivery or pick-up of organic fruit, vegetables, and sometimes also flowers, herbs, milk or meat products.

There are many variations of CSAs that are based on the core design that includes developing a cohesive consumer group that is willing to fund a whole season's budget in order to get quality foods. The greater the whole-farm, whole-budget support, the greater the focus can be on quality and the less risk of food waste or financial loss.

CSAs are best suited to small, independent, labour intensive, family farms. Consumers essentially help finance farming operations, allowing farmers to not only focus on quality growing, but it can also help to level the playing field in a food market that favours large-scale, industrialised food production systems.



Figure 2: Community Supported Apple Production

CSAs differ from [consumer groups or cooperatives](#) where consumers buy specific products at predetermined prices. In the basic model CSA members are actively involved in the production process, providing a form of direct financing through advance purchase of shares, and assisting with distribution by picking up their shares.

## Benefits of Community Supported Agriculture



Figure 3: Ranges of Products in Supermarkets

### Consumer Benefits:

- Consumers have access to fresh, organic produce,
- Consumers pay less than they would in shops,
- Consumers create a connection to their food and the producers of their food,
- Consumers understand some of the conditions of food production,
- Consumers know where their food comes from.

### Environmental Benefits:

- Helps ensure biodiversity of the local area,
  - Protects agricultural diversity - diversity of food,
  - Protects local farmland from urban development by helping small farms to remain economically viable.
  - Helps consumers to develop an ethos of caring for the land
  - Reduces waste created in marketing, packaging and transport
- How fresh is this?*

### Farmer Benefits:

- Farmers have improved economic security by providing money at planting,
- Farmers have increased share in food dollar,
- Farmers share risks with consumers,
- Farmers waste less produce,
- Farmers are provided a guaranteed market for produce,
- Farmers can focus on producing quality food through environmentally sustainable farming practices,
- Farmers can develop a direct connection with the consumers, and
- Farmers have fewer marketing costs.