

# Alternative and local food: concepts and practices

## Session 3 – Community supported agriculture

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INVESTICE DO ROZVOJE VZDĚLÁVÁNÍ

# Emergence of CSA

In session 2 we heard how some of the consequences of the modern food system stimulate concern among citizens:

- Concern about the disconnection between consumers and producers
- Concern about who controls the food chain
- Concern about health and environment linked to the industrial food system
- The idea that some of these challenges are 'locked in' to the places and the ways that we live and work

In this session we will hear about one civil society response to these concerns called Community Supported Agriculture or CSA.

## CSA - What is it?

CSA has a number of characteristics which may include:

- Shared risk between farmer and consumer (member)
- Advanced, or regular payment for food
- **Co-operative**/democratic management
- Contribution by members to labour
- Access to the farm for education, relaxation... etc.

Essentially, it is a way of planning cash-flow and cropping; and *may* renegotiate the distinction between farmer, landholder, customer – **this is a political/conceptual challenge in the EU.**

## Current models include:

- Share in the harvest (a proportion of the harvest)
- Committed market (a minimum, or informal commitment)
- Support group around a farm (events, festivals, markets)
- Rent a tree (for fruit – can be non-local)
- Do the work yourself (labour for food)
- Shares or gifts in the farm capital (cf. Polanyi?)
- Community owned enterprise (see shares above and later)

We'll discuss some of these. Main point is to think about breadth – one size will not fit all, all schemes are different.

# North American and European divergence

In its modern form, CSA emerged in the US, under Trauger Groh. In general, the literature suggests the US and Europe have slightly different approaches:

North America	Europe
Peri-urban horticultural model prevails – access to markets	More mixed produce and locations (dairy, meat etc)
May be oppositional and linked to the construction of communities (cf. Lyson)	Some opposition; city self-provision; also supporting producers and connecting to the land (rural development and social solidarity)

Soil Association (2007) *Cultivating Communities – Reconnecting food and farming*. SA, Bristol.

Henderson, E. & Van En, R. (2007) *Sharing the Harvest – A citizen's guide to Community Supported Agriculture*. Chelsea Green Publishing Co, White River Jct.

# CSA No 1 Stroud Community Agriculture

## - Community Owned Enterprise

- Operates solely to further a set of principles (mission-led)
- 2 farmers paid wage £19k\*/CzC 570k (2009)
- 46-acre organic mixed farm, 2 locations
- A rich community life around the farm

IPS members represent 200 households

£80,000 turnover (2009)

\*Ave. dairy £20k Farmers' Weekly 2/4/10, less than average UK earnings but much higher than minimum wage.

# What is it for? What are their principles?

- To support organic and biodynamic agriculture.
- To pioneer new economic model and ensure the farmers have a decent livelihood.
- Low income shall not exclude anyone. Practical involvement on all levels encouraged.
- To be transparent in all affairs and make decisions on the basis of consensus.
- To offer opportunities for learning, therapy and re-connecting with the earth.
- To network with others to promote CSA to other communities and farms.
- To encourage members, in co-operation with the farmers, to use the farm for their individual and social activities and celebrations.

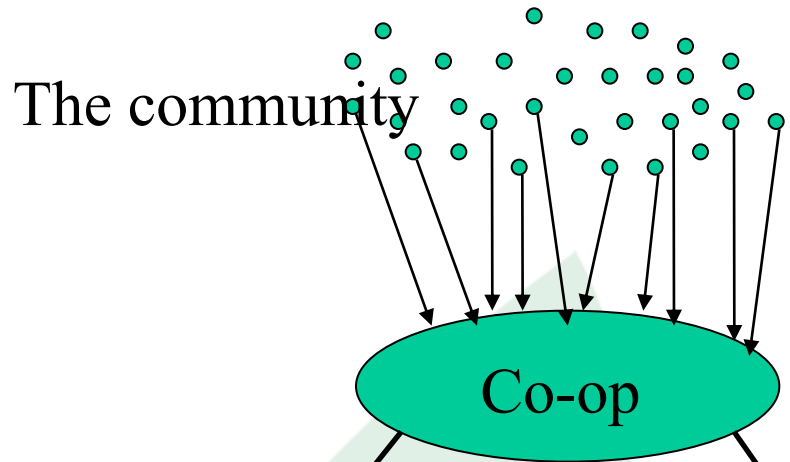
## How does it work?

- Members pay subscription, plus £8/CzC240 per week for a vegetable share, which they collect.
- Members can buy meat from freezer, and eggs – honesty box and swap box.
- Members decide all matters, delegated to a core group, 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.

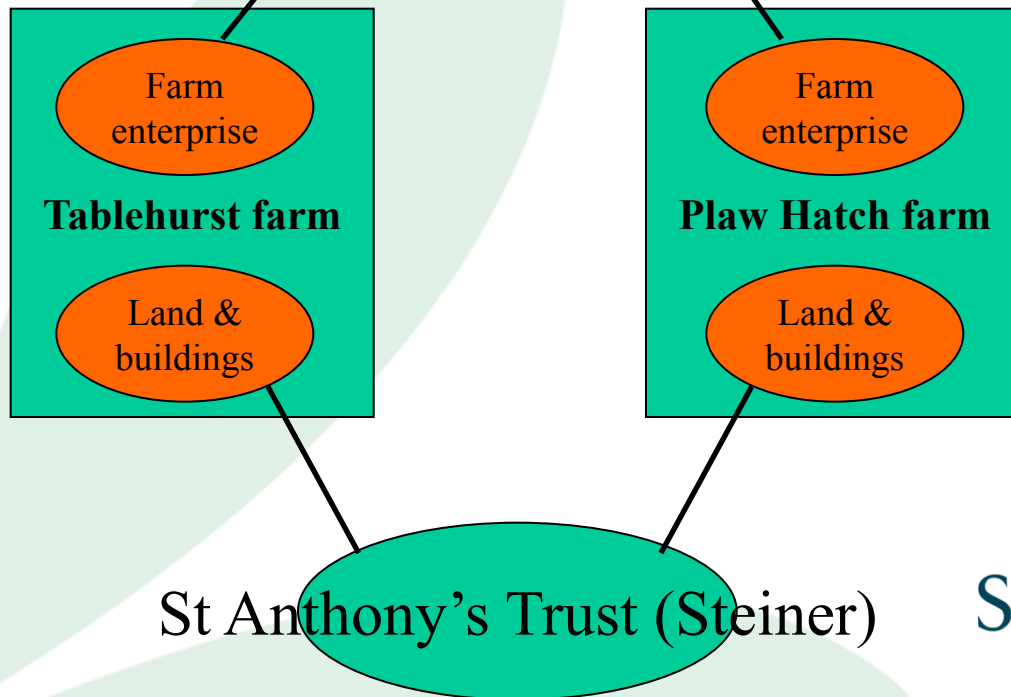


## No 2: Tablehurst & Plaw Hatch CSA

- Tablehurst (125 ha.) is arable and stock, Plaw Hatch (50 ha. acres) is dairy and horticulture
- Both are biodynamic. T'hurst was a loss-making college farm put up for sale in 1994. Local people raised capital to buy it.
- A co-op (IPS) owns both farms, with shares held by local members. Membership does not give entitlement to food.
- Together employ 20 f/t and 40 p/t and voluntary staff – inefficient or rural job creation? **Several staff live on the farm – community inside the farm & links to social care.**
- Annual turnover £1.3 million/CzC 38 million



# Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch structure



## Tablehurst & Plaw Hatch - Farming for farmers?

- Shares cost £100/CzK 3000 and there are 600 members. No yield or trade.
- 1,000 customers a week in farm shop and bakery.
- Occasionally members are asked to provide loan capital – for buildings (incl. homes) or loans equipment (over 5 years)
- Total capital stock is currently £250k/CzK 7.5 million
- In exchange for that capital and that goodwill, farmers undertake to farm well. They do.
- Farmers appreciate the strong sense of community, faith in their professionalism and freedom from burden of inheritance. They farm for the future, not for their own wealth (it's fixed) or for their children.

# Short film

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqLUasaHLuA>
- **Growing Communities in London**

# Community development finance instruments

## Somerset Land for Food community share issue

- People buy shares in CBS
- That investment provides capital for groups to buy land
- Land is rented by growers
- Rental income pays dividends (2%) and secures more land purchase
- Option for growers to buy after 5 years

More info: [www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk](http://www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk)

## Group exercise: CSA critique

Divide into 2 groups. Think about the CSA story. Nadia told me there is a CSA in Brno.

Group 1 – Describe the Brno CSA if you know it. What are its three key STRENGTHS? If not, consider three key general strengths of the CSA models we have described as you see them in a Czech/Slovak perspective.

Group 2 – CSAs are a good idea but they are not the mainstream of farming. Please provide 3-5 critical points about the difficulties or weaknesses of CSA.

10 mins and 5 mins feedback per group.

## Some critiques of CSA

- CSAs are marginal do not really change the food 'landscape'
- Their pricing policies may be exclusive for some citizens – often educated and wealthy
- They can be complex and hard work – relies on high degree of farmer and business skills
- Land is very hard and expensive to find
- Farmers may appreciate the support of their communities but find the limited sales volumes hard to accommodate
- Potentially risky; have to eat what grows – choice?

# Summary

- CSA takes many forms but most expect consumers to share production risks with farmers
- CSAs may be ideologically led but are businesses
- CSAs have made successful links with other alternative food projects – farmers’ markets, organic box schemes and have produced innovative methods and financial models
- Potentially transferable? – housing and energy generation
- Community supported agriculture or agriculture supporting the community?



## Some reading

Butler Flora, C. and Bregendahl, C. (2012) *Collaborative Community-supported Agriculture: Balancing Community Capitals for Producers and Consumers*. International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food Vol 19 No 3 pp. 329-346.

DeLind, M. (1999) *Is This a Women's Movement? The Relationship to Gender of Community Supported Agriculture in Michigan*. Human Organisation Vol 58 No 2 pp. 190-200

Guthman, J., Morris, A. and Allen, P (2006) *Squaring Farm Security in Two Types of Alternative Food Institutions*. Rural Sociology Vol 71, No 4, pp. 662-684

Keech, D., Alldred, S. and Snow, R (2009) *An analysis of seven CSA enterprises*. Making Local Food Work Discussion Paper. Soil Association, Bristol.

Schnell, S (2007) *Food with a farmer's face: CSA in the United States*. Geographical Review Vol 97 Iss 4, pp.550-564.