





# Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) in the UK

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## Who are we and what do we do?

Soil Association – membership and campaigning charity to support organic food production and sustainable local food systems

Soil Association Certification Ltd – leading UK organic certification body

Making Local Food Work (MLFW) partnership, Big lottery funded to support Community Food Enterprises in England



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# Community Supported Agriculture

A partnership between farmers and consumers where, at its best, the responsibilities and rewards of farming are shared.



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## But what does that actually look like?

- Shared risk between grower and consumer (member)
- Advanced or regular payment for food (commitment)
- Co-operative or democratic management
- Contribution by members to labour
- Access to the farm for pleasure...etc.
- Sustainable business - essentially, it is a way of planning cash flow and cropping



## Community

### Key benefits

- Fresh local seasonal food from a known source
- Keep money in the local economy
- New skills and knowledge in sustainable food production

### Challenges

- Can be time-consuming, particularly for leader
- Challenges previous shopping and purchasing behaviour
- Sharing risks in food production – as well as rewards!

# Farmer

## Key benefits

- A more secure income from a guaranteed market
- A higher and fairer return for their products
- Potential to raise working capital and financial support from local communities

## Challenges

- Some loss of control / decision making
- People on land



## CSA history worldwide

- 1960's Europe, Japan – response to industrial farming scale and methods
- USA now over 2,000 CSA enterprises, also now France
- UK until 5 years ago only a handful of truly pioneering community farm projects ..however this is changing...



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## CSA in England

- There are 63 trading CSAs, 118 in development
- Very diverse – many different approaches & models
- CSA enables consumers to make positive change in response to current social, environmental & economic concerns!



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# CSA



63 **TRADING**

118 **DEVELOPING**

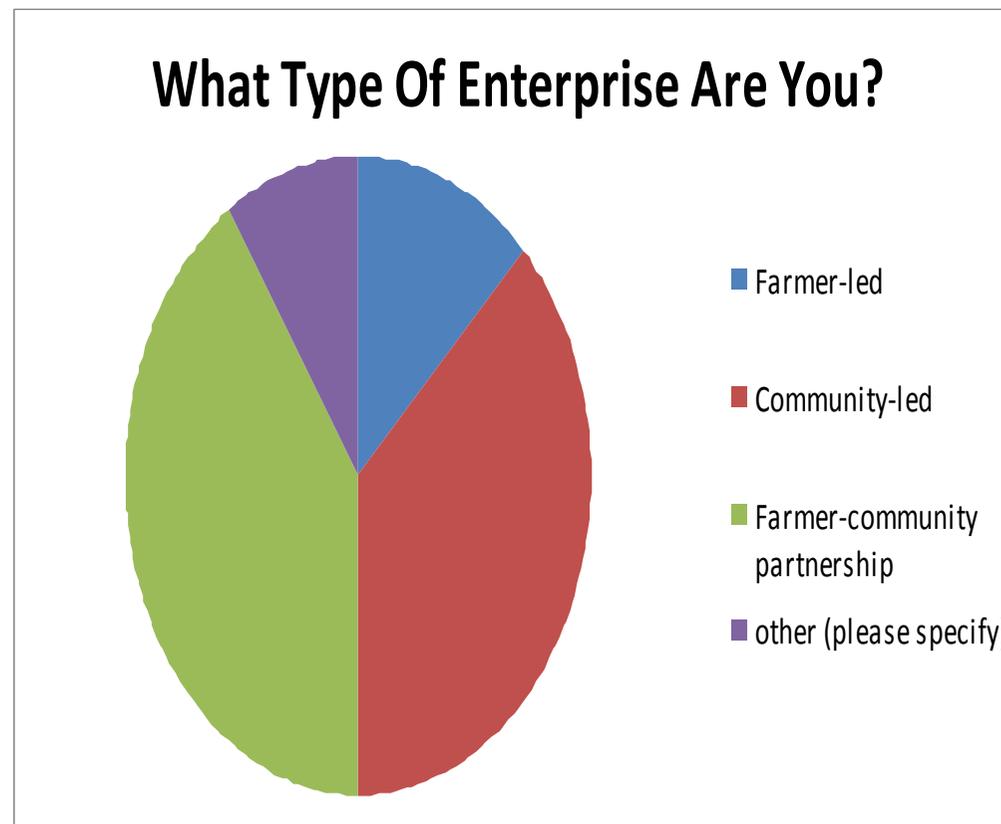
(MLFW target is 70 trading)

*"I have experienced a shift in where CSA is at now. I think it will become/is commonplace regardless of what else I do"*

Jade Bashford

Figure 1.3 – CSAs in England

Region	CSAs under development	CSAs trading	Overall
South West	59	28	87
West Midlands	11	4	15
Yorkshire and Humber	9	6	15
South East	16	13	29
North West	4	0	4
North East	6	3	9
London	4	2	6
East of England	6	3	9
East Midlands	3	4	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>181</b>



## Key findings

- 86% of enterprises community led or a community/farmer partnership
- Fruit and vegetables most common products
- Very important to source during the 'hungry gap' (March / April)
- Member collection main source of contact and supply to customers
- Members mainly pay in advance, or at the point of collection
- Significant % forecast income - training/education and grants
- 75% of CSA's located on  $\leq 5$ ha of land
- + Inc. environmental diversity, no negative impact on neighbours

## Different models

- Receive a weekly share of the harvest – Swillington CSA
- A monthly standing order at a farm shop - Whitmuir Farm
- Support an orchard & receive apples & juice, visit 4 times a year – Dragon Orchard
- Rent land; share the work, costs and responsibilities and produce – Loxley Valley Community Farm
- Support a farm by buying shares or providing finance for new equipment – Fordhall Farm
- Community owned enterprise where the members employ the farmers and rent the land and manage the whole business - Stroud Community Agriculture
- Pay up front and receive meat shares every month – Swillington Poultry buying group



## Swillington Organic Farm – farmer led

- Established organic farm 6 miles from centre of Leeds
- Run as part of 160-acre mixed farm producing beef, pork, mutton/lamb, goat (& cheese), ducks, turkeys, eggs, veg
- Veg produced in 2.25 acre walled garden run as CSA





## How does it work?

- Producer-led: grower works over the year 38 hours and takes £15k s/e income; Summer may be 60 hours a week
- Many members recruited via FM where Swillington meat sold. Also serves as distribution hub. Also have shed for self-weighing.
- Labour contribution not pre-required by members, but welcome.
- Communication is key – people need to understand that crops can vary.
- Had lot of support from other CSAs



## More Information & Support

**Soil Association** [www.soilassociation.org/CSA.aspx](http://www.soilassociation.org/CSA.aspx)

**‘Making Local Food Work’** Lottery funded partnership supporting local food social enterprise

[www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk](http://www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk)

**Project Partners:** Plunkett Foundation, Coops UK, FARMA, Sustain, CPRE, Country Markets



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## **A Case Study:**

# **Stroud Community Agriculture Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK**

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## Stroud Community Agriculture

- A community owned enterprise
- 2 farmers paid a wage
- Runs a 50 acre organic mixed farm
- A rich community life around the farm
- 240 members, 190 veg shares
- £107,000 turnover
- IPS governance structure



## How did it begin?

- Started with no land, no farmer, no money, no relationships  
– There was a public meeting in 2001
- Further discussions organised into a core group and work groups
- Set principles and purpose
- Made a plan
- Started on 2 acres of walled garden





'It has been scary at times to watch us take leaps as a community; to sign a lease, or employment contract, or to receive our first cattle.

We have come a long way and are now much more confident about what we are capable of."

Director, Stroud Community Agriculture



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## How does it work?

- Members pay an annual subscription of £24 and £8 per week for a vegetable share, which they collect
- Members can buy meat; 'Hog hands' pig enterprise
- Members decide all matters, delegated to a core group (8 people), with many volunteers
- Farmers have delegated responsibility for farming
- No compulsion for members to be active
- Open access to the farm
- Two rented sites, one very close to Stroud



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# FRIDAY 29 AUG SHARE

500g potato

500g carrots

400g onion

240g runner beans

300g tomato

2 apples - PYO from walled garden

50g coriander

300g courgettes

1 lettuce

1 cucumber

P.Y.O spinach & chard & flowers

WEEDING day on Saturday -

ALL welcome ~ bring a picnic

August: BBQ in the evening

for members & friends -

bring food ~ cook & share



'The prices of our beef and vegetables have not altered as food prices nationally have rocketed. We are not trying to make a profit and our costs are barely related to oil prices or global markets because we don't buy anything in much. We simply divide the costs of running the farm amongst the people who eat the food. We grass feed our cows and don't use a lot of fuel.'

Member Stroud Community Agriculture



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## **Stroud CSA aims and principles**

- To support organic and biodynamic agriculture.
- To pioneer a new economic model based on mutual benefit and shared risk and ensure that the farmers have a decent livelihood.
- To be fully inclusive. Low income shall not exclude anyone.
- To encourage practical involvement on all levels.
- To be transparent in all our affairs. To make decisions on the basis of consensus wherever possible. To strive towards social justice.
- To offer opportunities for learning, therapy and re-connecting with the life of the earth.
- To network with others to promote community supported agriculture to other communities and farms and share our learning (both economic and farming).
- To encourage SCA members, in co-operation with the farmers, to use the farm for individual and social activities and celebrations.
- To develop a non-exclusive sense of community around the farm



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## A new economic model

- Based on mutual benefit and shared risk
- No profiting shareholders
- Not trying to make a profit (£12 last year)
- Not grant dependant
- Farmers paid £19k pro rata
- We all decide the finances



## Agriculture Supported Community

- Formed from community debate
- Community events, engagement
- A sense of ownership
- Relationships
- Resilience
- A pioneering new economic model



Any  
questions?

Thank you!

