

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN ADDING A COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE (CSA) VENTURE

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Abstract:

Many new CSA farmers find that operating a CSA can be quite intense, especially when there are significant elements of business planning that accompany general day- to-day operations. CSAs are increasingly popular in the US, and they are often many people's introduction agricultural production, having been attracted to the concept and operation of CSA as a customer, then attempting to operate one themselves (often as a complement to a farmer's market stand). This poster presents information about the operation of CSAs, including ways of organizing CSAs, managing production and distribution, deciding on products and product presentation, and building and maintaining a customer base.

The CSA model made its first appearance in the U.S. in the 1980s, arriving from Europe with clear social, economic, and environmental goals. From less than a dozen CSA farms in the early 1990s, the movement has expanded to several thousand across the country. The CSA model of prepayment for shares allows producers to know and, in many cases, receive a large part of their operating budgets before the growing season begins. It also ensures a market since much of the produce is sold before it is planted or raised. In addition, this model passes some of the risks of farming to the customers. That is, members share in the risks and rewards of the growing season with producers, celebrating bumper crops while suffering through crop losses or lean seasons.

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