



► Co-operation in Action

Community Supported Agriculture as a pathway towards localised value chains

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Introduction

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a model that has been used in a variety of countries to facilitate numerous socio-economic and ecological outcomes. As co-operatives and co-operation are becoming more mainstreamed, stakeholders are looking for practical ways of putting these concepts into effect. What are some of the ways CSA responds to the localisation of value chains?

CSA represents a relevant locus for triggering civic responsibility in economic relations and for setting up a social network of solidarity between farmers and consumers, building more socially just and sustainable communities

► Urgenci



Context

▶ The State of The World

We are at the nexus of multiple crises

Economic, social, ecological and health crises plague us:

- ▶ Covid-19 has highlighted the fragility of our systems
- ▶ Unbridled, extractive commercial activity is leading to climate collapse and exacerbated inequality
- ▶ Humanity is over-reliant on the industrial agri-food model
- ▶ The distance between seed and plate has never been greater
- ▶ Food insecurity and malnutrition are set to grow worse



► CSA: a Reimagined Local Future

We can change the food system

CSA is based on the following core principles*:

- Partnership
- Local
- Solidarity
- Producer/consumer in tandem
- Large bullet style

*agreed at the first international CSA Symposium

Smallholder farming (SHF) is one of our most ancient subsistence activities and can unlock access to local, fresh and affordable food.

Studies have found that, with the right support, these farms can be remarkably productive, drive decent employment and benefit communities' health and nutrition.

States and local governments are beginning to drive CSAs as part of food resilience strategies but have way to go.

There are various ways to configure a CSA hub (e.g. multi-farm, food hub, seasonal/perineal)

▶ Case Studies

► Penn's Corner Farmer Alliance

Pennsylvania, USA

Key innovations and takeaways:

- Multi-farm CSA (more diversity of produce, risk mitigation strategy and economies of scale)
- Centralised assembly, packing, sorting and storage
- Open and flexible membership system (farmers have other market access avenues)
- Setting fair and appropriate commissions for admin and ops takes trial and error
- Supplementing fresh good with processed good expands consumer choice and opens up other livelihood opportunities
- There is still scope to educate consumers on the benefits and mechanics of CSA

▶ Instituto Salvia Soluções SocioAmbientais and Aprospira

Brasilia, Brazil

Key innovations and takeaways:

- ▶ Emerged out of a UNDP initiative to address water supply/quality
- ▶ They have focused on converting conventional farms to agroecological practices
- ▶ Traditional CSA model of upfront pay for farmers' harvests (cash flow to purchase tools, seeds, other inputs)
- ▶ Shift in dynamics between farmers and consumers is evident
- ▶ The water quality has improved, plus soil revitalisation
- ▶ Improved consumer access to diverse, healthy and fresh food

▶ **Farmer Dave's Northeast Organic Farming Alliance**

MA (Boston), USA

Key innovations and takeaways:

- ▶ Works primarily with low-income communities
- ▶ Model enabled through strategic partnerships with housing, public health and agriculture sectors
- ▶ Integrates with the SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and is subsidised
- ▶ The admin is extensive and requires careful consideration of community needs (e.g. staggering payments)
- ▶ Urban partnerships are key in ensuring there is mandate for this programme
- ▶ The programme includes peer-peer farmer education opportunities

▶ Voedselteams

Flanders, Belgium

Key innovations and takeaways:

- ▶ A network of CSAs established in 1996
- ▶ Development of a sophisticated web platform
- ▶ The scale of the operation means there is less rigidity and the load is shared
- ▶ Several million Euros are circulated through this network annually, significantly boosting local economies
- ▶ Food sovereignty movements are positive impacted through this scheme

► Innovations in Denver Urban and Urban Fringe

Denver (Colorado), USA

Key innovations and takeaways (Granata Farm)

- Exists in partnership with the Denver Housing Authority
- Shifting the dynamics behind urban Denver residents and their food (behavioural angle)
- Vandalism and establishing price equilibriums remain a challenge

Key innovations and takeaways (Stare Acre Farm):

- Challenges with access to land and water, therefore partnering with City Parks
- They share a site with a community garden – opportunities for seed sharing, educational classes and public visits.
- Significant potential for the CSA to be used as a tool to deepen culture and community around food

► Conclusion

▶ Concluding Remarks

- ▶ A review of some key CSA literature and links to co-operative, eco-systemic local future
- ▶ Argument for their use as a guiding model for future agri and community development projects
- ▶ Case studies have shown the multidimensional nature of benefits of CSAs
- ▶ Core outcomes are: improved access to local and health food, enhanced community health, multistakeholder collaboration, economic and ecological benefits
- ▶ Not a panacea for social but a compelling case for co-operation leading to reconfigured systems
- ▶ Paradigm shift required
- ▶ Potential for local governments to leverage CSA to realise development goals
- ▶ Potential for regional partnership development (inter and intra-CSA)
- ▶ Potential links to welfare programmes
- ▶ Bottom-up approach to wellbeing
- ▶ Supplement the supermarket model and provide alternatives?