

4.1 History of Community Supported Agriculture

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Lecture Outline: History of Community Supported Agriculture

A. Philosophy and Definition of Community Supported Agriculture

1. Community Supported Agriculture defined: CSA is a direct marketing partnership between a farmer or farmers and a committed network of community supporters/consumers who help to provide a portion of a given farm's operating budget by purchasing "shares" of the season's harvest in advance of the growing season. CSA shareholders make a commitment to support the farm financially (and/or through other roles) throughout the growing season, thereby assuming some of the costs and risks along with the grower.
2. The intended outcome of CSA relationships
 - a. Greater economic viability for the farmer – Through community member commitment, CSA relationships may help to ensure the economic viability of regional agriculture by assuring regional direct market outlets for smaller-scale producers/growers unable or disinterested in competing in the wholesale produce market.
 - b. Increased consumer contact with agriculture and therefore awareness of and appreciation for farmland and for the growing practices used
 - c. Increased awareness and appreciation of seasonal limitations of regional food production
 - d. Increased consumer awareness of differences in food quality
 - e. The development of personal relationships between growers and community members
 - f. Environmental soundness of farming practices
 - i. CSA and land use practices – The majority of CSA programs use certified organic, biodynamic, or similar farming practices that restrict the use of synthetically compounded fertilizers and pests control agents known to pose environmental quality and human health risks
 - ii. CSA, cropping diversity, and pest management – In order to provide for the seasonal fresh fruit and vegetable needs of shareholders, a large variety of crops are typically grown, which also encourages pest and disease prevention
 - iii. Financial support for the adoption of conservation farming practices – By making his or her true costs of production known to a potential shareholder group, CSA farmer(s) may be fairly compensated for adopting specific conservation farming practices, allowing the grower to internalize the true costs of production
 - g. CSA programs' contribution to social justice and community development – By making his or her true costs of production known to a potential shareholder group, farmer(s) may be fairly compensated for specific social services provided by the farm
 - i. Examples of social services provided by CSA farms
 - Limited-income shares partially or wholly subsidized by shareholders, community members
 - Donations of excess produce and/or gleaning programs with food banks and anti-hunger organizations
 - Environmental and agricultural education for the community
 - Fair employee/labor compensation practices
 - Seasonal celebrations (e.g., harvest festivals)

B. History of Community Supported Agriculture: The Independent Development of the CSA Model in Japan and Europe

1. The development of CSA in Japan
 - a. Japanese food scares prompt sharp increase in demand for domestically produced and “natural” or certified organic foods
 - i. “Minimata Disease” – Kumamoto, Japan (c: 1955). Over 3,000 victims of methyl mercury poisoning resulting from the dumping of an estimated 27 tons of industrial mercury compounds into Minamata Bay between 1932 and 1968 (see: www.american.edu/TED/MINAMATA.HTM).
 - ii. Concern over radioactive contamination of food products following Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident of 1986
 - iii. Agricultural trade imbalances between Japan and other nations threaten Japanese agricultural economy
 - iv. Labeling frauds for organic foods stimulate increase in direct market relationships
 - b. The Cooperative movement in Japan and the development of CSA (see: www.wisc.edu/uwcc/icic/today/consumer/move.html)
 - i. A long history of cooperatives – First co-ops were established in 1897
 - ii. Many consumers were drawn to the co-ops in the 1960s and 1970s because of their stated objective of providing “safe, affordable and reliable foods” to their members
 - iii. Today 14 million co-op members (22% percent of all Japanese households) are involved in the Japanese Consumers’ Co-operative Union, the largest consumer organization in the country
 - iv. Co-ops are engaged in a wide array of mutual help activities covering all aspects of daily living including: medicine, insurance, housing, and education
 - v. Most of Japan’s CSA programs have been organized between existing cooperatives of producers/farmers and consumers
 - vi. CSA relationships are strongly supported by Japanese co-op members as they allow for more direct communication with the producers on how foods are produced, thereby allowing members to gauge food safety and the soundness of agricultural practices for themselves
 - c. Teikei system – “Putting the farmers’ face on food” (see: www.joaa.net/English/teikei.htm)
 - i. The Teikei system (c. 1965) – A producer-consumer co-partnership was developed by a small group of Japanese women concerned with food safety, pesticide use, processed and imported foods, and the corresponding decrease in the regional small-scale farming population in Japan
 - ii. Primary objectives of Teikei
 - Create an alternative distribution system independent of the conventional produce market
 - Develop a mutual understanding of the needs of both producers and consumers
 - Develop a better way of life through mutually supportive producer/consumer interactions and cooperation
 - iii. Teikei list of ten principles – See Appendix: Ten Founding Principles of the Teikei System
 - d. Japan Organic Agricultural Association (JOAA; see: www.joaa.net/English/teikei.htm)
 - i. Established in 1971 in response to a period of unprecedented economic growth, rapid industrialization, and subsequent concerns over environmental quality and human health impacts from agriculture
 - ii. An estimated 3,000 members in association: 20–25% growers, 80% consumers
 - iii. Producers and consumers share objective of expanding the organic agriculture movement through mutual support

2. The development of CSA in Europe
 - a. The influence of Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) on European agriculture, education, medicine, the arts, religion, and economics, 1930s–1970s (see: www.biodynamics.com/index.html; www.rudolfsteinerpress.com/; www.elib.com/Steiner/)
 - i. The development of Biodynamic farming (see www.biodynamics.com/index.html; attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/biodynamic.html)
 - The oldest non-chemical agriculture movement, which seeks to “...actively work with the health-giving forces of nature”
 - A world-wide agricultural movement with strict production standards and independent certification through the Demeter Association (see www.demeter-usa.org/)
 - ii. Waldorf education (see: www.awsna.org/index.html)
 - iii. Anthroposophy (see: www.anthroposophy.org/index2.php)
 - iv. Camp Hill Communities – Social renewal and community building through working with populations of developmentally delayed children and adults (see: www.camphill.org)
 - v. Threefold Commonwealth – New forms of economic development intended to define desirable economic outcomes and direct economic life in a conscious, human way while resisting the temptation to defer to market forces alone
 - b. The influence of Rudolf Steiner’s thinking on small-scale agricultural economics: “The associative approach” to economics
 - i. Associative Economics – Economic arrangement that fosters interaction among producers, traders, creditors, and consumers and where appropriate price, true human needs, the eradication of poverty, greater social equity, and environmental impacts are explicitly addressed in the process (see: www.cadi.ph/index.htm)
 - ii. Examples of associative economics: Gemeinnutzige Landbau-Forschungsgesellschaft (LBF) in Germany
 - Creating equitable partnerships through new forms of land tenure. Carl-August Loss and Trauger and Hans Groh establish community land trust, Gemeinnutzige Landbau-Forschungsgesellschaft (LBF), through personal donations of land and capital (1968).
 - Carl-August Loss and Trauger Groh establish Buschberghof farm on LBF lands (1968)
 - Objectives of Landbau-Forschungsgesellschaft (LBF)
 - § Hold title to agricultural lands and make them available through leases to biodynamic farmers, in perpetuity
 - § Eliminate owner privileges/power imbalances in agricultural partnerships where one partner holds title
 - § Protect agricultural lands from development by removing land from speculative real estate market
 - § Replace the old systems of employers and employees by encouraging cooperative and equitable partnerships
 - Creating new forms of financial cooperation – Landwirtschaftliche Arbeitsgemeinschaft (LAG). Carl August and Trauger Groh establish “Agriculturally Cooperating Community,” a network of non-farming community members who support farmers through providing loans to active LBF farmers who no longer qualify for conventional bank loans without the equity conveyed through private land ownership.
 - iii. European CSA relationships develop from multiple models and influences
 - Jan Vander Tuin travels through Switzerland and Germany to study associative economic relations in agriculture
 - Producer-consumer food alliance in Geneva, Switzerland inspired by co-operative movement in Chile during Allende Administration (1970–1973)

- Jan Vander Tuin helps to found CSA farm (Topinambur) in Zurich, Switzerland (1984)
- LAG members in Germany became customers of farms, creating proto-CSA (1985)
- LAG members and Carl-August hear of CSA scheme begun at Temple Wilton Farm (USA) and begin discussions of starting a CSA at Buschberghof (1987)
- As the CSA model developed and more consumers became shareholders, adequate start-up capital was provided by the CSAs, making the LAG obsolete
- Wolfgang Stranz adopted Trauger Groh's system of CSA, developed on The Temple Wilton Community Farm, on Buschberghof (1988)

C. The History of Community Supported Agriculture in North America

(see: <http://solutions.synearth.net/2004/02/04>)

1. Indian Line Community Farm

- Jan Vander Tuin brings the concept of CSA to North America from Europe. Introduces the idea to Robyn Van En at Indian Line Farm in South Egremont, Massachusetts and Susan Witt, director of the E. F. Schumacher Society (1984). CSA seen as a way to integrate Shumacher's and Steiner's ideas.
- Robyn Van En, Jan Vander Tuin, John Root, Jr., and Charlotte Zaneccchia form core group to begin first CSA with a small apple orchard operation
- With Hugh Ratcliffe, Indian Line Community Farm begins to offer shares in vegetable harvests (1986)
- Within four years, the Indian Line CSA expands from 30 to 150 members
- Robyn Van En drafts pamphlet: "Basic Formula to Create Community Supported Agriculture" (1992); produces video: "It's Not Just about Vegetables" (1992); and founds CSA North America (CSANA), a nonprofit clearinghouse supporting CSA development (1992)

2. Temple-Wilton Community Farm, New Hampshire (see: www.templewiltoncommunityfarm.com)

- Started by Anthony Graham, Trauger Groh and Lincoln Geiger (1986). Inspiration for the Temple-Wilton farm came out of discussions with Trauger Groh about Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophical writings, associative economic models in Germany, and from the model of the Camphill Village in Copake, New York.

3. East Coast CSA movement

- From the mid 1980s to the present, the number of CSAs on the east coast has continued to steadily grow
- Examples of East Coast CSAs
 - Roxbury Farm NY (www.roxburyfarm.com)
 - Genesee Valley Organic CSA (www.gvocsa.org)

4. CSA spreading West

- Midwest hubs for Community Supported Agriculture
 - In Wisconsin, the first CSA projects began near Milwaukee and the Twin Cities in 1988
 - At present, more than 65 Wisconsin community supported farms are expected to grow food for an estimated 3,000 households
 - Many CSA farms have formed associations or networks to exchange information and ideas, educate consumers, and support new or struggling farms
 - Examples of Midwest CSAs
 - Angelic Organics (www.AngelicOrganics.com)
 - See: Alliance for Sustainability in the Resources section of Unit 4.0 for a comprehensive listing (www.mtn.org/iasa/index.htm)
 - Wisconsin, with the largest number of CSAs in the Midwest, is followed by Minnesota, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Iowa, Missouri, and Ohio (www.mtn.org/iasa/index.htm)

- b. Examples of Community Supported Agriculture in California
 - i. Live Power Community Farm in Covelo, California – The first CSA in California. Horse-powered farm delivering vegetables and fruits to the Bay Area core group (www.covelo.net/agriculture/farm/pages/farms_lpf.shtml).
 - ii. Full Belly Farm, Capay Valley, California (www.fullbellyfarm.com)
 - iii. Live Earth Farms, Corralitos, California, started in 1995 (www.liveearthfarm.com)
 - iv. Eatwell Farm, Winters, California (www.eatwell.com)
 - v. Homeless Garden Project, Santa Cruz, California (www.infopoint.com/sc/orgs/garden/). The Homeless Garden Project, founded in 1990, provides job training and support for the homeless population of Santa Cruz.
 - vi. UCSC CASFS Farm and Garden CSA, Santa Cruz, California (casfs.ucsc.edu/community/csap.html). Organic horticulture and agriculture training program located at the University of California, Santa Cruz, providing instruction in CSA production and management. The CSA project was started in 1995.

D. The CSA Movement in North America: How Well Are CSA Programs Meeting Their Goals?

- 1. CSA has only recently been studied (see Research Bibliography in Unit 4.0)

E. The Developing International CSA Movement

- 1. See the Robyn Van En Center for CSA for a listing of international CSAs (www.csacenter.org/csa_international.htm)
- 2. Urban-Rural Generate New Commitments between Citizens (URGENCEI) – Seeks to be a worldwide network for imparting information about consumer/producer and urban/rural relationships (see: www.urgenci.net). Sponsored the “First International Symposium on Local Contracts between Farmers and Consumers” in February 2004.

Appendix: The Ten Founding Principles of the Teikei System in Japan

1. Principle of Mutual Assistance

The principle of mutual assistance is intended to direct both consumers and producers toward a mutually supportive and beneficial relationship based on a shared understanding of each other's needs and desires.

2. Principle of Intended Production

The principle of intended production is intended to guide growers to produce the maximum diversity and highest quality of produce within the production capacities of the farm unit.

3. Principle of Accepting the Produce

This principle encourages consumers to accept the produce that has been grown in accordance with the previous consultations between growers and consumers; their diet should depend as much as possible on the produce provided.

4. Principle of Mutual Concession in the Price Setting Decision

This principle encourages the use of full disclosure and an open discussion of the true costs and benefits of CSA for both producer and consumer when establishing the price of a given CSA share.

5. Principle of Deepening Friendships

Founded on the assumption that enduring partnerships require true friendships, the principle of deepening friendly relationships encourages frequent contact among CSA members and producers.

6. Principle of Self-distribution

This principle encourages reliance on the producer or shareholders for the distribution of CSA shares and discourages the use of professional transporters.

7. Principle of Democratic Management

The principle of democratic management encourages both producer and consumers to practice democratic decision making with shared responsibilities.

8. Principle of Learning Among Each Group

This principle encourages the continued development of friendship and non-material culture, in order to avoid the tendency for CSA to devolve into an exclusively commodity/trade-based relationship.

9. Principle of Maintaining the Appropriate Group Scale

As the size (or scale) of the producer or consumer groups will determine the ability of the above practices to be maintained, the principle of maintaining the appropriate group scale encourages the limitation of scale to appropriate levels.

10. Principle of Steady Development

The principle of steady development encourages the continued effort of engaging in mutual cooperation in order to achieve satisfactory conditions for both producer and consumer groups.

Adapted from Sharing the Harvest: A Guide to Community Supported Agriculture, by Margaret Henderson and Robyn Van En. Chelsea Green Publishing Co., 1999.

