Expanding Your Market: The Multi-Farm Community Supported Agriculture Model

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Community Supported Agriculture, or CSA, is an alternative food system. It represents an informal agreement forged on an annual basis between a farmer and a group of members to produce and distribute food. Members, sometimes referred to as shareholders, are people concerned about where their food comes from, how it is grown, and by whom. A typical CSA provides vegetables to a group of shareholders who have paid a fee to receive a share of the harvest each week throughout the season. CSA subscribers know exactly where their food comes from and often develop a loyalty to “their farmer.” Vegetable farmers get an infusion of cash at the beginning of the growing season, when they most need it to purchase seeds and supplies. Many CSAs have expanded the menu of options to offer shares of berries and fruit, eggs or flowers, as well as meat shares.

In contrast, the multi-farm CSA minimizes the risks to producers and members by gathering produce from several local farms, which increases the variety, and assures that there will be plenty of produce every week throughout the season. This new kind of CSA model will support more than one local farm and provide a greater variety of fresh fruits and vegetables.

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