FOR MORE INFORMATION ON COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE:

The Robyn Van En Center
Wilson College
1015 Philadelphia Ave.
Chambersburg, Pa. 17201
Phone: 717-264-4141, ext. 3352
Web site: www.wilson.edu/csacenter
Email: csacenter@wilson.edu

Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association
25844 Butler Road
Junction City, Oregon 97448
Phone: 541-998-0105 or 888-516-7797
Fax: 541-998-0106
Web site: www.biodynamics.com
Email: info@biodynamics.com

Just Food
208 East 51st St.
4th Floor
New York, N.Y. 10022
Phone: 212-645-9880
Fax: 212-645-9881
Web site: www.justfood.org
Email: info@justfood.org

Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
P.O. Box 11
Belchertown, Mass. 01007
Phone: 413-323-9878
Web site: www.nesawg@nesawg.org
Email: nesawg@nesawg.org

Other groups offer information on CSA, but space limitations preclude listing them all. The content of this pamphlet was prepared by the Robyn Van En Center and may be reproduced.
What is Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)?

CSA brings together community members, farmers and agricultural land in a relationship of mutual support based on an annual commitment to one another – a commitment that ensures the survival of local farms today and for future generations.

In a CSA, community members pay the farmer an annual membership fee to cover farm production costs. In return, those members receive a weekly share of the harvest during the local growing season. The arrangement guarantees the farmer financial support and enables many small-to moderate-scale organic family farms to remain in business.

Ultimately, CSA creates agriculture-supported communities where members receive a wide variety of foods harvested at the peak of ripeness, flavor, and vitamin and mineral content.

In the words of Wendell Berry, “How we eat determines to a considerable extent how the world is used.” With this in mind, it is important to remember that the goals of CSA support a sustainable agricultural system.

CSA - A SOLUTION FOR FARMERS AND COMMUNITIES THAT ...

- Supplies the community with high-quality, reasonably priced, usually organic produce.
- Provides the farmer a guaranteed outlet and a fair return.
- Supports farmers in transition towards low or no chemical inputs.
- Keeps food dollars in the local community.
- Creates a viable, economically and environmentally sustainable agricultural system.
- Offers an opportunity to celebrate nature and community for all.

How Does it Work?

The methods of operating a CSA vary considerably. The farmer and group representing the shareholders may develop an annual budget of expenses and then establish the share price by dividing the budget by the total number of shares. In others, the farmer may determine the cost of a share based on produce value and weight. Payment for a share may be in one lump sum or in installments – some accept food stamps and some accept labor in lieu of cash, while others may require farm or delivery work as part of membership.

Each CSA is designed specifically for its community and farmer, yet all CSAs strive for a truly sustainable operation, both economically and environmentally.

Crops are planted in succession to provide a continuous weekly supply of mixed vegetables chosen for flavor and nutritional value, and to support biodiversity. The farmer frequently grows a large assortment of seasonal vegetables so shareholders can expect a wide variety. This greatly diminishes the risk of crop failure while enhancing soil fertility without the use of synthetic chemicals. Organic growing techniques such as crop rotation, companion planting, green manuring and composting are often standard practice.

What is a Share?

Each week the farmer harvests fresh, ripe crops that are either divided equally among shareholders or placed into boxes of predetermined quantities. Usually, people receive their food within 24 hours of picking. A share is generally enough for a family of four or a couple on a vegetarian diet. Sometimes half shares are available.

The price of a share for a season varies widely depending on each farm’s costs of operation, total months of distribution, variety of crops available and soil productivity. Most fall within the range of $300 to $600 for a full share. The shareholder’s cost for produce varies, but is generally comparable to supermarket prices.

“Agriculture is the mother of our culture. Growing food is the common thread throughout the whole world. It connects everyone, across all party lines, all ethnic and religious differences.”

Robyn Van En (1947-1997)
Pioneer of the CSA movement in North America