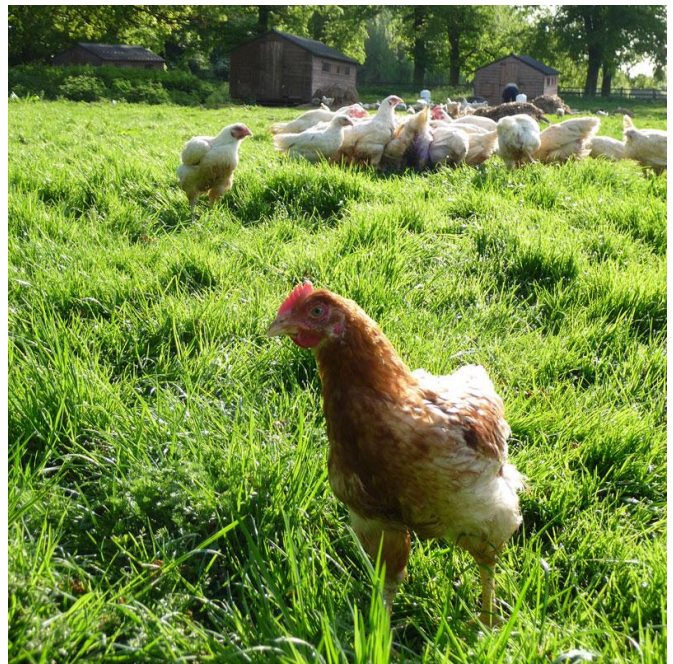


The impact of community supported agriculture



The impact of community supported agriculture **Published November 2011**

The final report of Provenance's evaluation for the Soil Association's project to support CSA, part of the Making Local Food Work programme, funded by the Big Lottery.

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Front cover photographs (clockwise from top left) : The Community Farm; Swillington Organic Farm; The Community Farm; Canalside Community Food

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0 Summary

Community supported agriculture (CSA) is a radical approach to the production and supply of food that builds strong, close and mutually beneficial partnerships between communities and producers. Though still a niche element of the local food sector and representing a tiny part of the food system as a whole, CSA offers a powerful approach to reconnecting people and agriculture. It is increasingly attractive as an answer to popular concerns about sustainability, resilience and transparency in the food system. As it grows more rapidly, albeit from a small base, CSA has potential to play a greater role in the provision of sustainable food and to deliver other benefits, including the increased wellbeing of participants, skills development, and provision of local employment and volunteering opportunities.

Our evaluation of the impact of CSA in England finds that at least 80 CSA initiatives are providing multiple benefits to thousands of members, their communities, local economies and the environment.

Scope

Defining CSA

CSA is defined not by any particular approach but by what it seeks to achieve: a mutually supportive relationship between communities and the producers of their food (or fuel or fibre). We adopted a definition that explicitly included all productive initiatives where the community has a stake in production, outlining how the community-production relationship can work:

“ *Community Supported Agriculture means any food, fuel or fibre producing initiative where the community shares the risks and rewards of production, whether through ownership, investment, sharing the costs of production, or provision of labour.* ”

Within this definition CSA initiatives can be divided according to four core approaches, characterised by their ownership and leadership:

- **Producer-led (subscription) initiatives**
- **Community-led (co-operative) initiatives**
- **Producer-community partnerships**
- **Community-owned farm enterprises**

Aim and Methodology

The central aim of this evaluation was to assess the features and impacts of CSA in England. The evaluation was commissioned by the Soil Association's project to support CSA as part of the Making Local Food Work

Programme but we were not tasked with evaluating the specific impact of the project.

The study gathered information on CSA initiatives in England, their members and potential members, through a phased approach of desk research, surveys, interviews and case studies, guided by the framework of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach. Of 80 active initiatives identified, 37 completed a comprehensive survey; survey responses were obtained from 440 members of 20 initiatives and from 249 potential members.

CSA in England

Context

CSA is arguably the most radical approach to provision of food within England's dynamic local food sector but remains less widespread than better known and more established approaches such as farmers' markets, local sourcing or standard box schemes, themselves only small parts of the food system as a whole. While the large supermarkets now account for over 70% of food retail in England, CSA counts under 0.01% of the population as members but represents over 0.2% of farm income. Public awareness of CSA is lower than other types of community food enterprise: just 32% of adult grocery shoppers have heard of the concept and only 6% know of an example. When the concept is explained 47% find it appealing.

Membership of CSA initiatives in England ranges from less than ten to the hundreds, averaging 69 trading members (ie those receiving produce) with a median of 40. The number of initiatives has recently increased at a growing rate with over 50 having started trading in the last 3 years. The average age for a CSA initiative is now just under 3 years though some have been in operation for over 10 years.

Priorities

Involvement in CSA is primarily motivated by environmental and social values, manifest in participants' active choice to commit to obtain at least some of their daily food requirements from a known and sustainable source in which they have a stake. The main reason cited by participants for their involvement was for provision of more sustainably produced food. Other important reasons for involvement are for healthy and high quality food, to support local farmers, and to help build a sustainable enterprise. Many members find their initiative appealing because it provides a more environmentally friendly alternative to the mainstream food system.

Reflecting the environmental motivations, members of a CSA initiative are likely to be involved in other groups, with high representation of environmental and other campaigning groups, particularly Transition Town groups.

Strategies

There is no single predominant approach to CSA in England, unlike in other countries such as France or the United States. Instead, CSA represents an ambition and provides a number of flexible models that initiatives adapt according to their local circumstances and the needs, ideas and ideals of their participants. Initiatives consequently exhibit great diversity across many dimensions, including membership structure, how and to whom food is provided, the type of food produced, the balance of production and trade, and use of volunteer and employed labour.

Assets

CSA initiatives bring together a set of assets to create a wider enterprise. We assessed initiatives' assets using a framework of five capitals suggested by the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, providing insights into the operation and sustainability of initiatives.

CSA initiatives generally enjoy good access to human capital through their members, volunteers and / or employees, with the relative importance of each of these categories varying greatly. Successful initiatives require a combination of agricultural, business management and community organisation skills. In the early phases, one or more of these areas may require development through external support, mentoring or employment of suitably skilled staff. Levels of volunteering are mostly high but smaller initiatives sometimes struggle to mobilize adequate volunteer input while turnover may not allow the necessary level of employment. This can place a heavy burden on a committed core of volunteers.

Initiatives draw on social capital from the existing networks and contacts of their participants, while also generating substantial social capital through the networks they create. The members of a CSA initiative constitute a group motivated by a single principle aim: to provide support to the agricultural production of their initiative. Through their individual social networks and contacts, members bring much existing social capital to their initiative. Initiatives, their employees and volunteers forge additional connections through the development and operation of their CSA initiative.

Most CSA initiatives are land-based agricultural producers and access to sufficient and suitable land is a fundamental requirement. Securing long-term access to land can present a significant challenge for new community-led initiatives. The need for a minimum base of physical capital – the necessary buildings and equipment for production and operation – can also pose a hurdle for community-led initiatives starting from scratch. Producer-led initiatives and community-producer

partnerships tend to enjoy ready access to the existing natural and physical capital of the producers involved.

While CSA is built on mutual support between members and the production of their food, in most initiatives the central exchange is trade of goods for money, albeit through an arrangement that goes beyond the conventional exchange of money for goods in the marketplace. Equally, while most initiatives make considerable use of volunteers, most are also dependent on employed staff for much of their labour and rely on rented land to provide their underlying natural capital. It is therefore essential to most initiatives that they have adequate start-up financial capital, are financially viable in their operations, and accumulate some reserves to provide security. Most established initiatives have achieved financial stability and enjoy a relatively secure income through trade with a core of loyal members paying in advance. CSA is often not a stand-alone business approach with many CSA initiatives an integral part of wider enterprises.

Impacts

CSA is largely motivated by an awareness of global environmental issues but operates at a very local level. Its environmental impact is threefold: effecting change through awareness raising and encouraging sustainable behaviour; providing food of low environmental impact; improving the local environment through land management.

CSA initiatives provide a high proportion of their members' food needs: initiatives supplying vegetables provide 62% of their members with all or nearly all of their requirements, and a further 27% with about half.

While CSA appeals to those with existing environmental value, initiatives still effect change to more sustainable behaviour amongst their members: 70% of members say that their cooking and eating habits have changed, primarily through using more local, seasonal and healthy food; 66% say that their shopping habits have changed, principally through a shift to more local shopping in addition to buying through the initiative. Before joining a CSA initiative, 73% of members had shopped regularly at a supermarket; as members only 51% were regular supermarket shoppers.

CSA has a perceived effect on members' health, skills and well-being: 70% saying that their overall quality of life has improved; 46% say their health has improved; 32% say they have developed new skills; 49% identify some other personal benefit. Employees frequently report high levels of job satisfaction from a supportive work environment and regular contact with the community the initiative supplies.

Almost half (45%) of CSA members feel that their initiative has had an impact on the broader community, often by bringing people together or providing a focal

point for community activity. Many initiatives provide a service where none previously existed: not just direct provision of food from the initiative but in some cases wider services such as a village shop or farmers' market. Many also offer a wide range of social events and activities for participants and other community members.

Though CSA initiatives tend to be, with notable exceptions, relatively small, their economic impacts are disproportionately significant. Successful CSA initiatives contribute directly to local economies through the employment they provide (mean employment is 2.6 employees with a median of 1 reflecting the large number of very small enterprises) and other spending, particularly trade with other producers (38% of initiatives buy from other producers). Indirectly, CSA can help to build economic potential through provision of education, training and volunteering opportunities: 77% of initiatives count education or training among the services they provide; initiatives have an average of 44 regular volunteers each year.

Several longer established CSA initiatives have actively developed or supported other community enterprises.

CSA in action: case studies

Our seven case studies illustrate the diversity of approaches to CSA, encompassing initiatives that are based in rural and urban areas, producer- and community-led, varying in the extent of production and trade, and reliant on volunteer or employed labour. The initiatives cover almost the full range of turnover, area of land worked and size of membership.

The future for CSA

CSA is proving increasingly popular as the mutually beneficial, supportive and close relationship they offer between producers and consumers meets growing popular concerns about the lack of transparency, sustainability and resilience of our mainstream food system.

The current rate of growth, even greater growth in other countries and the high latent appeal of CSA (despite a lack of public awareness), all point to potential for further and accelerating growth for the movement as a whole.

Most existing initiatives plan to develop in the future, through expansion, development or diversification. A handful of very successful larger enterprises suggest that opportunities exist to scale up the operations of some smaller and often newer initiatives.

We identified 18 former CSA initiatives no longer active under a CSA approach. In most cases the initiative had changed its approach or operations rather than ceasing trading altogether. This is often the result of a change in leadership or a considered decision on business grounds.

Recent growth is coincident with the Soil Association's Making Local Food Work project to support CSA and a majority of active initiatives have received some of the support available, in the form of advice, resources, networking opportunities, mentoring and study visits. Growth in the last few years appears, at least in part, to reflect such available support as well as recent accessibility of funding from the Local Food Fund and other sources.

A changing support and funding environment may provide less assistance to new and developing initiatives in the coming years.

1 Scope

1.1 What is community supported agriculture?

Defining CSA

The description *community supported agriculture* (CSA) is applied to a wide range of initiatives in which communities are more closely linked to the production of their food (occasionally fuel and potentially fibre), providing support beyond the conventional exchange of money for goods in the marketplace. Definitions of CSA tend to refer to mutual benefit or a sharing of the risks, rewards and responsibilities of production, for example:

“ *CSA is a partnership between one or more farmers and a community of subscribers; together they share the risks and benefits inherent in farming.*
Co-operative Research on Environmental Problems in Europe (2011)

“ *CSA is a partnership between farmers and the local community, providing mutual benefits and reconnecting people to the land where their food is grown.*
Soil Association website (2011)

“ *[CSA is] a partnership [ie a relationship based on mutual trust, openness, shared risk and shared reward] between farmers and consumers where the responsibilities and rewards of farming are shared.*
A Share in the Harvest, Soil Association (2001)

The above definitions are typical in avoiding specificity as to the nature of the partnership. At most, examples are given of possible approaches to CSA, for example:

“ *Community Supported Agriculture is a mutually beneficial partnership between a community and farmer. [...]*
There is no fixed way of organising CSA - it's a framework to inspire communities to work together with their local farmer. CSA projects range from allotments on farms and sponsoring apple trees; a community agreement in advance to purchase a particular crop from a producer; community members making regular input of labour; the purchase of land or related holdings or renting land and employing the producer.
Making Local Food Work website (2011)

CSA is characterised by what it seeks to achieve, rather than any specific approach. At the heart of the concept is a closer and more supportive relationship between communities and the production of their food (or fuel or

fibre); how this end is achieved varies from one initiative to another. CSA initiatives share common elements – production and some sharing of the risks, rewards and responsibilities – but show diversity across many dimensions (see section 2.3).

We devised and followed a definition that explicitly included all productive initiatives where the community has a stake in production, outlining ways in which the community-production relationship may be manifest:

“ *Community Supported Agriculture means any food, fuel or fibre producing initiative where the community shares the risks and rewards of production, whether through ownership, investment, sharing the costs of production, or provision of labour.*

Within the above definition are four core approaches to CSA, characterised by the ownership and leadership of the initiative:

- **Producer-led (subscription) initiatives**
An existing producer offers members of the community a share of production in return for a fixed subscription. The share may vary with the vagaries of production (so the risks and rewards are shared), while the subscription is generally payable in advance and for a relatively long term (providing secure income to the producer).
- **Community-led (co-operative) initiatives**
An enterprise owned by the community through a co-operative or similar structure takes on direct responsibility for production. Labour may be provided by volunteers and/or employed professionals. Produce may be distributed amongst the community and/or sold for the benefit of the enterprise.
- **Producer-community partnerships**
The enterprise, owned by the community through a co-operative or similar structure, works in close partnership with existing producer (s) to provide a secure and long-term supply of produce to community members.
- **Community-owned farm enterprises**
A farming enterprise is secured through community investment but does not necessarily trade primarily with the community members.

Some intentional and therapeutic communities, for example many Camphill Communities, involve shared production of food. However we excluded such communities from this study where production is not the primary focus.

1.2 Aim and methodology

Evaluation aim

The central aim of this evaluation was to collect evidence to allow a better understanding of the social, environmental and economic features and impacts of CSA in England. Questions we addressed included:

- What wider impact do these initiatives have on the people and communities involved, including farmers?
- To what extent does CSA increase access to fresh, healthy, local food with clear provenance for more people in the community?
- What sorts of people are involved in starting and becoming members of CSA?

We sought to identify opportunities for CSA to be a vehicle for positive change within communities, and its potential to bring about more sustainable and resilient practices, for both farmers and consumers. We have assessed the extent to which CSA delivers in these areas and against a range of indicators.

The evaluation was commissioned by the Soil Association's project to support CSA as part of the Making Local Food Work Programme but we were not tasked with evaluating the specific impact of the project.

Methodology

Our methodology was built on a proven approach to the evaluation of rural community enterprises, drawing on the experiences of as many existing initiatives as possible through a phased approach from postal and online surveys, through telephone interviews, to site visits for participatory engagement in a more wide-ranging assessment. This approach provided a rich quantitative dataset and qualitative results, allowing an evaluation of the success of individual initiatives and the concept of community supported agriculture more generally.

Research framework

The framework for our methodology was guided by the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA), developed in the late 1990s by the Department for International Development (DFID) and building on the work of a group of development NGOs (including Oxfam, the Institute of Development Studies and the International Institute for Sustainable Development).

The SLA analyses the factors affecting peoples' livelihoods, with reference to the principles and based on:

- The **priorities** that people define as their desired livelihood outcomes;
- Their **access to social, human, physical, financial and natural capital** or assets, and their ability to put these to productive use;
- The **different strategies they adopt** (and how they use their assets) in pursuit of their priorities;

- The **policies, institutions and processes** that shape their access to assets and opportunities;
- The **context in which they live**, and factors affecting vulnerability to shocks and stresses.

Though designed for use in the majority world, the SLA is founded on a set of principles that make it eminently transferable to the UK and useful in the context of small, land-based enterprises – such as CSA initiatives. The principles state that the SLA should be people-centered, responsive and participatory, multi-level, conducted in partnership, sustainable and dynamic.

Phased research

Phase 1: Appraisal and baselining of initiatives

We applied a reduced version of the SLA in order to baseline as many CSA initiatives as possible, through an online survey (also available on paper) for completion by CSA coordinators, farm managers and/or management committees. The survey was carried out in partnership with the Plunkett Foundation, which was surveying community food enterprises for a Defra-funded research project. Combining our surveys ensured that enterprises only received one survey request and maximised the likely response rate for both.

Working from the Soil Association database and other sources we initially identified 62 active initiatives. A further 18, mostly new, initiatives were later identified. 37 initiatives responded to the survey.

The surveys gathered data about the operation and assets of the initiatives and the individuals (and groups) involved. Focussing on the five capital assets used by the SLA, the questions explored:

- **Human capital:** motivation for participation, skills, knowledge, health and wellbeing of members and farmers and improvements to these, where attributable to the initiative.
- **Social capital:** social resources, including informal networks, membership of formalised groups and relationships of trust that facilitate co-operation (eg with other farmers or community groups).
- **Natural capital:** quality and quantity of natural resources available to the CSA initiatives, including land, water and soil quality.
- **Physical capital:** basic infrastructure such as irrigation and on-farm sanitation, offices and buildings, computers and communications technology, tools, vehicles and other equipment
- **Financial capital:** financial resources including savings, credit, and income from farm sales of goods and services (for example produce and training)

Additional data were gathered from published sources, including reports, company accounts and websites, and Soil Association records and case studies.

We surveyed CSA members and non-members through further online surveys. Initiatives responding to the survey of initiatives were invited to distribute survey invitations to their membership. Responding members were then invited to ask family, friends and neighbours who were not members of the CSA to participate in the non-members' survey, which was also publicised through various networks, newsletters and Twitter. The nature of the networks used resulted in an unrepresentative sample of non-members, biased towards those with an existing interest in food, community and sustainability issues.

The members' survey yielded 440 responses representing 20 initiatives; the non-members' survey 249 responses. We also took advantage of an opportunity to include two questions about general awareness of and attitudes to CSA in a survey of 1,000 grocery shoppers in the East of England, giving a more representative sample of the general public.

The surveys were followed up with selective telephone interviews, though the richness of the data gathered through the surveys exceeded expectations and required little additional interviewing.

Phase 2: Case studies

We carried out seven detailed case studies over 1 or 2 days on-site and in the communities where the initiatives operate. Initiatives for the case studies were selected to provide a range of approaches across key dimensions (see figure 1.2, below).

With the farm managers we worked through a set of indicators, where necessary to supplement the survey responses, to assess the economic, environmental and social sustainability of the initiative. This was intended to provide a snapshot of the CSA and allow for quantitative

comparisons between initiatives, a collective representation of the sectors' sustainability and, if desired at a later date, a comparison between initiatives and other similarly sized but differently structured farm enterprises. We interviewed groups and individuals involved in the CSA and from the wider community in order to establish how the CSA has affected their lives and organisations.

The case studies yielded detailed quantitative and qualitative results, capturing the impact of the CSA on members and the wider community, the specific and general challenges faced by CSA initiatives (and potential solutions), a detailed overview of the additionality attributed to the initiatives (improvements in skills, knowledge, health and well being) and relationships with the wider community.

Communicating the findings

This report details the findings of our evaluation, lessons drawn opportunities identified and recommendations.

The multiple sources of data give varying sample sizes for the quantitative findings: 37 initiatives completed our survey but some omitted specific questions; additional data were gathered where available to supplement the survey results. Sample sizes (n) are specified for each result in this report. Although the sample sizes are generally small, results are reported as percentages to facilitate comparisons across the varying samples.

Three additional papers present selected findings in a more concise and accessible form:

- Key features and benefits;
- Lessons for enterprises;
- An introduction for farmers.

Figure 1.2: Key characteristics of initiatives chosen for case studies

Initiative	Core model	Active for	Principal product(s)	Income (£k)	Land area (ha)	Type of location	Members	Employees	Volunteers
Bungay Community Bees	Community-led initiative	<2 years	Education, bees	<5	<1	Small Town	37	0	8
Fordhall Farm	Community-owned farm enterprise	5-10 years	Meat; education; other	100-250	50-100	Small Town	8000	4	114
Camel CSA	Community-led initiative	<2 years	Vegetables; education	10-20	<1	Hamlet	53	1	34
Canalside Community Food	Producer-community partnership	2-5 years	Vegetables	50-100	1-5	Village	130	2	33
Dragon Orchard	Producer-led initiative	5-10 years	Fruit	30-40	5-20	Village	100	2	0
Futurefarms – Martin	Community-led initiative	5-10 years	Mixed produce	40-50	1-5	Village	100	1	25
Growing Communities	Producer-community partnership	>10 years	Vegetables	>250	<1	City	680	21	172

2 CSA in England

2.1 The context: mainstream and local food systems

Mainstream food supply

The mainstream food system is complex and sophisticated. England is served by producers and food supply chains that function at present to provide food daily to 50 million people and are – for now and for the most part – logistically efficient, generally profitable and largely invisible. Food production and supply have become concentrated in recent decades¹, with large national and multi-national businesses providing the majority of our food. A large and increasing proportion of food is supplied from large scale producers via the multiple retailers (taking 72% of all spending on food and non-alcoholic drink in 2009²) and their dedicated supply chains. Other dedicated supply chains provide food to multiple-site caterers and groups of independent retailers and caterers.

Popular concerns and aspirations

Though efficient, England's existing supply chains often demonstrate a lack of social and environmental sustainability³, while their efficiency may come at the cost of compromised resilience. The invisibility of mainstream supply chains points to the disconnection they engender between producers and consumers. The food system increasingly meets the needs of larger food businesses so that markets are often inaccessible to small and local producers, while the sourcing requirements of small, specialist and community outlets may be poorly served.

Growing concerns about the social and environmental impacts of the mainstream food system⁴, and its lack of transparency and resilience, are driving increasing interest in alternatives. A dynamic local food sector has emerged, encompassing community food enterprises, small private businesses and national box schemes⁵. Awareness of local and sustainable food has increased significantly, not least through campaigns to promote farmers' markets, farm shops, CSA initiatives and box schemes, a perceived need to protect independent retailers and growing media coverage of concerns about food issues. The sector remains relatively small though the major supermarkets have at least gestured towards offering more local food.

A recent Mintel market research report⁶ suggests that awareness of local (and to a lesser extent sustainable) food has been matched by a stated intention to buy local food, with local food listed alongside animal welfare, food

purity and British provenance as one of the most important factors in consumer decision making. However Mintel also observe that "broad interest in food origin in general, and British and local food specifically, often fails to translate into action". Nonetheless, an increasing minority is taking radical action: "Resistance movements that seek to promote alternatives to the current world food economy are on the rise. [...] these movements signal a momentous shift in thinking [...]"⁷.

CSA as a movement

CSA is currently a niche element of the local food sector but is proving increasingly popular as the mutually beneficial, supportive and close relationship it offers between producers and consumers meets these concerns. Despite the diversity of approaches and the lack of any organising structure, CSA can be seen as an *alternative movement*⁸, characterised by a common aim to connect producers and communities, and the achievement of this through partial change in individuals' behaviours or habits. Many members and organisers of CSA initiatives expressed a desire to see the concept spread, with active support and encouragement provided by some established initiatives (eg Canalside, Growing Communities – see cases studies 3.3, 3.7).

More consistent models of CSA are found in some countries – for example *Teikei* in Japan, *Associations pour le Maintien d'une Agriculture Paysanne* (AMAP) in France or *Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale* (GAS) in Italy. Producer-led schemes are most prevalent in the US but Elizabeth Henderson, co-author of *Sharing the Harvest*⁹, has said of CSA initiatives in the US that "no two are alike".

The extent of CSA

We identified 80 active initiatives across England (mapped in figure 2.1a; listed in appendix 5.1), counting thousands of members. Membership of individual initiatives ranges from under 10 to over 600 *trading* members (ie those receiving a share of the produce¹⁰), with a mean of 69. Some initiatives have non-trading members, sometimes in much larger numbers. For example, two community-owned farms have approximately 600 and 8,000 members / shareholders respectively, though many of these do not receive produce from the farm.

¹ Vorley, 2003

² Office for National Statistics, 2010

³ Pretty, Jules et al, 2000

⁴ Kneafsey et al, 2007; CPRE; FARMA; FoE; Sustain

⁵ Making Local Food Work

⁶ Mintel, 2010

⁷ Clapp J, 2011

⁸ Collom E, 2007

⁹ Henderson and Van En, 2007

¹⁰ We draw a distinction between trading and non-trading members to avoid any comparison between the active participants in most CSA initiatives and the much larger but less active memberships of community-owned farm enterprises.

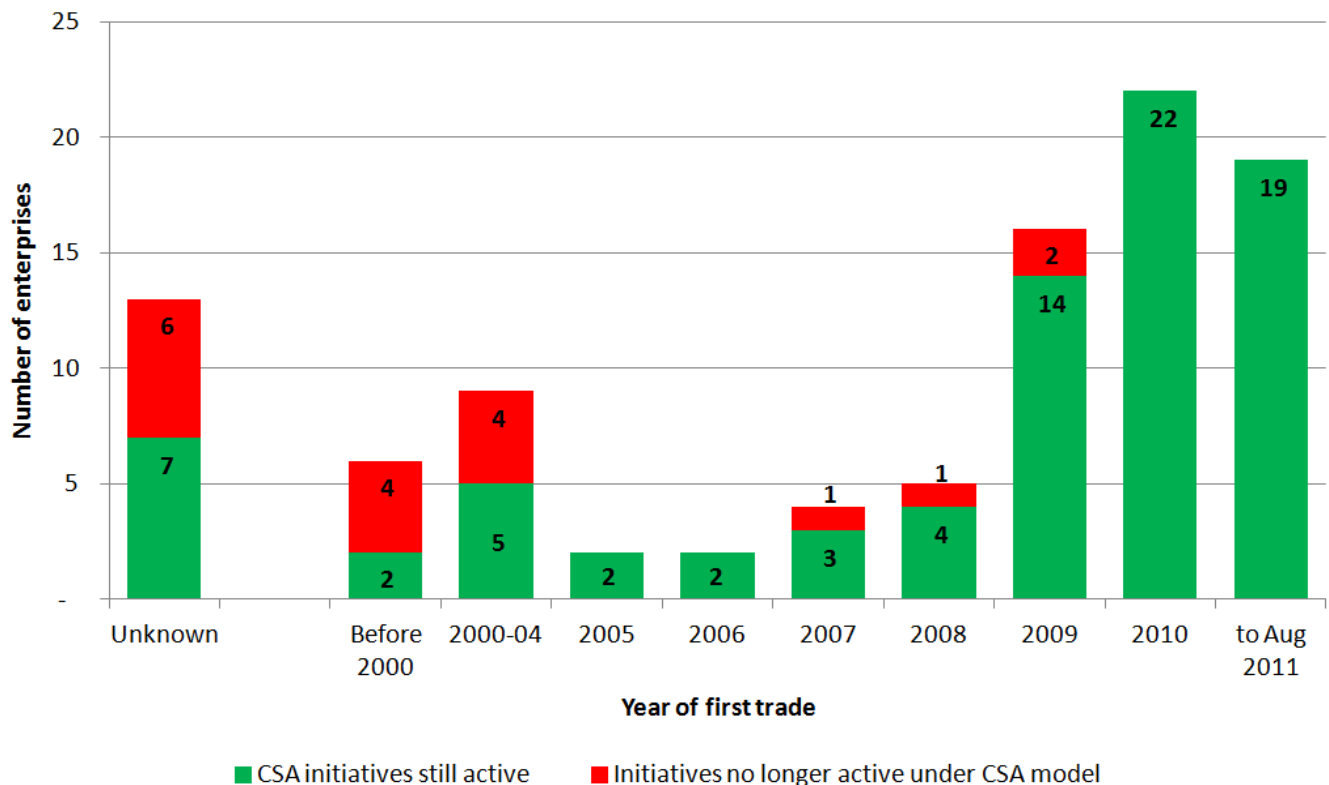
Figure 2.1a
CSA initiatives in England, mapped by core approach¹¹



¹¹ Google Fusion map reproduced under Google's terms of use: <http://www.google.com/permissions/>

Figure 2.1b (n=98)

CSA initiatives commencing trading, by year



A growing movement

The last few years have seen much increased growth of CSA in England. Creation of new initiatives was fairly steady between 2000 and 2008, at a few initiatives a year – see figure 2.1b above. Since 2009 many more new initiatives have started trading: 14 or more each year. The average age for a CSA initiative is just under 3 years. This growth may at least in part reflect the strong support provided in recent years, particularly by the *Soil Association* through the *Making Local Food Work* programme and the availability of funding from the *Local Food Fund* and other sources.

Evidence from the United States¹², France¹³ and Germany¹⁴ points to similarly accelerating growth of CSA in recent years (at a much higher rate in France and the US). In the United States, there were 12,549 farms marketing products through community supported agriculture in 2007, up from 2 in 1986 and 200 in 1992. In France, the *Associations pour le Maintien d'une Agriculture Paysanne* (AMAP) model has shown even more rapid growth¹⁵. The first AMAP initiatives were created in early 2001 and there are now approximately 3,000 farms working with AMAP across France. Whether

growth on a similar scale can be replicated in England remains to be seen.

The consistent pattern of growth, albeit from widely differing starting points and at different rates, suggests increasing popular demand for the reconnection CSA offers between people and their food. This may be a result of increasing economic and environmental uncertainty eroding faith in the mainstream food system and conventional investment models.

Lost CSA initiatives

Inevitably some CSA initiatives cease trading, either altogether or under a CSA model. We are aware of 18 initiatives in England that previously operated under a CSA model but ceased at some point in the last 10 years, in the majority of cases through a change of approach or business model rather than complete cessation of trade. In several cases, the move away from a CSA model followed the departure of one or more key individuals, suggesting that the leadership of someone with suitable skills and social entrepreneurship may be critical to an initiative's viability as a CSA. In other cases, a considered decision was taken on business grounds to move to an alternative model.

After 10 years or more around half of CSA initiatives are no longer trading as such. The low rate of straightforward business failure suggests that CSA may fulfil an important transitional role for some farm businesses and community groups. This may change as CSA becomes a more established and widely known approach.

¹² United States Department of Agriculture, 2009 and reported by Elizabeth Henderson

¹³ Soil Association, 2011

¹⁴ reported by Wolfgang Stränz of Buschberghof "Solidarische Landwirtschaft")

¹⁵ Soil Association, 2011

More initiatives are now being created than cease trading under a CSA model, though the longevity of the newer initiatives remains to be proven, particularly after the end of any start-up grant funding.

CSA as part of England's food system

Despite recent growth CSA remains a niche element of local food sector and a tiny part of England's food system as a whole, though one with potential for growth (see below).

Crude extrapolations¹⁶ from the available data suggest that CSA initiatives in England currently work over 3,200 acres (approximately 1,300 hectares) of land, count at least 5,000 trading members and have a combined annual turnover of over £7,000,000. As a proportion of total figures for England¹⁷, CSA initiatives therefore count a little over 0.01% of the total population as members and work under 0.01% of England's total farmland. However, turnover for CSA initiatives is over 0.2% of total farm income for England, reflecting the high productivity per acre of CSA and additional income from traded produce and other services. It should be noted that CSA initiatives are mostly small scale horticulture and many operate as diversified businesses, and would consequently be expected to have higher than average income relative to land area. Nevertheless, the magnitude of difference between share of farmland and farm income is striking.

Public awareness and attitudes

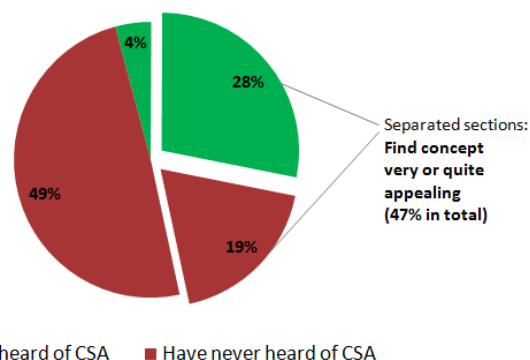
CSA currently lacks popular awareness understanding. In our survey of 1,000 grocery shoppers in the East of England, 32% said they had heard of CSA and just 6% knew of a particular initiative. By comparison, more people were aware of other types of community food enterprise: community-run shops (58% have heard of it / 14% know of an example), community-run pubs (50% / 11%), community buying groups (52% / 12%).

There is however, much potential to significantly increase public understanding, appreciation and participation in CSA initiatives: when the concept is explained (using the definition in section 1.1), 47% find it very or quite appealing and 6% would definitely like to join a CSA initiative.

Figure 2.1c (n=1,016)

Awareness and appeal of CSA

Colours show awareness; separated sections indicate positive appeal

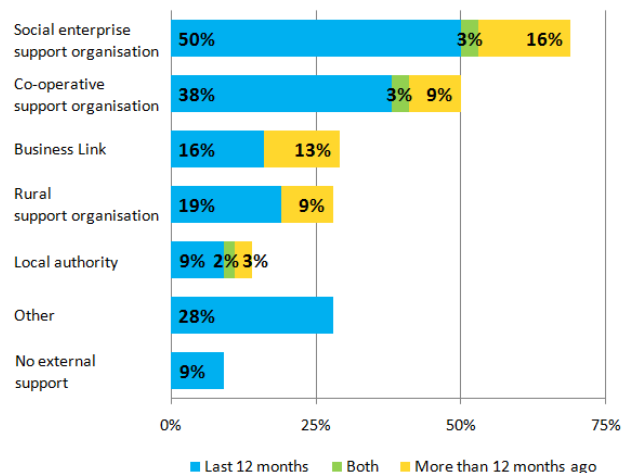


Support and grant funding

The majority of CSA initiatives (90%) have benefited from external advice or support, mostly from a social enterprise support organization or co-operative support organization.

Figure 2.1d (n=32)

Initiatives receiving external support in last 12 months and before, by supporting organisation



CSA has been championed and supported by the Soil Association and other organisations, most recently through the Soil Association's CSA project under the Making Local Food Programme. As Making Local Food Work ends in March 2012, the support environment will change significantly, though it is hoped that some support, networking and advocacy will continue. In addition to direct support to initiatives, there is evidence that national publicity is effective in encouraging interested individuals to seek out and join, or even to initiate, a local CSA initiative.

Many CSA initiatives have benefited from grant funding (44% are currently deriving some income from grants) from various sources, particularly the Local Food Fund,

¹⁶ These figures have been calculated from the averages across enterprises where data is available, adjusting for outlying extremes.

¹⁷ Figures taken from Agriculture in the United Kingdom 2010, Defra (2011), accessed via <http://www.defra.gov.uk/statistics/foodfarm/cross-cutting/auk/> and UK National Statistics Publication Hub: Population <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/population/index.html>

UnLtd and charitable foundations such as the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

The policy environment

Government, at a range of levels, has identified local food production and consumption as a key driver in rural development and the promotion of health and wellbeing¹⁸. The UK Government has shown some recognition of community approaches to food production and supply, and the benefits they can provide, but there has been little active support for CSA initiatives to date. Defra has commissioned research on the role of community enterprises including CSA¹⁹, in the context of the Big Society agenda, which suggests a favourable shift in policy towards community enterprise.

Wider policy can hinder the operation smaller food producers, including CSA initiatives. For example, the closure of small abattoirs can threaten the local meat supply chains that meat-producing CSA initiatives rely on (see section 3.6, case study on Futurefarms). Several initiatives expressed frustration with planning and land restrictions as obstacles to their operation.

Looking ahead, the Coalition Government has expressed support for community initiatives, outlining the following broad policy areas in *Building the Big Society*²⁰:

“ Encourage people to take an active role in their communities

- We will take a range of measures to encourage volunteering and involvement in social action

Support co-ops, mutuals, charities and social enterprises

- We will support the creation and expansion of mutuals, co-operatives, charities and social enterprises, and support these groups to have much greater involvement in the running of public services.
- We will use funds from dormant bank accounts to establish a Big Society Bank, which will provide new finance for neighbourhood groups, charities, social enterprises and other nongovernmental bodies.

The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature, Defra's recent Natural England White Paper²¹ highlights the benefits of access to the outdoors and volunteering, which CSA can help to deliver.

Suitably directed, such policies could favour the growth of CSA in future, providing necessary support and finance as current provision comes to an end.

Guidance and research

A wide range of useful support materials for CSA initiatives has been collected and developed by the Soil Association's programme to support CSA²², and many instructive case studies of individual initiatives have been carried out by the Soil Association and others²³. A handful of research papers explore the history and nature of CSA initiatives²⁴ though there has previously been no systematic assessment of the features and impacts of CSA across England.

A growing body of research analyses the elements that make up a sustainable food system as a whole, consumers willingness to participate in those systems and what these new networks might do to better raise their profile²⁵.

¹⁸ Darnton, 2004b; Defra 2011a

¹⁹ The survey of CSA enterprises for this evaluation was carried out jointly with the Plunkett Foundation's survey for Defra.

²⁰ Cabinet Office, 2010

²¹ Defra, 2011b

²² Soil Association, 2010

²³ Soil Association, 2001, 2005, 2010; Stroud Common Wealth Company Ltd

²⁴ Cooley & Lass, 1994; Cone & Myhre, 2000; Adam, 2006

²⁵ Morris and Buller, 2003; Weatherell *et al.*, 2003; Jackson, 2004; Seyfang, 2006a, b & c; SDC, 2006; Grant, 2007; Thaler & Sunstein, 2008; Jarosz, 2008; FANN, 2009

2.2 Priorities for participants in CSA

Participants in CSA initiatives are primarily motivated by a desire for sustainably produced food, reflecting wider concerns about the social and environmental impacts of the mainstream food system and a consequent desire for a more sustainable alternative offering more direct relationships with the production of food²⁶. Participation in CSA is typically pro-environmental behaviour.

Some early Initiatives were established in response to concerns about food safety and access²⁷, but more recent initiatives have been driven by a desire to shorten supply chains and widen provision to sustainably produced food²⁸.

Individual motivation

We asked non-members what reasons would potentially encourage them to join a CSA initiative. We also asked members what originally encouraged them and what their reasons were for continued involvement. The table below (figure 2.2a) shows the ranking of reasons by percentage of respondents citing a reason as very or quite important.

Fig. 2.2a (n=249 potential participants; 440 actual)
Ranked reasons for participation in CSA initiative

Potential CSA participant Potential reasons for participation	Current CSA participant Original reasons for participation	Current CSA participant Reasons for continued participation
For sustainably produced food	For sustainably produced food	For sustainably produced food
For healthy food	For healthy food	To support local farmers
For high quality food	For high quality food	For healthy food
To support local farmers	To support local farmers	For high quality food
For affordable food	To help build a new sustainable enterprise	To help build a new sustainable enterprise
To help build a new sustainable enterprise	For affordable food	For affordable food
To become more involved in local community	To become more involved in local community	To become more involved in local community
To get involved in food production	To get involved in food production	To get involved in food production

Across both groups and both questions for members the leading reason was markedly and consistently "for sustainably produced food". This leading pro-environmental motivation to seek food with fewer negative social and environmental impacts is in line with the findings of other research that participation in CSA is primarily motivated by environmental values²⁹. In addition, many members explicitly stated that a key appealing feature of their initiative is that it provides a more environmentally friendly alternative to the mainstream food system.

For both non-members and members the second and third most important (potential) reasons to join were "for healthy food" and "for high quality food" but these both fall below "to support local farmers" among members' reasons for continued involvement. This suggests that the quality and freshness (often equated with health) of the food provided is an important factor in motivating participation. After joining a CSA initiative, active participants may be more aware of the need to support local farmers to ensure provision of such food.

A desire to get involved with food production is less cited as a motivation, particularly by active participants. Just under half (47%) of CSA members said involvement in production was important, matching reports from Canalside (see case study 3.3) and others that about half of members were actively engaged in farm activities. However, involvement with food production is very important to around a quarter of participants and many also reported that getting their children involved with and aware of the production of their food was important to them.

For many members, being involved with a CSA initiative is central to helping build a more sustainable society more generally:

“ I feel part of something that is truly pioneering, that I am contributing in some way to a different, more sustainable way of living.

[I am involved] to help build a sustainable economy/society

[Involvement means] doing something worthwhile; something that might bring about change.

The chart on the following page details cited reasons for participation (figure 2.2b) with illustrative quotes.

²⁶ Kneafsey et al, 2007

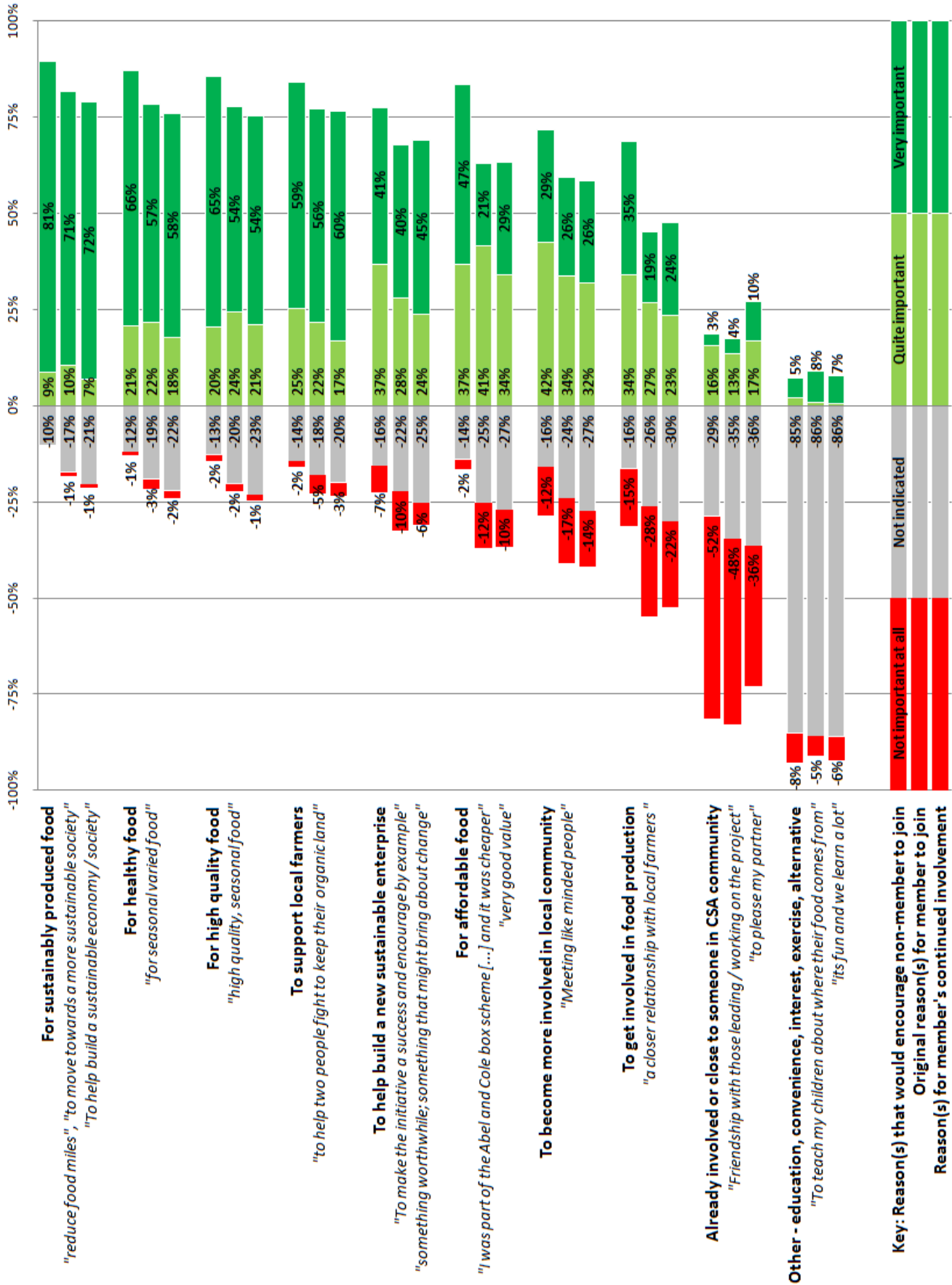
²⁷ Adam, 2006

²⁸ East Anglia Food Link 2010

²⁹ Kneafsey et al, 2007

Figure 2.2b (Non-members, n=250; members, n=439)

Reasons for involvement in CSA: What would encourage a non-member to join; Original reason for member to join; Reason for members' continued involvement.



Links with other groups and movements

Members of a CSA initiative are likely to be involved in other groups, with high representation of environmental and other campaigning groups. 67% are members of some other local or national group:

- 36% are members of a national campaigning group, such as Amnesty, Friends of the Earth or the Soil Association;
- 25% are members of a local social group, eg meeting to pursue a sport, activity or discussion;
- 15% are members of a Transition Town group;
- 14% are members of a local environmental group;
- 10% are members of a local campaigning group.

Barriers to participation

The barriers to participation are mostly practical. Potential members described four main factors that do or would discourage them from joining a CSA initiative:

1. Lack of time (cited by 51% of potential participants)
2. Difficult to find out how to participate (22%)
3. Don't feel part of community (21%)
4. Lack of transport (16%)

Many potential members also expressed reservations about community groups, their management and the people involved:

“ *Too often one person takes over and acts as self appointed leader.*
I just don't like these types.

I would have to be convinced that all participants shared the same short and long term goals and were equally committed.

Worried about the types of people I'd meet.

The aims of CSA initiatives

Asked to rank four broad aims as priorities when setting up, organisers of CSA mostly ranked the provision of a service where public or private provision had failed as most important:

1. To provide a service where private/public provision failed (ranked first by 50% of initiatives)
2. To provide employment (paid and/or volunteer) opportunities (20%)
3. To provide a social service for those at risk of social exclusion (7%)
4. To provide training opportunities (3%)

The low ranking for training indicates that it is not the main priority for initiative although 48% of initiatives provide training as a service.

Initiatives also cited unprompted priorities, including:

- To provide health benefits;

- Honey bee conservation;
- To reconnect people with the land where their food is grown;
- To reconnect people with land;
- To feed people;
- To give people the opportunity to grow their own food;
- To create an outlet for fruit;
- To provide organic veg to local people;
- To grow veg communally;
- To get more people regularly eating our potatoes;
- To bring underused land back into production in a benign way.

As the above list indicates, the priorities of initiatives range from very practical considerations to more ideologically driven aims. These reasons and the case studies suggested that producer-led initiatives tend to be primarily motivated by the practical requirement to find a reliable market for produce and a secure income, while community-led initiatives are, at least initially, inspired by more environmental or social aspirations. There is, however, considerable overlap: producer-led initiatives also tend to value social and environmental ends highly, while community-led initiatives soon face the reality of having to ensure viable provision of labour, whether paid or volunteer, to deliver their ends.

2.3 Strategies for CSA

Diverse approaches to CSA

CSA in England is remarkably diverse, reflecting the grassroots origins of initiatives. Although CSA has been encouraged and supported by national and regional organizations, there has been no strategic effort to initiate multiple instances of a specific model, in contrast to France, where AMAP initiatives have been successfully and rapidly replicated.

Instead initiatives adopt very individual approaches to their local circumstances and the needs, ideas and ideals of the participants.

Unlike the United States, where the producer-led approach is most prevalent and widely replicated, albeit with local variations, the majority of initiatives in England are community-led.

The charts on the following page (figures 2.3a, 2.3b) illustrate the diversity of initiatives across four key dimensions:

- Initiative leadership / ownership (ie core approach);
- Number of trading members;
- Area of land worked;
- Turnover.

Variation across these last three characteristics is greater than a linear scale can adequately represent, ranging across several orders of magnitude: all scales in figure 2.3a and the vertical scale in figure 2.3b are log scales.

The following table (table 2.3c) examines some of the wider variable dimensions of CSA initiatives, illustrating their diversity.

- **Initiative leadership** (initiatives for which data are available, n=80) indicates where ownership and decision-making lies – with the community, producer or shared – and closely matches the core business model, for which it is often the determining factor.
- The **number of trading members** (n=50) in CSA initiatives varies widely, as described above. Note that two community-owned farm businesses are not included in these figures.
- Another key defining feature of CSA initiatives is the nature of production. **Produce** (n=58) shows the main categories of food (and fuel) produced by initiatives.
- **Production and trade** (n=58) captures the balance of activity between production and trade. These factors are explored in more detail below (section 2.1.4).
- Most initiatives rely on both employed staff and volunteers to provide the labour necessary for their operations, though some rely wholly on one or the other. **Labour** (n=37) indicates the division of work between volunteers and employees.

- Just as membership of initiatives varies widely, so the land used ranges from under 1 acre (and zero for a handful of non-land-based initiatives) to over 100 acres. **Available land** (n=70) indicates the land area used, **land tenure** (n=36) whether land is rented or owned.
- **Distribution of produce** (n=32) demonstrates the fairly even spread between initiatives serving only their own members, largely non-members, or a mix of both.
- CSA initiatives can be located in any size of settlement, as indicated by **urban / rural location** (n=32).

Produce and services

Production (predominately but not exclusively agricultural) is at the heart of any CSA initiative though the balance between the initiative's own production and trade with partner producer varies greatly.

Initiatives also differ according to the categories of food or fuel that they produce and trade in. Figure 2.3d indicates the importance of different categories of produce and service to initiatives, both as own production and bought in.

Vegetables are by far the most usual category of food, produced by 78% of initiatives (and very important to 71%). Second most produced is meat, produced by almost a quarter of all initiatives (and very important to 22%).

Fruit follows closely behind meat, with eggs, dairy and cereals important to a few initiatives, along with other produce including bread, honey, wine, charcoal, logs and cut flowers.

Initiatives don't just focus on produce. Providing education as a service is considered important to 40% of all initiatives. Some initiatives also cite other benefits as services provided, including access to nature, volunteering opportunities, community building and awareness raising.

CSA and trade

38% of all CSA initiatives buy in additional produce, largely from local producers. Bought-in produce is primarily vegetables, followed by fruit, eggs, dairy products and meat, perhaps representing a hierarchy of expected continuity of supply among CSA members.

Some initiatives (notably Growing Communities – see section 3.7 for case study – and initiatives started with the support of its start-up programme) focus primarily on community-led trade with long-term partner farms. Volumes can be significant: Growing Communities sold almost £400,000 worth of traded produce in 2010, while also running a weekly farmers' market with annual sales of over £430,000.

Figure 2.3a (n=35)

CSA initiatives by area of land, number of members and turnover (bubble size, log scale)

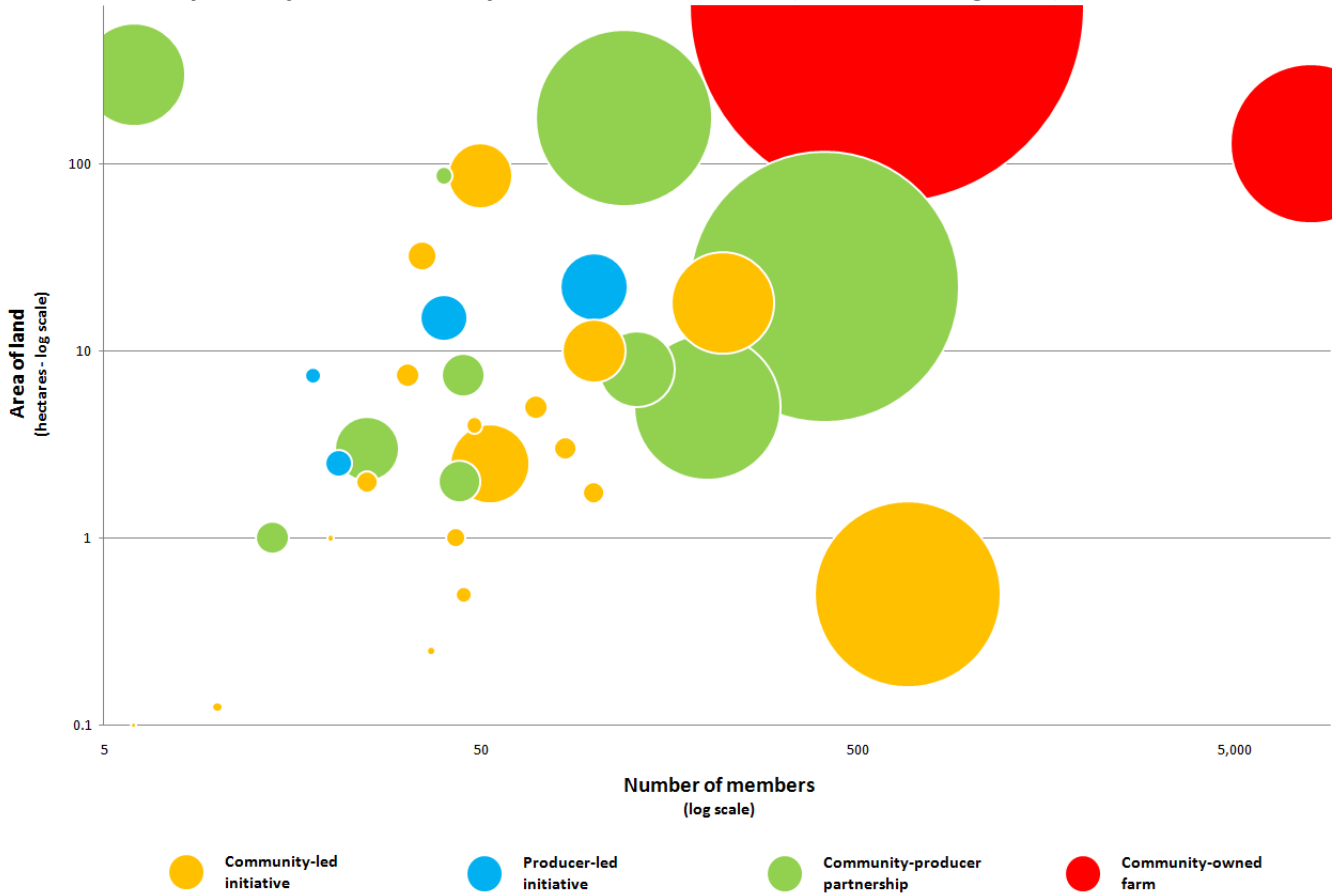


Figure 2.3b (n=47)

CSA initiatives by type and number of trading members, arranged by date of first trade

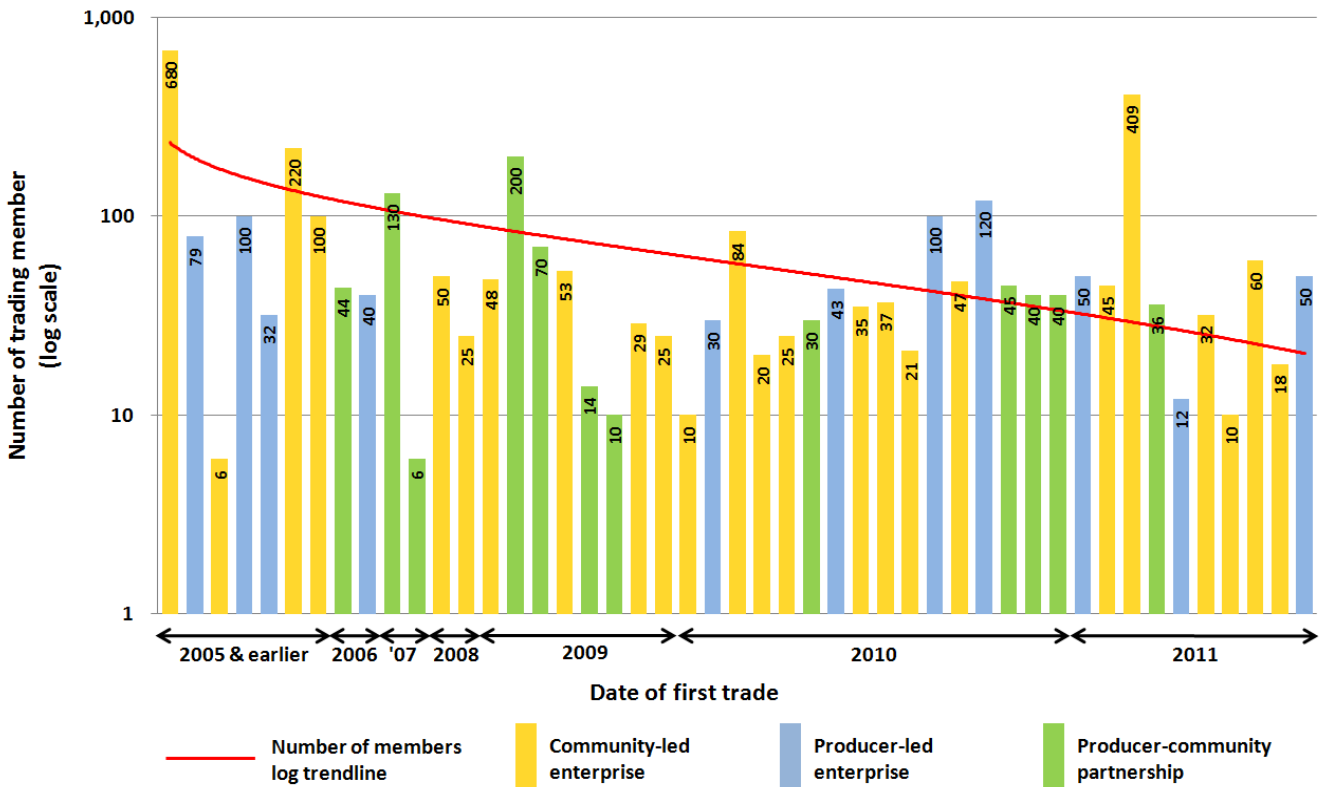
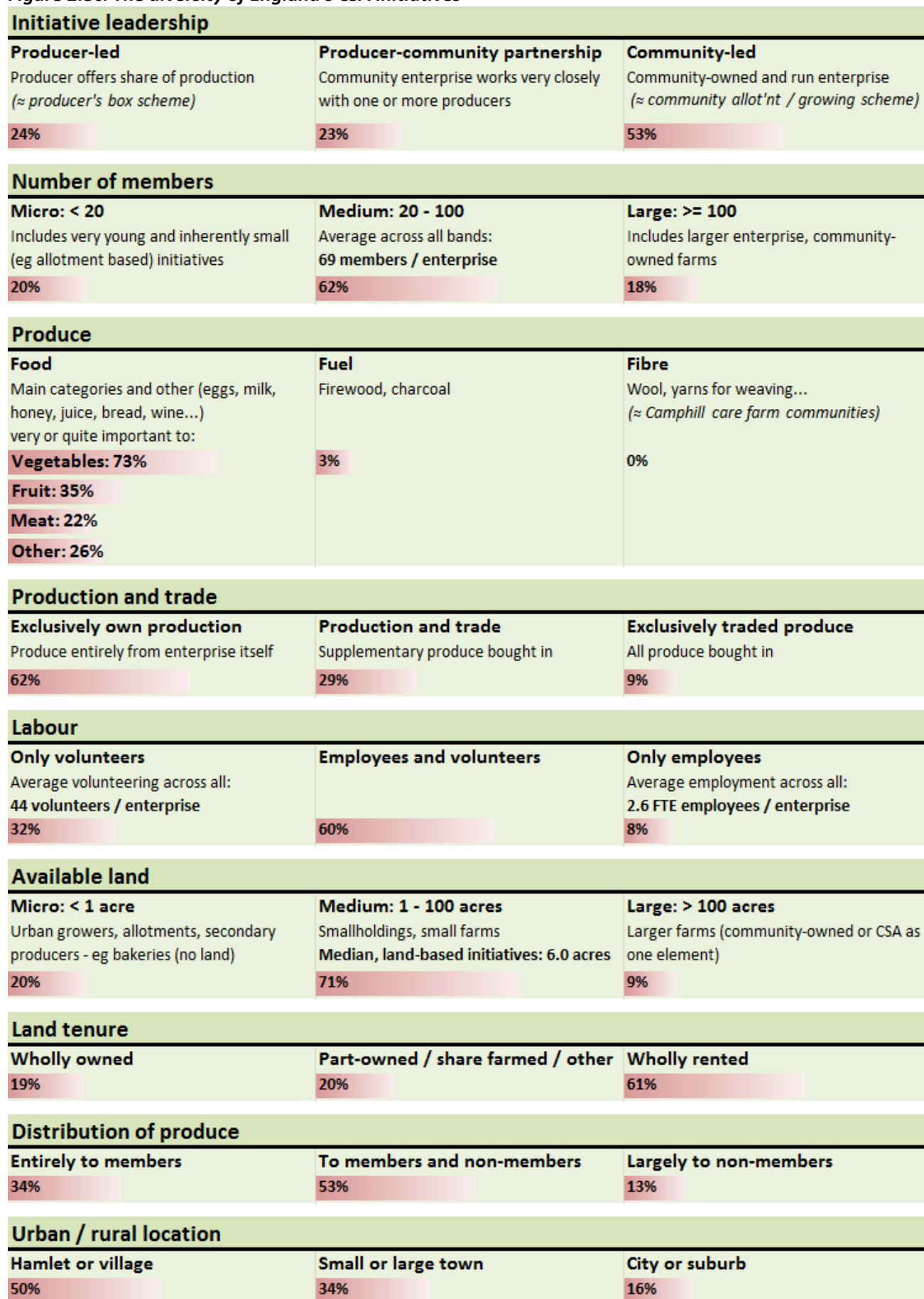


Figure 2.3c: The diversity of England's CSA initiatives



Notes: Percentages give proportion of initiatives in each category where data are available. *Alternative models similar to outlying examples in italics.*

The offer to members

The offer of CSA initiatives to their members also differs from initiative to initiative, though most require payment in advance and throughout the year or season.

Variable factors include the frequency of produce supplies (typically weekly for vegetables, monthly for meat), the length of commitment demanded of members, the range of share sizes and prices, holiday and distribution options.

The table on the following page (figure 2.3e) gives current details of the offer of nine sample initiatives, as published on their websites (September 2011).

Some initiatives follow a very different model, where members make discretionary purchases rather than receiving a regular share. Examples of this approach include Futurefarms (see section 3.6 for case study) and the Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch farm shops. Sales may also be made to non-members.

Communicating the offer

Most CSA members first heard about their local initiative by word of mouth, with other sources of information much less significant:

- Word of mouth (51% of members first heard about initiative this way);
- Flyer or poster (12%);
- Local press article (10%);
- CSA initiative website (10%);
- At an event (8%).

To some extent this may reflect the channels most used more than their effectiveness. The communication channels considered most important by initiatives were:

- Word of mouth (very important to 83% of initiatives);
- Website (63%);
- Attending events (40%);
- Flyers and posters (37%);
- Local press articles (34%).

Word of mouth is clearly the most effective way for initiatives to reach new members, unsurprisingly in the context of their generally very local presence. Attending events appears to reach relatively new few members though it often requires considerable effort from volunteers or employees.

Several members were inspired to find their local CSA initiative after hearing about the concept in the national media, in a book or on the internet.

Figure 2.3d (n=58)

Produce / services important to CSA initiatives, both own production and bought-in

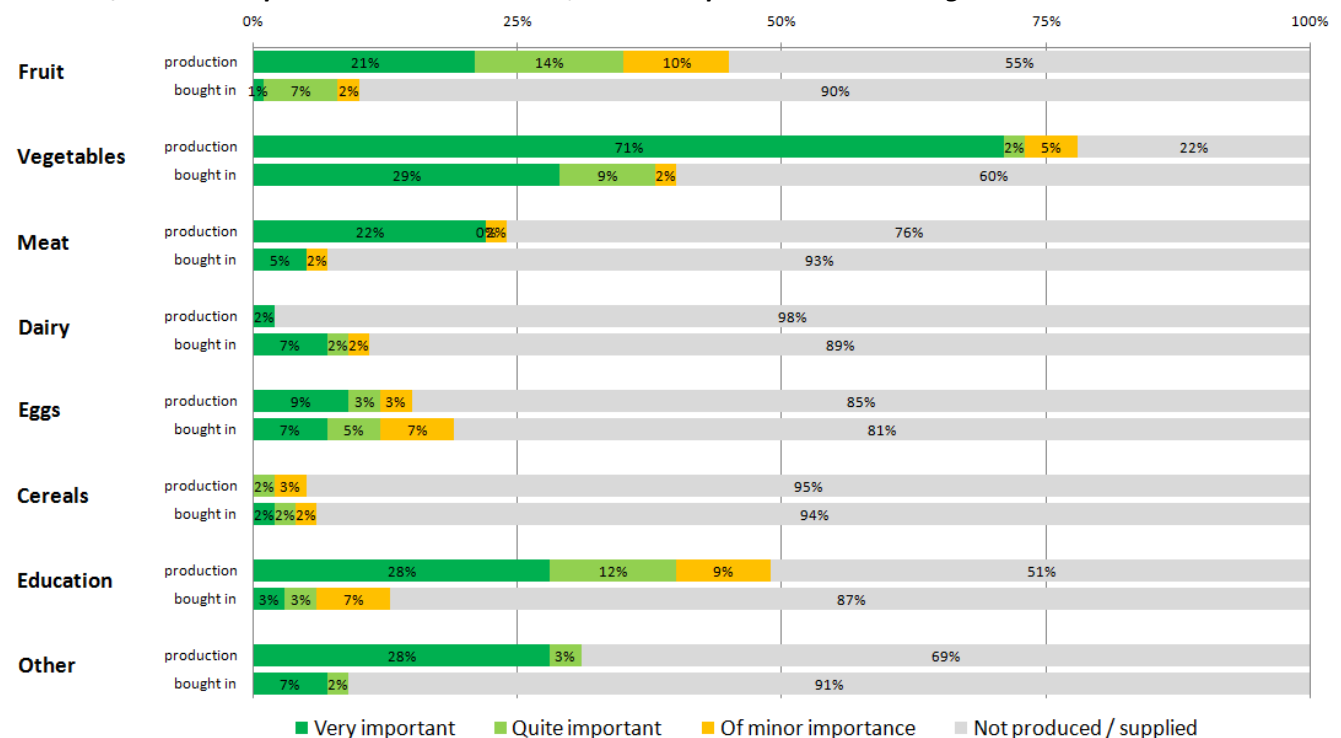


Figure 2.3e: The offer to members in selected CSA initiatives

<p>Canalside Community Food</p> <p>Vegetable shares supplied weekly Large / small / mini £58.50 / £39 / £26 – per month</p> <p>Fruit share trial (autumn 2011) 1-2 (or more) types per week £20 – per month</p> <p>Membership fee: £2 (£1) / month</p> <p>Holiday: no refunds</p> <p>Payment: monthly by standing order 2 month notice period to cancel order</p> <p>2 pick-up points: farm and town (£2.20/month extra)</p> <p>Work contribution: 3x3hr work shifts requests / year</p>	<p>Scarborough Shearling CSA</p> <p>Lamb share monthly over 8 months Full / half share of 1 shearling sheep £20 / £10 – per month for 8 months</p> <p>Membership fee: £2 / year</p> <p>Holiday: no refunds</p> <p>Payment: advance / monthly SO</p> <p>1 pick-up points: central Scarborough</p> <p>Work contribution: none</p>	<p>Sims Hill Shared Harvest</p> <p>Vegetable shares supplied weekly Full / half £37 / £20 – per month</p> <p>Workshares available (5 each year): Full: 4 hrs/week over 6 months Half: 2 hrs/week over 6 months</p> <p>Membership fee: £3 / month</p> <p>Holiday: no refunds</p> <p>Payment: monthly by SO / cheque</p> <p>4 pick-up points: around Bristol</p> <p>Work contribution: voluntary or workshare</p>
<p>Camel CSA</p> <p>Vegetable shares supplied weekly Large / standard / small £60 / £32 / £20 – per month</p> <p>Membership fee: £2 (£1) / month</p> <p>Holiday: refunds for cancelled orders</p> <p>Payment: month/weekly; SO / cheque 1 week notice period to cancel order</p> <p>1 pick-up points: extra shared collection points planned</p> <p>Work contribution: voluntary</p>	<p>Sedlescombe Vineyard Rentavine</p> <p>Discounted wine for members 30% off normal price of chosen type 10% off price of other products</p> <p>Membership fees (1 yr / 5 yr / life): White: £75 / £295 / £495 Red: £95 / £395 / £595 Sparkling: £149 / £595 / £795</p> <p>Holiday: n/a</p> <p>Payment: online on joining No cancellations</p> <p>Delivery: online orders delivered Members free to visit vineyard</p> <p>Work contribution: none</p>	<p>Growing Communities</p> <p>Vegetable bags supplied weekly Standard / small (no potatoes options) £44 (£50) / £26 (£30) – per month</p> <p>Fruit bags supplied weekly Standard / small £35 / £19 – per month</p> <p>Membership fee: none</p> <p>Holiday: refunds if over 4 weeks</p> <p>Payment: monthly by SO / cheque</p> <p>12 pick-up points: various sites across Hackney</p> <p>Work contribution: voluntary</p>
<p>Dragon Orchard Cropsharers</p> <p>Fruit shares supplied annually Eating Apples – 2 x 10Kg box Cooking Apples – 2 x 10Kg box Apple Juice – 1 dozen bottles Cider & Perry – 1 dozen bottles Pears, Chutney, Jams, Jellies</p> <p>Membership & share: £352.50 / year</p> <p>Holiday: n/a</p> <p>Payment: yearly by cheque</p> <p>1 pick-up point: farm Plus four open weekends / year</p> <p>Work contribution: none</p>	<p>Stroud Community Agriculture</p> <p>Vegetable shares supplied weekly 1st share / additional shares £33 / £22 – per month</p> <p>Meat and eggs Frozen beef and pork, local eggs, other veg sold ad hoc to members</p> <p>Membership fee: £2 (£1) / month</p> <p>Holiday: no refunds</p> <p>Payment: monthly by SO / cheque 3 month notice period to cancel order</p> <p>5 pick-up points: farm, Stroud, Gloucester, Nailsworth</p> <p>Work contribution: voluntary</p>	<p>Beenleigh Meadows Farm</p> <p>Lamb available to order Half lamb box £10 discount to members on £85 cost</p> <p>Membership fee: £24 / year</p> <p>Holiday: n/a</p> <p>Payment: membership in advance produce as ordered</p> <p>Pick-up or delivery: farm pick-up, free local delivery</p> <p>Work contribution: none</p>

2.4 The assets of CSA initiatives

CSA initiatives bring together a set of assets to create a wider enterprise. We assessed initiatives' assets using a framework of five capitals suggested by the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, providing insights into the operation and sustainability of enterprises.

Human capital

CSA initiatives access human capital through their members, volunteers and / or employees, with the relative importance of each of these categories varying greatly.

Key indicators

Membership (n=52) (trading and non-trading)		
Range	3 to 8,000	
Distribution	<20	: 19%
	20-99	: 60%
	>=100	: 21%
Average	Mean	: 232
	Median	: 40
Length of membership	Mean	: 2.5 years
	Median	: 1.5 years
Regular volunteers (n=36)		
Range	0 to 308	
Distribution	0	: 8%
	1-19	: 25%
	20-99	: 56%
	>=100	: 11%
Average	Mean	: 44
	Median	: 32
Volunteers / member (n=35)	Mean	: 0.51
	Median	: 0.25
Employees (n=32) (full time equivalent)		
Range	0 to 21	
Distribution	0	: 32%
	1-4	: 57%
	5-9	: 6%
	>=10	: 5%
Average	Mean	: 2.6
	Median	: 1
Employees / acre	Mean	: 0.34
	Median	: 0.13
(for primarily land-based enterprises with 1 or more employees; n=22)		

Labour

Sufficient and appropriately skilled labour is essential for the successful operation of any enterprise and may be provided through any combination of employees and volunteers.

In most enterprises some or all of the members, and in some cases interested non-members, provide volunteer labour on a regular basis. Community-led initiatives often depend entirely on volunteer input initially, and some remain wholly dependent on volunteers. While many initiatives enjoy strong volunteer support, some struggle to motivate sufficient volunteering and can be over-reliant on a few very committed volunteers, at the risk of making excessive demands that might ultimately result in burnout. This may be attributed to a focus on social and environmental outcomes over ensuring viable provision of paid or volunteer labour¹.

In addition, most enterprises employ staff, providing additional human capital that is generally more consistent, regular and responsive.

Skills

Production of food and other aspects of an initiative's operation require specific skills. The nature of CSA requires skills in agricultural production, business management and community organisation.

Where an existing producer is involved from the outset, in a producer-led initiative or producer-community partnership, sufficient agricultural skills are generally available, but community-led initiatives may start from a low skill base. An awareness of the skills required and an openness to acquiring them has allowed some initiatives to successfully overcome this and develop the required skills during initial period of operation. Likewise, producer-led initiatives may initially lack the necessary skills in community organisation.

Established CSA initiatives provide ongoing opportunities for development of skills through volunteer and employed work and both formal and informal training, building human capital for the enterprise and to wider benefit.

Membership

An essential element of any CSA enterprise is its membership and the commitment of members to support the enterprise's agricultural production. The members represent significant human capital for the enterprise, although the way and extent to which members are engaged varies. Members tend to be more active participants in community-led initiatives though a sizeable proportion often remain fairly passive recipients of produce.

¹ Freudenberger, 1974

Active membership of CSA enterprises varies enormously, ranging from 3 to 8,000, though the majority (60%) have between 20 and 100 members. The mean number of members (232) is skewed by the few enterprises with very large memberships (the mean excluding two community-owned farms is 69); the median (40) is more indicative of typical numbers.

Community-led growing initiatives tend to have a small but committed membership, while the governance structure of a few enterprises is such that they have few formal members but trade with a wider group. Community-owned farms have much larger numbers of members, many of whom may have no or minimal trading relationship with the initiative.

Commitment

Helping to build a sustainable enterprise is a very or quite important reason for continued involvement for 69% of CSA members and most show commitment and loyalty: current members, including of new initiatives, have been involved for an average of 2.5 years. Amongst longer established initiatives, average membership is up to 5.5 years.

Member demographics

Existing CSA members exhibit some clear demographic and social traits. Members are more likely to be female (74%) and the most frequent age band is 25-34 (28%).

Income distribution for CSA members shows slightly higher percentages of middle incomes than the national average, though with representation of all income brackets: 12% of members have annual household income under £15,000; 13% over £75,000.

Governance and development

Appropriate and effective governance is key to the successful organization and employment of an initiative's human capital. At the same time community-led initiatives rely on a volunteer governing body. Most initiatives are industrial and provident societies / IPS (21%), IPS for the benefit of the community (17%), or companies limited by guarantee (21%), though alternative legal statuses are represented, including companies limited by share, community interest companies / CIC, partnerships and unincorporated.

Initiatives can take time to effectively put their assets to use. Most initiatives (66%) are up and running within one year of the original idea, with 30% active within less than 6 months. Some take longer: 21% are operational after 1 to 2 years and 12% after more than 2 years.

Social capital

CSA initiatives draw on social capital from the existing networks and contacts of their participants, while also generating substantial social capital through the networks they create. The members of a CSA initiative constitute a group motivated by a single principle aim: to provide support to the agricultural production of their initiative. Through their individual social networks and contacts, members bring much existing social capital to their initiative. Initiatives, their employees and volunteers forge additional connections through the development and operation of their CSA initiative.

Key indicators

Informal support networks (n=36)	
% CSA initiatives finding local groups very or quite supportive (and very or quite resistant)	
Other local farmers	Supportive 55% Resistant 6%
Local councils	Supportive 63% Resistant 0%
Other enterprises	Supportive 66% Resistant 3%
Local residents	Supportive 81% Resistant 0%
Formal support (n=32)	
% CSA initiatives benefiting from external advice or support, by provider	
Any external support	91%
Social enterprise support organisation	53% in last 12 months 19% over 12 months ago
Co-operative support organisation	41% in last 12 months 13% over 12 months ago
Rural support organisation	19% in last 12 months 9% over 12 months ago
Business Link	16% in last 12 months 13% over 12 months ago
Local authority	13% in last 12 months 6% over 12 months ago

Informal support networks

Networking is very valuable to CSA initiatives, particularly with local groups and organizations, amongst themselves and with related enterprises. Initiatives are split on the importance to them of the private and public sectors, with approximately half considering each sector of some importance, both in the period before they started trading and on an ongoing basis. While some initiatives have benefited from good relationships with both the public and private sector, others haven't had or taken the same opportunity.

Some initiatives reported initial suspicion, skepticism or resistance from local farmers though attitudes tended to

improve once the initiative was more established and had demonstrated some success. Initiatives cited a wide range of individuals, businesses, groups and organizations that had provided informal support, including:

- **National organizations:** National Trust, Natural England, Plunkett Foundation, Soil Association
- **Local groups and organisations:** Farming and beekeeping groups, parish councils, Transition Towns
- **Individuals and business:** Landowners, local farmers, local residents

Several initiatives have supportive relationships with their local Transition Town or similar group. At least ten initiatives were initiated by a Transition Town food group but many of these have developed a separate identity and retain only informal links. Parish councils were described a particularly supportive by some initiatives, perhaps reflecting their direct representation of the local community.

Formal support

Most initiatives (91%) have received some external advice or formal support, most frequently from a social enterprise or co-operative support organization. In many cases support has been provided by the Soil Association's CSA support project, part of the Making Local Food Work programme, led by the Plunkett Foundation. The majority of initiatives (80%) see a need for ongoing support, citing the following areas of greatest need for current or future support:

- Finance and fundraising (54% envisage seeking support in next 12 months);
- Marketing (50%);
- Legal structures and governance (38%);
- Community leadership (35%);
- Specialist advice, eg horticultural mentoring (31%);
- Volunteer management (27%);
- Legal issues (27%).

Membership

The members of CSA initiatives represent considerable social capital and provide access to advice, support and resources through their individual contacts and networks. Members are also by far the most important marketing tool to initiatives, with word of mouth accounting for half (51%) of all members' first having heard about their local initiative.

Competition

An area of negative social capital is where other local food producers perceive a CSA initiative as a threat to their business. The ability of CSA initiatives to draw on volunteer labour and grant funding can be seen as presenting unfair competition. Ideally, CSA initiatives will work as part of an informal and supportive network of local food producers, helping to grow the total market for local food rather than threatening existing trade.

Natural capital

Most CSA initiatives are land-based agricultural producers and access to sufficient and suitable land is a fundamental requirement, often presenting a significant challenge for new community-led initiatives. Even non-land-based initiatives are dependent on natural capital though less directly.

Key indicators

Land worked		(n=69)
Range	0 to 700 acres	
Distribution	No land	: 10%
	<2 acres	: 19%
	2-20	: 48%
	21-100	: 14%
	>=100	: 9%
Average for all initiatives	Mean	: 41 acres
	Median	: 5 acres
Average for land-based initiatives	Mean	: 46 acres
	Median	: 6 acres
Land tenure		(n=36)
% initiatives by type of tenure, length of lease		
Tenure type	Wholly owned	: 19%
	Part-owned	: 3%
	Wholly rented	: 61%
	Share farmed	: 3%
	Other	: 14%
Length of lease where renting (n=23)	Under 1 year	: 4%
	1-3 years	: 31%
	4-5 years	: 13%
	6-10 years	: 35%
	Over 10 years	: 17%

Extent of land available

The land used by initiatives ranges from under 1 acre (and zero for a handful of non-land-based initiatives) to over 100 acres.

Across all land-based initiatives (n=62), the mean acreage is 45.7 acres. This figure is skewed by a handful of large holdings: the median for land-based initiatives is 6.0 acres, reflecting predominance of smaller holdings.

Many initiatives are land-based on a micro scale (9% work less than 1 acre, a further 10% between 1 and 2 acres) including small-scale community-led growing initiatives in both urban and rural areas.

The majority of initiatives (58%) work on a smallholding / market garden scale of between 1 and 20 acres, with many explicitly referring to market gardening as a model of production for a local market.

Almost a quarter of initiatives work land on the scale of a small or medium farm, with over 20 acres. Community-owned farms are the largest initiatives, comprising up to 700 acres.

Land access and tenure

Producer-led initiatives already have land available: CSA can provide a means to viable use of existing natural capital through the additional social capital provided by the membership. Community-led initiatives face the challenge of securing access to land when starting up.

Many initiatives cite access to land as a limiting factor in their plans for the future and this is a critical issue for developing initiatives. Trade can allow further growth and flexibility, so that additional land is only sought and taken on when the membership has grown sufficiently. In urban areas, availability of land is particularly constrained.

The quality of land, water and soil available to initiatives is highly variable as choice of land is limited by availability within the local area. Accessibility to members and volunteers may be considered a higher priority initially.

61% of CSA initiatives rent all the land they use and a further 20% are in share farming, part-rent or other arrangements. Only 19% own all of their land. Land is most often rented at the market rate from a local landowner though in some cases it may be made available at little or no cost by a favourable individual, business, organization or local authority. For initiatives renting land, their length of tenure has a bearing on long-term viability. A high proportion of initiatives have a lease of less than 5 years.

At least four CSA initiatives have safeguarded the use of land through a Community Farm Land Trust, offering a secure and sound "mechanism for the democratic ownership of land (and property) by a local community"¹.

Working the land

CSA initiatives tend to work their available land intensively (in terms of input of labour) and productively.

Members/acre

Land-based initiatives have a very wide range of members per acre: from less than 1 (larger farms with relatively few CSA members) to over 1,000 (micro land-based initiatives supplementing their production through trade).

On the whole, initiatives serve a large number of members, relative to their available land, with a mean of 47.4 members per acre (n=48) and median of 8.4 (more representative as not skewed by very large outlying examples).

¹ The Community Farm Land Trusts Project, Stroud Common Wealth Company Limited:
http://www.stroudcommonwealth.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=10&Itemid=13

Employees/acre

Again, employee/land intensity varies widely, from less than 1 employee per 100 acres to 42 employees per acre (considering only land-based initiatives with employees). Initiatives tend to show high levels of employment relative to the land available, with a mean of 2.2 employees/acre and median of 0.2. Among just the primarily land-based initiatives (excluding those predominately buying in produce), the number of employees per acre has a mean of 0.34 (equivalent to 0.14 employees / hectare). This compares with a mean of 0.027 employees / hectare across the UK agricultural sector as a whole. It should be noted that CSA initiatives are mostly small scale horticulture and would be expected to have higher than average labour inputs. On the other hand, CSA also benefits from high levels of volunteer labour.

Sustainable land management

CSA initiatives tend to manage their land well, many following sustainable methods of production and fostering biodiversity: 56% have increased the amount of land managed according to organic principles; 55% have planted more hedges and trees; 61% have introduced new wildlife areas. Many initiatives contribute to agro-biodiversity through cultivation of an unusually wide range of crops and raising rare breeds of livestock: 77% have increased diversity of production on their land. Initiatives also invest in more conventional improvements to their land and natural capital: over half have invested in fencing and in their water supply or irrigation, over a third in building fertility. Initiatives are frequently open and communicative about their management of the land: 53% have made land more accessible to the public. 29% consider that their approach has had a positive effect on the way their neighbours manage their land, including encouraging membership of stewardship schemes.

Physical capital

CSA initiatives have fundamental, though often relatively modest, requirements for physical capital, often including buildings, one or more vehicles and a range of agricultural equipment, in order to operate.

Key indicators

Availability of buildings and equipment (n=36) % of CSA initiatives with access through ownership, renting, hiring and/or borrowing (individual figures do not sum to total access figure as some initiatives have mixed access)		
Buildings	Access	: 89%
	Owned	: 42%
	Rentred / hired	: 31%
	Borrowed	: 25%
Tractor	Access	: 72%
	Owned	: 31%
	Rentred / hired	: 20%
	Borrowed	: 36%
Rotovator or similar	Access	: 69%
	Owned	: 33%
	Rentred / hired	: 11%
	Borrowed	: 36%
Handtools	Access	: 92%
	Owned	: 83%
	Rentred / hired	: 0%
	Borrowed	: 14%
Irrigation equipment	Access	: 67%
	Owned	: 56%
	Rentred / hired	: 0%
	Borrowed	: 11%
Harvesting equipment	Access	: 64%
	Owned	: 42%
	Rentred / hired	: 9%
	Borrowed	: 17%
Delivery vehicle	Access	: 58%
	Owned	: 28%
	Rentred / hired	: 3%
	Borrowed	: 28%

The need for a minimum base of physical capital can be a hurdle for community-led initiatives starting from scratch. Producer-led initiatives and community-producer partnerships often enjoy access to the existing physical capital of the producers involved.

In many cases, initiatives draw on external resources though their contacts and networks, often through informal borrowing arrangements: abundant social capital can help provide missing physical capital. The need for

physical capital may also be kept to a minimum by the way an initiative is run. For example, restricting produce pick-ups to the farm can eliminate the need for a delivery vehicle.

Buildings

Most initiatives require buildings of some sort to provide office space, storage, packing facilities or a mess room: 89% have access to some sort of building. Largely reflecting initiatives' tenure of land, under a half of initiatives own the buildings they use: 42% of initiatives own buildings.

An initiative's buildings often serve as the sole or main pick-up point for produce. In many cases, they represent an important point of contact between members and the initiative. However, a number of initiatives successfully work with less fixed arrangements for pick-ups.

Some initiatives have dispersed offices, with volunteers and even employees working on administrative tasks from home. This can effectively reduce the initiative's requirements and costs but may also reduce effective teamwork by hampering communication.

Transport

As noted above, many initiatives avoid the need for a delivery vehicle through their working arrangements. Just over a half have access to a delivery vehicle with an equal split between ownership and borrowing.

However, potential members may be excluded by restrictions on pick-up points for produce: lack of transport is cited as a barrier to involvement by 16% of non-members (see section 2.2).

Agricultural equipment

Initiatives inevitably require access to adequate equipment to successfully operate. In addition to the equipment detailed in the key indicators, initiatives may require on-farm sanitation, fencing, polytunnels, packing equipment, cold storage, specialist tools, clothing and other equipment.

Where an initiative has secured funding, some may be specifically for the purchase of necessary equipment. In most other cases, funds are generated through trade, particularly smaller items. Larger items are frequently borrowed, hired or rented.

In some initiatives relying mainly on volunteer labour, equipment is provided by the volunteers themselves.

Financial capital

While CSA is built on mutual support between members and the production of their food, in most initiatives the central exchange is trade of goods for money, albeit through an arrangement that goes beyond the conventional exchange of money for goods in the marketplace. Equally, while most initiatives make considerable use of volunteers, most are also dependent on employed staff for much of their labour. Most are also reliant on rented land to provide their underlying natural capital.

It is therefore essential to most initiatives that they have adequate start-up financial capital, are financially viable in their operations, and accumulate some reserves to provide security.

Key indicators

Annual turnover		(n=36)
(reported or estimated)		
Range	£240 to £1.5 million	
Distribution	<£10k	: 44%
	£10k - £50k	: 25%
	£50k - £100k	: 9%
	>£100k	: 22%
Average	Mean	: £110,000
	Median	: £16,000
Length of membership	Mean	: 2.5 years
	Median	: 1.5 years
Annual turnover / member		(n=33)
(2 initiatives with very few formal members excluded)		
Range	£20 to £2,500	
Distribution	<£100	: 33%
	£100 - £500	: 40%
	£500 - £1,000	: 9%
	>£1,000	: 18%
Average	Mean	: £520
	Median	: £333

Start-up finance

The majority of initiatives (57%) relied on members' subscriptions / shares to provide the finance to start their initiative – in many cases this is simply the regular subscription but a few initiatives have invited larger investments through a community share issue or similar.

Almost half of all initiatives (43%) secured some grant funding towards start-up and initial running costs: 37% of initiatives benefited from capital grants, 23% revenue.

Other important sources of finance were loans from members (27%) and local fundraising (27%).

Income

Many Initiatives operate at a modest financial level: 44% of all initiative, mostly community-led, have turnover under £10,000. However, many are working on a very different scale: annual initiative turnover ranges from under £1,000 for very small community-led initiatives to over £500,000 for a handful of initiatives of various kinds, including larger community-owned farms and trading community-led initiatives.

The mean annual turnover of £110,000 is skewed by the larger initiatives; the median of £16,000 is more representative of typical levels of turnover.

Trade is the primary source of income for most initiatives: 54% generate all their income from trading. However, almost half (43%) generate some income from grant funding: for 29% of initiatives over 25% of income is from grants; for 11% over 50% of income is grant funding. Just a handful of initiatives (14%) derive some income (between 20% and 70% of the total) from public sector contracts.

Members' share subscriptions

Most initiatives trade primarily with their membership, a loyal core (or sole) market that largely pays in advance, providing secure income and a healthy cashflow once the business reaches a sustainable size. 60% of initiatives have a minimum membership period of one year or season; 85% only take payment in advance. Two thirds of all initiatives (66%) trade with non-members as well; a minority (13%) trade predominately with non-members.

Income is therefore often closely related to the number of members. The average price of a *small* produce share is £7.59 / week, with larger shares typically around £12 / week. Annual income from each member, where produce shares are weekly, is typically from £300 to £600. In cases where an initiative has very few formal members or trades largely with non-members, turnover per member is considerably higher.

Depending on the extent of trade in addition to own production, income may also be limited by available land. Figure 2.3a shows the turnover of enterprises where known, against the number of members and available land.

Other sources of income

Grant funding is an important additional source of income, particularly for newer initiatives: 27% of all enterprises generate over a quarter of their income from grant funding.

48% state that they provide training as a service and may derive some income from fees or associated funding. Funding should be seen as providing a short-term step towards financial sustainability: 85% of funded initiatives expect a higher proportion of income from trading in the next three years.

2.5 The impacts of CSA

There is evidence to show that CSA has beneficial impacts on participants and their wider communities. Benefits include the direct impacts of initiatives' activities – provision of sustainable food, good land management, and offering employment, volunteering and training opportunities – and indirect effects – such as promoting wellbeing and social cohesion, and contributing to local economies.

Though operating at a very local level, CSA is often motivated by an awareness of global environmental issues. Its environmental impact is threefold: effecting change through awareness raising and encouraging sustainable behaviour; providing food of low environmental impact; improving the local environment through land management.

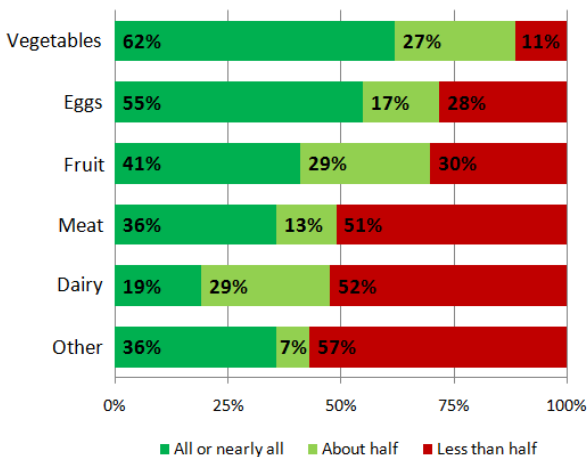
Impacts on participants

Participants in CSA include members, volunteers and employees, with much overlap between these categories.

Providing good food

The primary aim of most CSA initiatives is to provide good food to its members. Many members cite access to sustainable, healthy, high quality food and / or affordable food as key reasons for their involvement. Initiatives supply a significant proportion of their members' requirements with food that is predominately local, seasonal and produced to organic or other sustainable principles – whether from own production or bought in from known sources. Initiatives supplying vegetables provide 62% of their members with all or nearly all of their requirements; meat producing initiatives provide 36% of members with all or nearly all their meat.

Figure 2.5a (n=365)
Share of household needs provided by CSA
(where category supplied)



For 63% of initiatives, providing a service, where private or public provision is failing, is a high or medium priority. Although CSA members are more likely to enjoy middle

incomes, all income brackets are represented: 12% of members have annual household income under £15,000. For 37% of initiatives, providing a service for those at risk of social exclusion is a high or medium priority aim. A handful of initiatives offer discounts to the low waged or accept Healthy Start vouchers, though more are planning to do so and several offer free or discounted shares in return for work.

Encouraging sustainable behaviour

Many initiatives cite raising awareness of environmental issues as an important aim, often shared by members. While CSA can be assumed to appeal to environmentally minded people, initiatives still effect change to more sustainable behaviour amongst their members: 70% of members say that their cooking and eating habits have changed, primarily through using more local, seasonal and healthy food; 66% say that their shopping habits have changed, principally through a shift to more local shopping in addition to buying through the initiative.

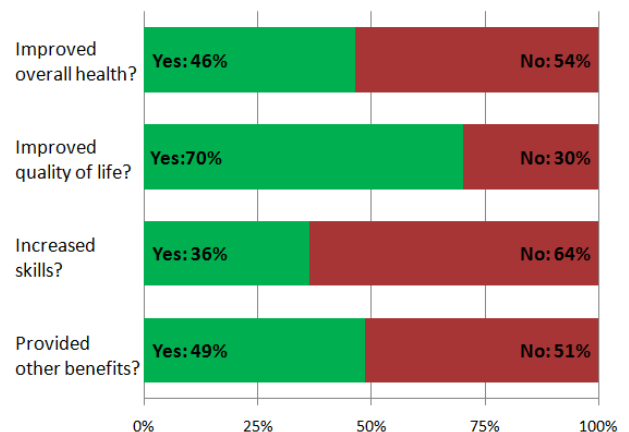
“ [Membership] changed the way we think about food and shopping, to fit with the seasons and have to know what to do with unusual produce - I should never have worried about it - it was an easy and enjoyable transition, and we love it!

Before joining a CSA initiative, 73% of members had shopped regularly at a supermarket; as members only 51% were regular supermarket shoppers. Many CSA members with children stress the importance of their involvement in developing their children's understanding and experience of food production and sustainability.

Promoting wellbeing

Many CSA members attribute beneficial effects on their quality of life, health, skills and other aspects of wellbeing to involvement in a CSA initiative.

Figure 2.5b (n=343)
Effects attributed by members to involvement in CSA initiative



70% of CSA members say that their overall quality of life has improved through membership, with many reporting an improvement in their health and citing other benefits, primarily social (eg "new friendships") but also educational (eg "better knowledge of farming") and relating to the natural environment ("more in touch with the seasons"). The impact on wellbeing is exemplified by members' accounts:

“ It makes me feel happy - at quite a deep level - that I'm playing a small part in helping such an excellent scheme to thrive. It's good for mental health as well as farmers, food growing and the environment - being part of the box scheme and meeting the farmers at the market is really important in such a many-layered and enjoyable way. Life is better by being involved.

[Our CSA initiative offers] increased connection with the natural and human world.

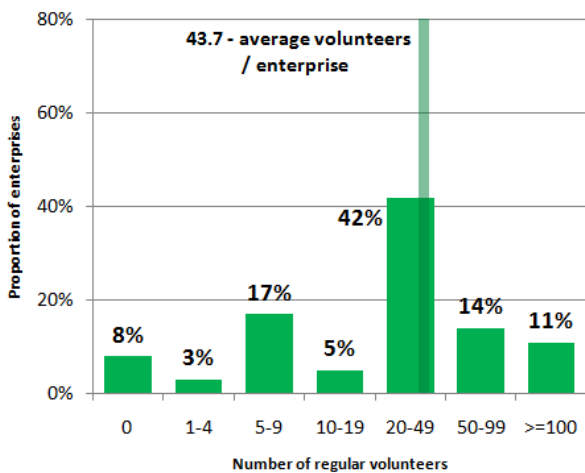
I feel involved in the production of the food I eat and have become more connected to the land.

I genuinely feel a bit happier now that I know our money and support is going to farmers, and to support a community enterprise that is bringing so many benefits to the environment and our neighbourhood.

Volunteering opportunities

The vast majority of initiatives (92%) provide volunteering opportunities – averaging 44 volunteers / enterprise and over 100 in several cases.

Figure 2.5c (n=36)
Volunteers / enterprise



Many of the volunteering opportunities provided by CSA are taken up by members: 36% of members are also involved as regular or occasional volunteers. The ratio of volunteers to members (mean 0.51 volunteers / member;

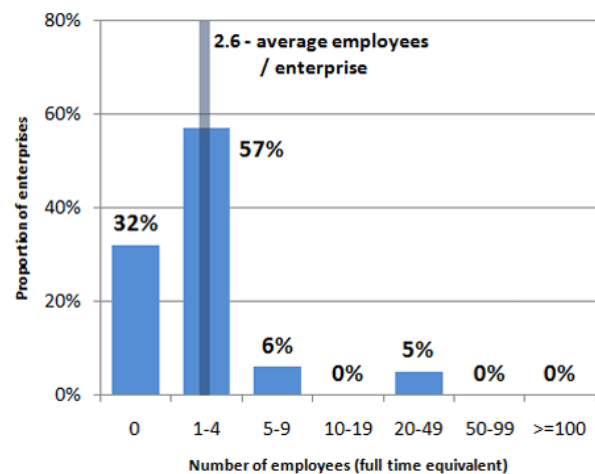
median 0.25 volunteers / member; one initiative with very few formal members excluded) gives a similar indication of the high levels of volunteering in CSA initiatives, including from interested non-members.

Most initiatives (87%) report that their volunteers are largely representative of their local community.

Employment

Over two thirds of all initiatives provide employment opportunities – averaging 2.6 full-time equivalent employees across all initiatives and over 20 in some cases – sometimes in relatively deprived rural or, more occasionally, urban areas.

Figure 2.5d (n=37)
Employees (full time equivalent) / enterprise



CSA initiatives provide very high levels of employment in contrast to other agricultural sectors. Among just the primarily land-based initiatives, the number of employees per acre has a mean of 0.34 (equivalent to 0.14 employees / hectare).

Across the UK agricultural sector as a whole a total workforce of 466,000 (full-time, part-time and casual workers in 2006) are employed across just over 17 million hectares³², giving a mean of 0.027 employees / hectare.

CSA can also offer a route into farming for new entrants who may find more conventional approaches to farming less attractive or accessible. New projects often start at a very small and manageable scale and can go on to grow with the skills and experience of a new grower. CSA has been described by one new grower as a much more supportive environment.

The Soil Association's Organic Apprenticeship Scheme³³ reports that many of their apprentices express an interest in CSA as a positive career option. Five CSA initiatives have

³² Figures taken from Agriculture in the United Kingdom 2010, Defra (2011), accessed via <http://www.defra.gov.uk/statistics/foodfarm/cross-cutting/auk/>

³³ <http://www.soilassociation.org/Enablingchange/Apprenticeshipscheme/tabid/240/Default.aspx>

hosted apprentices, and four out of the 13 apprentices who had completed the scheme by the summer of 2011 have gone on to work on a CSA initiative or have set one up themselves.

Training

CSA initiatives develop their human capital through training and education of their members, volunteers and employees. Most initiatives provide some formal or informal training (71%), and a still greater proportion (77%) count education or training more broadly amongst the products and services they provide. 36% of members say that being involved has increased their skills.

Some initiatives provide longer apprenticeship schemes (for example Growing Communities, see section 3.7 for case study) while others are host farms for the Soil Association's Organic Apprenticeship Scheme (including Swillington CSA and Growing with Grace).

Supporting wider enterprises

CSA initiatives can play an important role supporting wider farm businesses and social enterprises, providing additional diversified income and promotional opportunities. CSA can provide a market for very small scale production, which can struggle to sell elsewhere.

Many CSA initiatives are an integral part of a wider enterprise: producer-led initiatives are usually one element of a wider farm business; other initiatives are run by community enterprises providing care farming, farmers' markets, training and even IT services.

Several enterprises cite the CSA element as having played an essential role in ensuring the economic viability of the wider business, either by directly contributing relatively secure income or by attracting customers and publicity for the other elements.

Annual income of enterprises from sales and subscriptions varies from under £5,000 to over £250,000. Many of the lower income enterprises are very new, while others are inherently limited, particularly by limited access to land. The larger turnover and longer established enterprises demonstrate the potential for a CSA model to provide a viable basis to build substantial sales.

Impacts on communities

CSA initiatives depend on their members appreciating the benefits of involvement as well as valuing the wider impacts. There is strong evidence that they provide significant benefit for members and the wider community.

Contributing to local economies

For the producers and enterprises involved, CSA provides a valuable and relatively secure market for production that is generally sustainable and high quality. A key feature of the model is that producers have greater certainty of their income ahead of harvest and some

protection from fluctuations in yield: 85% of CSA initiatives take all payments in advance.

Many CSA initiatives, particularly the newer ones, are economically very small: 58% have annual income under £20,000. But several are much larger: 17% have income over £100,000, including a handful over £500,000.

CSA initiatives are largely dynamic: while 22% have no plans to develop, 38% would like to expand, 56% to develop their offering and 31% to diversify into other areas. A large majority of initiatives reported growth in turnover between 2009 and 2010 – 83% of those trading in both years. 67% reported a profit in the last year, while 22% broke even. 89% of those reporting a profit invested it back into the enterprise; 17% invested in a new business or other projects in the community. None distributed profits to members.

CSA initiatives also benefit other business, both directly (mainly through trade with other producers) and indirectly, through spending linked to CSA activity (eg members using local accommodation when visiting a farm or local shops when picking up produce).

Members of CSA buy a high proportion of their food requirements through their initiative and are more likely to buy other food locally, thereby contributing more to their local economy.

Contributing to social cohesion

Almost half (45%) of CSA members feel that their initiative has had an impact on the broader community, often by bringing people together or providing a focal point for community activity.

Some longer established CSA initiatives have actively developed or supported other community enterprises.

Sustainable land management

As described in section 2.4 (Physical capital), CSA initiatives tend to manage their land well, following sustainable methods of production and fostering biodiversity and agro-biodiversity. CSA initiatives are also frequently open and communicative about their management of the land.

Wider impacts

Though CSA initiatives tend to be relatively small, with notable exceptions, their economic impacts are disproportionately significant.

Successful CSA initiatives contribute directly to local economies through the employment they provide and other spending, particularly trade with other producers. Indirectly, CSA can help to build economic potential through provision of training and volunteering opportunities.

3 CSA in action: case studies

3.1 Bungay Community Bees

History and operation	
Approach	Community-led initiative
Established	April 2010
Location	Bungay, Suffolk
Products, services and prices	<p>Education: Volunteers offer local schools the opportunity to experience and better understand bees and other pollinators</p> <p>Pollination services: Provided through wildflower planting programme and management of hives</p> <p>Honey and hive products: Not the primary purpose but when available CSA honey and hive products are distributed to members.</p>
Membership	£20 per year
Holiday arrangements	N/A
Payment	Cheque, bank transfer or cash annually
Work contribution	Voluntary
Distribution	N/A
Production	3 apiary sites in and around Bungay
Trade	N/A

Overview

Bungay Community Bees, established in 2010, was the first beekeeping CSA in England. In common with all schemes it raises money from subscribers in order to carry out productive activities, however, unlike most CSA the primary products are not tangibly agricultural but instead education and less tangible ecosystem services.

Rapidly growing to 50 members Bungay Community Bees operates three apiary sites in Bungay as well as working with members who keep their own bees. Along side beekeeping volunteers from the group run two related projects: plants for bees and education and outreach.

Bungay Community Bees works with landowners, local schools, businesses and residents to improve the quality and continuity of forage for bees and to raise awareness about the vital role bees play in ecosystems and, in particular, food production.

Bungay Community Bees has inspired similar groups to follow a similar approach and has given its parent organization, Sustainable Bungay, the confidence to apply CSA principles to other micro enterprises.

Key indicators

Human capital	
Regular volunteers	8
Volunteers / member	0.16
Employees	0
Employees / acre	0
Social capital	
Legal structure	Part of Sustainable Bungay, an unincorporated voluntary association.
Governance	Volunteer management committee reporting regularly to members
Members	50 (September 2011)
Length of membership	1 year
Natural capital	
Land worked	Under 0.5 acres, the apiary sites take up very little space
Tenure of land	By agreement with landowners – no formal tenancy
Improvements to land	Hives are sited on land already managed to a high environmental standard. BCB works with local residents and landowners to encourage bee friendly gardening / farming.
Physical capital	
Buildings	Use of out buildings for equipment storage and meetings negotiated with landowners on <i>ad hoc</i> basis
Equipment	All necessary equipment owned: hives, beekeeping equipment, honey processing equipment.
Financial capital	
Turnover	£2250 (year to March 2011)
Turnover / member	Approximately £65
Reserves	£500 (restricted reserves at March 2011)
Forecast turnover 2011/12	£3500

History

Early in 2009 Elinor McDowall and Gemma Parker, members of Sustainable Bungay a Transition initiative on the north Suffolk border, became increasingly interested in the plight of honeybees and other pollinators. Global declines in honeybee populations and evidence that this is connected to industrial agriculture and intensive apiculture along with the craft, environmental, economic and local food aspects of beekeeping fitted well with the central narratives that drive many transition initiatives and so Sustainable Bungay paid for Gemma and Elinor to attend a beekeeping course.

Setting up beehives is not prohibitively expensive, but for two novices like Elinor and Gemma the £600 investment in hives, bees and associated equipment was a significant barrier. In addition neither felt confident enough to keep bees without expert support. Working with other members of Sustainable Bungay they developed a 5 year business plan that would establish Bungay Community Bees as a self-sustaining community venture, supplying subscribers with honey and hive products, access to the hives and opportunities to learn more about beekeeping.

“ While we were writing the business plan, in fact even after the press releases were sent out, I thought; this isn't going to work – who's going to sign up for this? I couldn't believe the response we got. I still can't!
Elinor McDowall | Founding Member

In spring 2010 Sustainable Bungay produced a series of press releases describing the problems bees face and offering Bungay Community Bees as part of the local solution. Quickly picked up by the local media Elinor and Gemma appeared on local television news, in all the local papers and on local radio. This, combined with a presence on the Sustainable Bungay website, attracted 35 subscribers. Nervous that there wouldn't be enough honey to share the scheme carried out no further marketing in 2010.

During the first year Bungay Community Bees bought and received in gifts enough equipment to establish 6 hives on two sites. This exceeded their original plan (2 hives in the first year) and allowed them to spend the 2010-11 season developing their approach to beekeeping and training additional beekeepers. By this time the active members were meeting on a regular basis, either to inspect the hives or for regular planning meetings.

A core management committee of 6 or 7 emerged and runs Bungay Community Bees, it includes 2 beekeepers and those running the groups education and outreach and plants for bees projects. None have been formally elected and the group is unincorporated, operating under the Sustainable Bungay constitution and insurances.

The group sought advice on a more formal legal structure, but decided that because of their small size it would be

more cost and time effective to remain part of Sustainable Bungay.

Impact

As a relatively new organization the broader impacts of Bungay Community Bees are hard to quantify. However, the CSA has created three new apiary sites, encouraged 50 people to engage directly with bees and beekeeping as part of a supportive community and inspired several similar initiatives in other parts of the UK.

“ *Natural beekeeping is often viewed with suspicion by beekeepers who fear that it will lead to unfit colonies harboring disease or just think it's not a serious approach. Because we're members the Waveney Beekeepers Group and because we've worked with them, sought their advice and are using a mix of hive types I think we've convinced them that we're serious and committed*
Gemma Parker | Founding Member

In 2011 the education and outreach group worked with 400 school children and their *Bungay Beehive Day* attracted an estimated 1000 visitors.

The plants for bees programme, which starts in earnest in 2012, is already working with local farmers, landowners and a garden centre and the group anticipates significant planting of bee friendly wild flowers and garden plants.

Lessons

- The CSA approach is a flexible and powerful means of drawing together a community and it can be broadly applied to a range of community enterprises, not just those whose primary objectives are the production of food or fuel or fibre.
- Bungay Community Bees demonstrates that the tangible product as originally defined (in this case honey) may in fact be of secondary importance to a set of far less tangible benefits (learning, sharing knowledge and experience, creating a new enterprise, engaging in a practical project). If the organisers had been fully aware of this possibility at the launch they might not have restricted membership in the first year.
- A CSA model, applied on a small scale, can build group confidence and capacity and communicate CSA principles to a local audience. In the case of Sustainable Bungay the success of Bungay Community Bees has encouraged the group to apply the same approach to other micro-enterprises.
- Initiatives run wholly by volunteer effort run the risk of overwhelming their volunteer team, or failing to develop effectively. The Bungay Community Bees core group has reached the limits of its capacity and, without additional beekeepers or a part time paid staff member will struggle to build on early success.

- External support is essential in the development of CSA: without professional expertise Elinor and Gemma would not have been able to devise and launch Bungay Community Bees and they still feel the need for external input on leadership / governance and financial advice and the support of a parent organization has been vital.
- Strong links with local experts, community groups, businesses and the media greatly improve the chances of success and ease the start-up phase. In the case of Bungay Community Bees where local beekeepers could well have viewed the group with skepticism and concern this came through strong links with the local British Beekeepers Association group and a readiness to engage with them have proved fruitful and mutually beneficial.

3.2 Camel CSA

History and operation	
Approach	Community-led initiative
Established	2009
Location	St Kew Highway, Cornwall
Products, services and prices	Vegetable shares supplied weekly Large / standard / small £60 / £32 / £20 – per month
Membership	£2 (£1) / month
Holiday arrangements	Refunds provided for cancelled orders
Payment	Month or weekly, by SO or cheque; 1 week notice period to cancel order
Work contribution	Voluntary
Distribution	1 pick-up point at present; extra shared collection points planned
Production	Wide range of vegetables produced
Trade	Additional produce bought in from local growers

Overview

Camel Community Supported Agriculture is a community-led group growing their own food using organic farming principles to provide weekly shares through a community vegetable box scheme.

The group works on a 2.5 acre site rented from a neighbouring farm – which also produces vegetables and operates the St Kew Harvest Farm Shop. Established in 2008 and initially working on a small section of the land using volunteer labour, the group secured a grant from the Lottery's Local Food Fund in 2010 and now supplies over 50 boxes every week, employs staff, works most of the site and has erected two polytunnels, toolsheds and a tractor shelter.

Constituted as a Community Interest Company Camel has a board and management group elected from the membership. Early in the initiative's development the management group took a decision to buy produce from other local producers in order to supplement production on the CSA site. Inspired by Growing Communities' community trade model Camel sees this as a positive way of supporting other, similar, enterprises, strengthening the local food systems and ensuring continuity and a good range of vegetables in their shares.

Camel's members are keen that the site should be accessible and used by a wide cross-section of the community. As well as regular open days and volunteering opportunities for members the CSA welcomes visits from schools colleges and other interest groups. In 2010 the management group recruited a part-time partnership co-

ordinator to develop these connections and the impact of this work is being supported and evaluated by a researcher from Exeter University.

Camel is still growing intends to supply at least 70 boxes in the 2012 season and offer a range of opportunities for visitors and volunteers.

Key indicators

Human capital	
Regular volunteers	34
Volunteers / member	0.64
Employees	1
Employees / acre	0.4
Social capital	
Legal structure	Community Interest Company
Governance	Core management group elected from membership
Members	53
Length of membership	1 year
Natural capital	
Land worked	2.5 acres
Tenure of land	Wholly rented, lease of 5-10 years
Improvements to land	Increases to: diversity of production, land managed under organic and biodynamic principles, number of hedges and trees, wildlife areas, accessibility
Physical capital	
Buildings	Owned
Equipment	Tractor borrowed; other equipment owned (rotovator or similar, handtools, irrigation and harvesting equipment)
Financial capital	
Turnover	£60,000
Turnover / member	Approximately £1,100
Reserves	n/a

History

Camel Community Supported Agriculture, on the edge of St. Kew in Cornwall, emerged as a result of meetings and discussions organised by local Transition initiatives, but is not directly connected to a particular Transition group. Established and incorporated in 2008 Camel began trading at the beginning of 2009.

It is a community-led initiative but has had a very close relationship with its landlord and neighbour who, as well as running a small market garden and farm shop, was part of the CSAs initiating group and was on the first board after incorporation and continues to offer advice and support. In addition Camel has the advantage of having several other formally qualified horticulturalists actively involved in day to day activities - both in a voluntary and now also in a paid capacity.

During its first year Camel operated entirely by volunteer effort and the group were only able to work a small part of the total land area available to them. As the scheme established and they grew in confidence they sought funding from the Big Lottery's Local Food Fund, this has enabled them to make capital purchases, including a tractor, sheds, a poly-tunnel and hand-tools and well as cover some revenue costs: including a wage for a part-time grower.

Camel's volunteers pack the harvested shares into returnable bags and boxes every Friday morning, these are then collected by members on Friday afternoon or, in some cases, over the weekend. Though at present there is no formal delivery system some members collect shares for those unable to get to the farm.

Impact

Gradually increasing its own production and improving continuity of supply Camel never the less acknowledges that it is unlikely to grow sufficient volumes to supply its members with vegetables all year round. Rather than view this as a limitation the initiative has instead embraced the Growing Communities community trading model, buying in vegetables (and some fruit) from other local producers who work to similar standards - including one who works part time for the initiative. Camel sees these trading relationships as an essential part of building a resilient food system in their part of north Cornwall.

Perhaps because of its origins as a mutual self-help group with no external funding Camel has an excellent culture of volunteering, and regular teams take on responsibility for specific areas of work: a group of half a dozen harvests each week, another small group packs the shares ready for collection while others work on horticultural tasks, marketing and communications. Camel has also developed a board and management team with an excellent breadth of skills - from management and systems, through horticulture, to communications.

Camel's business plan (and funding) commits the initiative to steady growth over the next 2 years and the group are aware that expanding the membership could prove challenging; the CSA is located in a rural area with relatively poor access by public transport and low average incomes. There is also a risk that as a very well organised and increasingly established group they may appear closed or difficult to access to potential new members.

Camel are seeking to address these difficulties through an active outreach programme, and employ a Partnership co-ordinator whose task it is to make the farm more accessible to schools, community and hard to reach groups. At the same time the management team are exploring opportunities to work with other local food businesses - such as offering shops in local towns as pick up points for those not able to get to St. Kew.

Lessons

- Though community-led Camel has close relationships with a number of producers, including its landlord. This has given the group access to land and expertise and helped secure and develop the CSA.
- Partnership working, and seeing the CSA as a space for producing more than just fruit and vegetables, has allowed Camel to engage with a wider community who might not be immediately interested in membership.
- By starting small and building the capacity of the volunteers and management group at the same time as developing the growing area Camel is emerging as a strong and well organised social enterprise.
- Good communications are as important as strong marketing. Camel has an active website and ensures that its story is regularly picked up by local press, this helps draw in members but also strengthens existing members' sense of identity.
- External funding can be viewed negatively by other enterprises – particularly if they are not eligible for that funding.

3.3 Canalside Community Food

History and operation	
Approach	Community-led initiative
Established	2007
Location	Radford Semele, near Leamington Spa
Products, services and prices	Vegetable bags weekly Large / small / mini £58.50 / £39 / £26 – per month Fruit share trial (autumn 2011) 1-2 (or more) types per week £20 – per month
Membership	£2 (£1) / month
Holiday arrangements	No refunds
Payment	Monthly by standing order; 2 month notice period to cancel order
Work contribution	3x3hr work shifts requested / year
Distribution	2 pick-up points: farm and town (£2.20/month extra)
Production	Wide range of vegetables grown throughout the year; fruit production from 2011
Trade	Only honey, mushrooms, flour and apple juice are bought in for sale to members

Overview

Canalside Community Food aims "to provide fresh, organic, seasonal, locally grown fruit and vegetables and to involve local people in the process of producing the food they eat."

Canalside has a strong ethos of providing its subscribers' vegetable shares entirely from the enterprise's own production and has successfully supplied vegetable shares every week since the summer of 2007. Canalside now supplies around 130 shares a week, working to the capacity of the organically certified 8 acres it cultivates at Leasowe Farm, comprising 7 acres of field crops and 6 polytunnels.

Community engagement in the production of food is of great importance to Canalside and members are encouraged to visit the farm, offer volunteer labour and take part in numerous social events through the year.

With the help of a grant from the Local Food Fund, fruit production started in 2009 and a small number of subscribers receive fruit during the season, currently supplemented by local surpluses. A small amount of additional produce is available to members to buy including shiitake mushrooms and wholemeal flour from Leasowe Farm, and local honey and apple juice.

Key indicators

Human capital	
Regular volunteers	33
Volunteers / member	0.25
Employees	1 full time, 4 part time, some paid seasonal labour
Employees / acre	0.25
Social capital	
Legal structure	Company limited by guarantee
Governance	Management committee elected from and by members
Members	Approx 130 subscribers + 30 social members
Length of membership	1 year
Natural capital	
Land worked	8 acres
Tenure of land	Wholly rented with 5-10 year lease
Improvements to land	Increases to: diversity of production, land managed under organic principles, number of hedges and trees, wildlife areas, accessibility
Physical capital	
Buildings	Rented / owned
Equipment	Tractor rented from farm; delivery vehicle borrowed; all other equipment owned.
Financial capital	
Turnover	Approximately £55,000
Turnover / member	Approximately £425
Reserves	n/a

History

The origins of Canalside Community Food date back to 2005, when Tom and Caz Ingall, who had recently moved back to Leasowe Farm, first discussed setting up a CSA initiative with Judy Steele, from the local Agenda 21 Environmental Action Group, and Gareth Davies from Garden Organic, based at nearby Ryton Gardens.

Canalside Community Food was founded as a company limited by guarantee in 2006 following a public meeting attended by 80 people. Production started in early 2007 on 7 acres of land leased to Canalside by Leasowe Farm and previously used for a pig co-operative which provided

pork to its members and helped prepare the land for cultivation.

Labour was largely voluntary in the first couple of years though with some paid employees from the start of production. Horticultural mentoring and advice was provided by Garden Organic and Tom volunteered at Ryton Gardens to learn about organic horticulture. Start-up capital was provided through a soft loan of £10,000 from a member of the community. The loan is being paid off over 5 years, sharing the start-up costs between all users during this period.

Canalside started supplying vegetable shares in the summer of 2007, initially to 60 subscribers. In 2009 a grant from the Local Food Fund allowed Canalside to plant soft fruit plants and top fruit trees.

Operation

Canalside now produces the equivalent of around 130 small shares each week, along with additional trial shares and sales of around 10% of all produce to local outlets.

Canalside is a separate entity from Leasowe Farm, working on leased land. However, the relationship is strong and mutually beneficial. Canalside enjoys security of tenure and is able to make use of the farm's infrastructure, including tractors, other farm equipment, and a modern barn for storage of crops through the winter. Leasowe Farm benefits from having a responsible tenant and the relationship with Canalside's members: farm produce such as organic shiitake mushrooms and stoneground flour is available to members to buy.

Canalside has a strong ethos of producing all the vegetables for the members' shares on the farm and has successfully provided its members with a range of produce every week since the initiative started in 2007. This is seen as an important selling point – the publicity leaflet carries the slogan “All your veg grown on our farm” – and follows the wishes expressed by the membership. Will, the grower, also sees it as a benefit in presenting the challenging but rewarding opportunity to produce as wide a range of produce as possible throughout the year.

A limited number of seasonal fruit shares have recently been offered between late August and the end of November, providing a weekly share of one, two or three (or more) types of fruit. Until the fruit trees come into full production, additional fruit is harvested from local gardens, making use of unwanted surpluses.

Canalside engages very successfully with its members: around half are regularly involved beyond simply collecting their produce share, though Tom would love to see even more participating.

Most subscribers visit the farm weekly to pick up their vegetables from the Canalside yurt, and can take the opportunity to walk around the polytunnels and fields or to join one of the regular volunteer work sessions, taking

place every Wednesday and Saturday to coincide with the pick-ups. Subscribers are asked to contribute at least 9 hours of voluntary work each year and a limited number of workshare subscribers work 3 or 4 hours a week in return for a large or small share.

“ *Community comes first at Canalside – it's significant that community comes before food in the name Canalside Community Food.*

Abbie, assistant grower

A rich calendar of social events takes place on and off the farm during the year. Recent events have included a craft and camping weekend (the main autumn event, including craft, cabaret and potato harvesting), an earth oven weekend (installing a bread oven in the pole barn, also recently erected with the help of members) and a “tree-bog workshop” (installing two large composting toilets in a wooden building).

“ *Working on the farm is a fantastic experience – being out on the hillside, working alongside other members and knowing that you've played a part in the food that we subsequently collect and eat. There is a real community feel to Canalside and I love attending the social events, meeting other members, sharing food and sitting round the fire.*

Canalside share subscriber and volunteer

The location of Leasowe Farm has proved of great benefit. The farm is close to the adjoining towns of Leamington Spa (3 miles, population c40,000) and Warwick (5 miles, population c25,000), allowing members easy access to the farm for their weekly vegetable share pick-up, volunteering and social events.

The farm is also close to the Ryton Gardens, the organic demonstration garden of Garden Organic (formerly the Henry Doubleday Research Association) which as well as giving invaluable horticultural advice to Canalside in its early days has provided use of its heated greenhouses for raising of plants from seed.

With an ambition for as closed a production system as possible, Canalside is now hoping to move to raising plants in its own polytunnels, as well as saving more seed over time and reducing the dependence on organic muck from a nearby livestock farm for fertility.

From the beginning Canalside has enjoyed a close relationship with The Veggie Table, a community café in Leamington Spa. Around 70% of the Veggie Table's vegetables are sourced from Canalside, in the form of several large weekly shares. The café considers itself a showcase for healthy and sustainable vegetarian cuisine, and for Canalside produce in particular. The café venue serves as a satellite pick-up point, also providing a

presence for Canalside in the town and representing the initial point of contact for some members.

The number of vegetable share subscribers is fairly constant at 130, Canalside's capacity. Though shares could be reduced (more subscribers complain about receiving too much than too little) or more land taken on (the farm has land available), Tom would prefer to see Canalside concentrate on continuing to improve what it's doing rather than focusing on growth at the possible expense of the sense of community. His hope is that Canalside will provide a model of good practice to inspire and inform further CSA initiatives.

Natural turnover of subscribers does require continual recruitment. After a period of little active marketing a recent publicity drive, including leafleting by members, attracted several new members. A trial scheme was recently introduced allowing potential subscribers to sign up for 4 weeks before fully committing. Canalside does not operate a waiting list – experience in the first year suggested that asking potential members to wait often put them off altogether – but manages numbers flexibly.

Impact

Canalside successfully provides vegetables from its own production every week of the year to its subscribers, currently numbering around 130. 63% of subscribers³⁴ have all or nearly all of their household requirements met by their share; the remaining 37% have about half their requirements met.

A smaller amount of fruit, from the farm and local surplus production, is provided to a limited number of subscribers. Canalside also provides an outlet for other local and farm produce.

Canalside's members report significant individual impacts, particularly on their shopping, eating and cooking habits:

- 81% say their overall quality life has improved through membership;

“ I have made a lot of friends though the CSA. I value the opportunity to be outdoors in a rural area doing physical work, with nice people. I feel very happy to know exactly where my food comes from and how it is produced.

- 54% say their overall health has improved;

“ We eat a wider range of salad and green vegetables since joining Canalside. And working on the farm is very invigorating and good exercise!

- 46% say their skills have increased;

“ Communication, social awareness, knowledge of how to grow our own food.

- 85% say their cooking or eating habits have changed;

“ We cook what we get so everything is seasonal, the ingredients decide the dish.

- 77% say their other shopping habits have changed;

“ Reduction in supermarket visits - reduced need to go to a 'shop' so less purchases of anything from supermarket. Other shopping has become easier to do in smaller local outlets.

Canalside provides volunteering opportunities at least twice a week, attracting over 30 regular volunteers, and employs 2 permanent members of staff. Canalside also runs an educational programme, offering farm visits to local school children.

Many subscribers, social members, volunteers and employees are engaged in the farm's social activities, which often revolve around seasonal events on the farm (such as potato harvesting) or rural crafts and skills (such as installing a compost toilet or building a pole barn).

Lessons

- A close relationship with the farm proved hugely beneficial: providing security of tenure, flexible use of land, access to infrastructure;
- The farm's accessibility to a large population was an important factor in achieving and securing the target membership;
- A good relationship with nearby Ryton Gardens provided necessary expertise at first and continuing facilities for plant raising, avoiding the need to buy in plants;
- Initial lack of experience in horticulture was overcome through selective use of expert advice and an openness to learning;
- A close relationship with community cafe The Veggie Table provided an accessible pick-up point in Leamington Spa and a continuing publicity opportunity;
- Community engagement is a critical factor in Canalside's success, providing members with more than just vegetables;
- Members, staff and volunteers of Canalside show a remarkably consistent dedication to the concept of CSA and a desire to see the movement spread and grow.

³⁴ n=27 (Canalside members responding to our members' survey)

3.4 Dragon Orchard

History and operation	
Approach	Producer-led initiative
Established	Incorporated 2001
Location	Putley, Herefordshire
Products, services and prices	Cropshare: annual share in the fruit harvest – includes apples, juices, preserves and cider: £352.50 Tree Sponsor: 1 year supporting a particular tree in the orchard: £58.75
Membership	As outlined above
Holiday arrangements	N/A
Payment	Cheque, bank transfer or cash annually in advance
Work contribution	Voluntary
Distribution	In almost all cases members collect their share from the farm.
Production	22.2 acres in total, though not all production is supplied to members.
Trade	No trade to directly meet the requirements of members. Dragon Orchard operates a farm shop selling a small range of goods from other local producers and artists.

Overview

Dragon Orchard Cropsharers and tree sponsors form an essential part of a wider top fruit business in Putley Herefordshire. Established by Norman and Ann Stanier a decade ago the orchard is the longest running CSA of its kind.

Members pay yearly in advance for a share in the orchard harvest, this might include over 35kg of apples, preserves, apple juice and, recently, cider. The scheme is unusual in that more than 60% of members live away from the orchard making the four Cropsharer weekends – which mark each season at the orchard – and regular newsletters particularly important.

Though alone it covers its costs and makes a small surplus as part of Dragon Orchard the Cropsharers scheme has been central in the revitalization and diversification of a traditional orchard business.

Key indicators

Human capital	
Regular volunteers	9
Volunteers / member	0.25
Employees	2 directly involved with the CSA element of the business. More broadly the orchard forms part of the livelihoods of 2 households.
Employees / acre	1 employee per 11 acres
Social capital	
Legal structure	Partnership
Governance	Farmer-led: run by orchard owners as part of wider business
Members	40 crop sharers, up to 200 tree sponsors
Length of membership	1 year (originally 5 years for tree sponsors)
Natural capital	
Land worked	22 acres
Tenure of land	Freehold
Improvements to land	The orchard was already run to a high standard but has increased the diversity of fruit trees through CSA.
Physical capital	
Buildings	Shop, out-buildings, storage, farmhouse used for meetings and meals especially at Cropsharer weekends
Equipment	All necessary equipment owned: machinery, apple press and cider equipment. Some contract pruning and harvesting.
Financial capital	
Turnover	£42839 (year to March 2010)
Turnover / member	£285 (Cropsharers and tree sponsors)
Reserves	N/A

History

Dragon Orchard has been in the Stanier family for 80 years, and Norman and Ann returned almost 20 years ago to take on the business. As a small orchard the Staniers had always required another, off-farm income source, Norman's father was a youth worker and Norman operates a rope-access business.

In the late '90s the orchard had 10 acres of trees under contract to cider maker Bulmers while the rest of the orchard production was sold through traditional local wholesalers based in Herefordshire. The local wholesalers were gradually disappearing making it increasingly difficult to sell that part of the orchard's production.

At the time the Staniers took over the farm awareness about the threat to orchards was growing and there were signs of a resurgence of interest in apples and cider. A local organization called the Big Apple had begun organizing blossom, harvest and wassail days to celebrate apples and orchard on and around the Marcle Ridge. Having enjoyed being involved with Big Apple, tried selling at farmers markets and thought about an apple box scheme Ann was inspired by an early Soil Association CSA event and decided to establish Cropsharers.

Cropsharers was launched in Ludlow in 2001 with very little start-up finance (a £5,000 bank loan). The scheme benefited from positive press coverage and membership grew gradually and without huge effort from the Staniers. Initially the plan was to sign up 100 members, but when 50 people packed into the farmhouse for an early Cropsharer weekend it became clear that, because people joined as couples or families, this would be unmanageable.

Members are keen to get involved with the life of the orchard but often specific jobs – mowing, pruning or harvesting - don't fit in with the weekend visits or require very specific skills. As a result the Staniers developed other activities and while members are shown how to prune or pick their effort is not central to the operation of the orchard. Instead tours of other local food producers are organised, members are invited to the Putley Harvest Festival and join in other activities on the farm – including poetry, storytelling, bottling and preserving courses and photography.

In 2005 the orchard replanted old desert apples with 20 varieties of apple, 4 of pear, mirabelle plums, damsons, gages and quince. Unlike the rest of Dragon Orchard it has been planted with visitors and members in mind, laid out in 'W' rather than straight rows and focusing on a straw bale and adobe stage and seating area built by Cropsharers over a weekend and called the *Big Hug*. These 200 new trees are part of the sponsor a tree scheme. Some are sponsored in perpetuity as memorials, others for grandchildren or friends. Some Cropsharers have become tree sponsors but most are new to the orchard and tend to be more local. Initially trees were

sponsorship cost £50, lasted 5 years (unless a memorial) and covered the cost of planting and establishment. Now the trees are established the cost is £50 per year and sponsor get the crop in the autumn.

The Orchard now operates a farm shop selling fruit and other local goods directly to locals and visitors; in addition a new business partnership has been established with a local wine and cider maker: Once Upon a Tree produce high quality wines, juices and ciders from Dragon Orchard fruit. Though it currently only uses 10% of the orchard's 300 tonnes of cider apple production there is scope for it to develop.

“ *The most important thing is sharing. I feel lucky to be responsible for the land and being able to share it with other people enhances our enjoyment of it*
Ann Stanier | Founder and owner

Impact

Cropsharers and later the tree sponsor scheme have been central to the ongoing success of Dragon Orchard and to the quality of life of those involved. The CSA has also made a significant contribution to the local economy. Ann and Norman are clear that without Cropsharers the future of the orchard would have been very different – it kept them on the farm and kept the farm growing apples. As a result both feel anchored in the community and far better connected to other local producers and businesses.

The regular Cropsharer weekends (40+ so far) draw visitors to the village from all over the UK. The visitors stay in local accommodation, visit local attractions and restaurants. They have come to play a small part in village life – ensuring the harvest festival is well attended and that capacity the orchard has developed to meet their needs can be used for other events and activities.

By opening the orchard up to visitors and being open to new ideas Ann and Norman have been able to develop a diverse and secure business that maintains a traditional landscape and cultural identity.

Lessons

- The CSA approach, when applied as part of a wider enterprise can have unexpected and far reaching benefits.
- For some producers the idea of a CSA might appear complex, daunting and potentially expensive. Dragon Orchard shows that with very little capital investment a CSA initiative can be added as *part* of an existing business without complex organizational structures.
- Dragon Orchard has developed and succeeded because it suited Ann and Norman and they enjoyed running it. They already had some of the necessary skills and were prepared to allow the scheme to be shaped by experience.

3.5 Fordhall Farm

History and operation	
Approach	Community-owned farm enterprise
Established	2005
Location	Market Dryton Shropshire
Products, services and prices	<p>£50 shares: Fordhall Community Land Initiative is a community land trust, it offers shares in the farm but not the farms produce. The farm business (Fordhall Farm Ltd.) is a tenant of the land trust.</p> <p>Regular newsletter: Subscription to <i>Grazier</i> the Fordhall Farm magazine is available to anyone who donates £15 or more to the land trust each year.</p> <p>Access: The farm has a nature trail and runs regular volunteer weekends and events. These are generally free.</p> <p>Education: The farm works with local schools and hosts visits. It has recently built a meeting / class room and has an outdoor growing space for this work.</p> <p>Farm shop and Café: the land trust owns and operates a café and rents a farm shop to the tenant who operates it primarily as a butchery</p>
Membership	See above
Holiday arrangements	N/A
Payment	Various
Work contribution	Voluntary
Distribution	N/A
Production	Fordhall Farm Ltd (the tenant) produces livestock (cattle, sheep, pigs and some poultry)
Trade	N/A

Overview

Arguably Fordhall Community Land Initiative's (FCLI) status as a CSA initiative is questionable, not because it isn't community owned; there are approximately 8,000 shareholders and a good level of democratic participation, but because it doesn't have a conventional trading relationship with those shareholders and the risk being shared is not directly related to production (which is carried out by Fordhall Farm Ltd, FCLIs tenant).

Incorporated in 2005 FCLI raised money from public and private sources to secure the farm freehold, make capital investments in the farm infrastructure and cover the revenue costs of running a small office delivering a range of small scale education projects and managing the

campaign to secure the future of farm, but has only just begun actively trading in goods or services.

Though in the first 5 years of its life FCLI was very much a single issue campaigning organization, its focus is beginning to change as it enters the second phase of the farm's development.

The investments made in the farm over the last 5 years, including the development of a new farm shop, cafe and educational facilities should provide FCLI with the means to generate a modest income through a range educational activities, small conferences / seminars, room hire and cafe sales. In addition the farm business, run by the Hollins family, pays rent to FCLI.

Key indicators

Human capital	
Regular volunteers	114
Volunteers / member	0.14
Employees	4
Employees / acre	0.028 (FCLI employees are not directly involved in production and the tenant employs farm workers)
Social capital	
Legal structure	Industrial and Provident society for the benefit of the community
Governance	Management committee reporting regularly to a Board elected by the membership
Members	8000+
Length of membership	Variable – FCLIs non transferable shares can be bought back by organisation, but in principle membership lasts for life.
Natural capital	
Land worked	143 acres
Tenure of land	Freehold (Fordhall Farm Ltd rents additional grazing in other parts of Shropshire including a field that was traditionally part of the farm but was not sold to FCLI)
Improvements to land	One of the key motivations for saving Fordhall Farm was to protect the work Arthur Hollins had done to manage the land sustainably. Since securing the farm FCLI have

	continued this work in partnership with the tenant.
Physical capital	
Buildings	FCLI owns the farmhouse and agricultural buildings – including an office, class/meeting room, café, butchery and farm shop (the last two are rented to Fordhall Farm Ltd).
Equipment	The majority of the farms agricultural equipment is owned by Fordhall Farm Ltd, FCLI owns office and teaching equipment.
Financial capital	
Turnover	£245,000 (year to March 2010)
Turnover / member	Approximately £30
Reserves	N/A

History

Fordhall Community Land Initiative Ltd (FCLI), a community land trust registered as an Industrial and Provident society for the benefit of the community, was formed in 2005 to secure Fordhall Farm near Market Drayton in Shropshire. Fordhall is a livestock farm; until the 1970s specialising in dairy production and since then focusing on meat.

The farm has been tenanted by the Hollins family for three generations and in the late 1940s Arthur Hollins, the current tenants late father, began farming according to organic principles; making it one of the longest running ‘organic’ farms in the UK. During his long farming career (he took on the farm in 1929 aged 14 and died in 2005) Arthur recognised the importance of a diverse and permanent pasture for soil fertility and structure and developed the traditional ‘foggage’ approach to create a productive system where mature animals remain outside 12 months of the year and require little or no supplementary feed. Arthur also recognised the importance of education and research and over the decades thousands of people visited the farm or read his book; most were local but many came from further afield - these connections proved vital when Arthur’s children set about saving the farm in 2004.

The farm was owned by a local landowner who in the last decades of the 20th century sold land around Market Drayton to Muller Dairy UK who have a large processing plant next door to Fordhall. In the mid 1990s Muller wanted to expand their Market Drayton distribution centre and earmarked land tenanted by the Hollins. The loss of this grazing would have made the already small farm unviable and the family began a protracted battle to save the farm. The farm business suffered and Arthur’s

health deteriorated and in 2004 his youngest children, Ben and Charlotte, returned from college and took over the farm. They fought eviction notices and won a public enquiry. Then Muller pulled out and the landlord offered Ben and Charlotte a 24 month extended tenancy and first refusal on the purchase of the farm - if they could raise £800,000.

With support from Greg Pilley and Martin Large of Stroud Commonwealth and a small group of local volunteers Ben and Charlotte established a land trust to purchase the farm. A share issue was launched and within the time limit six hundred thousand pounds was raised through the sale of £50 shares, the remaining money was lent to the land trust by the Triodos Bank.

Since securing the farm in 2006 Fordhall Community Land Initiative (FCLI) has raised further money to restore many of the farm buildings and build a new farm shop, cafe and education centre. Access to the farmland has been improved and Ben and Charlotte Hollins have been given a 100 year tenancy with the option of succession for their children. The farm business (Fordhall Farm Ltd) manages the land in line with the expectations of FCLI and ensures that FCLI has full access to carry out research and educational work.

“ It just offers real hope for a new way to approach the land.

Member at Annual General Meeting

Impact

FCLI and its tenant Fordhall Farm Ltd has had a wide local impact through regular events, improved access to the farm and the opening of a farm shop and café. Regular attendance at food events with information stalls and hog roasts has further spread FCLIs positive message about community involvement and ownership to local farmers and residents.

FCLI has featured widely in print and broadcast media and, primarily through Charlotte Hollins, has been presented to hundreds of organizations across the UK and in Europe. Though few farms or communities in England have followed Fordhall’s example many are considering the approach and the rise in popularity of community share issues can undoubtedly be attributed to enterprises like FCLI.

Lessons

- The development of Fordhall Farm Ltd as a successful small farm enterprise demonstrates the important role new models of ownership can play in removing the speculative exchange value of land and providing security of tenure.
- Separating the farm business from the ownership of the land and buildings has allowed many more people to become involved with Fordhall than

might have been the case if members' relationship was based principally on trade.

- The Hollins story, their relationship with Fordhall Farm and the community around Market Drayton is unique and the success of the campaign to save the farm may not be easily replicable by other farmers and communities.
- The use of a community share issue to secure an asset (the farm) has enabled FCLI to leverage funding and support that might not have been otherwise available.
- FCLIs many members are a significant asset but providing them with the information they expect, legally require and to keep them interested in the evolving work of the project is time consuming and needs to be carefully structured.
- Ben, Charlotte and the FCLI staff and board have spent an extraordinary amount of time engaging with the local community – yet the project is still regarded with suspicion by some locals and unknown to others.

“ *I think the general principle of what is happening is so important and we've talked about that a lot at home and I've bought shares in a community woodland, so the whole concept has become stronger in my mind.*
Member at Annual General Meeting

3.6 Futurefarms - Martin

History and operation	
Approach	Community-led initiative
Established	2004
Location	Martin, Hampshire (village)
Products, services and prices	Wide range of food sold at village market (Saturday mornings); in village hall (Mon-Sat); from self-service barrow (Sun) Vegetables, eggs and meat from Futurefarms own production; Range of additional local produce, including cheese, honey, juice, bread, jams and chutneys; other groceries, household goods and Saturday newspapers.
Membership	£5 / year; open to producers and consumers
Holiday arrangements	n/a
Payment	On purchase of food
Work contribution	Voluntary; free membership to households volunteering for 5 hours or more in the year
Distribution	Pick-up at point of purchase in shop or at market; some individual deliveries
Production	Vegetables, eggs, pigs and chickens (but not at present)
Trade	Additional produce bought in from most local sources possible

Overview

Futurefarms aims to "feed Martin" by producing food within the parish of Martin for the people who live there and in surrounding villages. The enterprise was established in response to local concerns about the distance food travels, the consequent disconnect between producers and consumers, and resulting issues of poor quality, high prices, food safety, animal welfare and environmental damage.

Futurefarms is a cooperative organization, owned and run by its members, but does not operate on a subscription basis. A wide range of vegetables, as well as eggs and pork, is produced for sale at the weekly Futurefarms market, held every Saturday morning in Martin village hall. Produce is also available, alongside other locally sourced foods and a range of general groceries and household goods, in the village shop, open 6 days a week and also operated by Futurefarms.

Both the market and the more recently opened shop have provided valuable services and a social focus to a rural

community previously lacking in services and acknowledged as a rather closed dormitory settlement.

Key indicators

Human capital	
Regular volunteers	47
Volunteers / member	0.47
Employees	1
Employees / acre	0.1
Social capital	
Legal structure	Company limited by guarantee
Governance	Management committee of 8, elected from and by members
Members	100 (January 2011)
Length of membership	Annual
Natural capital	
Land worked	10 acres worked of 16.5 acres occupied
Tenure of land	Wholly rented, with lease of 4-5 years.
Improvements to land	Increases to: diversity of production, land managed under organic principles, accessibility
Physical capital	
Buildings	Rented and borrowed
Equipment	Tractor hired; all other necessary equipment owned: handtools, irrigation equipment, harvesting equipment.
Financial capital	
Turnover	£38,534 (year to May 2010)
Turnover / member	Approx £385
Reserves	£17,816 (year to May 2010)

History

Futurefarms was initiated in 2003 following founder Nick Snelgar's realization that none of the food he ate was produced in the fertile farmland that surrounded his village. An open event in the village hall to present Nick's ideas for an enterprise to feed Martin attracted around 30 interested individuals and led to the creation of an organizing committee.

In 2004 Futurefarms was established as a company limited by guarantee and started production of an initial range of 8 vegetables on its first site, 1.5 acres of rented land a mile outside the village, with rich alluvial soil ideal for vegetable growing.

From the outset, the intention was to produce as wide a range of food as possible: not just vegetables but also meat and eggs. The hope was to demonstrate local capacity to produce even those foods generally perceived as harder to produce. A second larger site of 15 acres was soon taken on, a mile outside the other end of the village, providing land for outdoor pigs and chickens, and production of potatoes and other field vegetable crops.

Successive grants of £5,000 and £15,000 were secured from the National Lottery funded Unltd programme, providing fund for initial capital investments in machinery and equipment.

Futurefarms initially depended entirely on volunteer effort apart from the use of an agricultural contractor for specific larger jobs. With minimal internal expertise in food production the group relied on informal advice from local farmers and learning through experience.

Two part-time employees were later taken on to help with the growing and livestock though volunteers, particularly a dedicated core group, continue to provide the majority of work. The ambition is to reach a level of turnover that would allow the employment of a full-time manager.

In its first year the initiative was the subject of a Channel 4 document, Feeding Martin. Nick actively encouraged the documentary, seeing it as critical to demonstrating the initiative's significance and establishing credibility in the village.

Rather than running as a subscription scheme, produce has always been sold through the Futurefarms village market, held every Saturday morning in the village hall. On other days, produce was initially available on an honesty basis from a vegetable barrow outside the village hall.

In 2010 a local authority grant provided capital funding to establish a more regular shop, the first in the village since the 1980s. Purchase of folding chairs for the village hall freed up a lean-to storeroom, which was equipped with refrigerators, a freezer and shelving. The shop opened in September 2010 and is now open 6 days a week, staffed entirely by volunteers.

Recent developments include the introduction of a café to the weekly market and the installation of two polytunnels, provided through a Local Food Fund grant, to allow production of a wider range of produce over a longer season.

Free range chicken was produced until recently, when the farm-based abattoir used by the initiative closed. An alternative farm just outside the village was identified and

facilities to allow slaughter of chickens were installed. However, although the local authority was initially supportive, it later insisted that the transport of live chickens from the Futurefarms site to the farm required approval of the facilities to the standards of a full poultry abattoir rather than on-farm processor. The costs of this were prohibitive so chicken production is currently suspended.

Nick Snelgar, who instigated the initiative, recently stepped down from the committee. He suggested that he needed to make room for others to take ownership of the enterprise and that village politics required a change of the personalities involved.

Operation

Futurefarms now produces a wide range of vegetables through most of the year, as well as eggs and free range pork. Although not organically certified, production follows organic principles, with no artificial fertilizers or chemicals used and all livestock raised free range.

Produce is sold at the weekly market and available 6 days a week from the village shop.

The weekly market is the main outlet for Futurefarms produce, attracting a continual flow of customers between 9.30am and 12.30pm every Saturday morning. The village shop now provides a more regular outlet, opening between 9am and 11am, and from 5pm to 6pm, on weekdays and coinciding with the market in the adjoining village hall every Saturday.

The market offers a full selection of Futurefarms vegetables and eggs alongside a range of other local produce. Different types of fresh meat, from Futurefarms and other local producers, are available each week, following a rotating calendar.

The small but well stocked shop provides a full range of frozen meat alongside Futurefarms vegetables, local produce and a very wide range of groceries and household goods. Some villagers say they now do all their shopping at the market and in the village shop, and there is a policy to try to provide any item requested.

Prices at the market and in the shop are extremely competitive: a recent comparison carried out by Futurefarms showed that a typical basket of food and household items cost 16% more in the nearest supermarket.

Customers make no commitment to regular purchases but are encouraged to become members of Futurefarms. Members receive vouchers entitling them to a discount of 50p on any daily spend of at least £5. Membership is free to any household contributing at least 5 hours of volunteer effort a year.

The ambition of Futurefarms is to feed Martin and the business model requires a high level of penetration in a limited market. Futurefarms estimates that 60% of the

160 households in the village make at least one purchase at the shop or market each year. The market typically sees over 50 transactions every Saturday. Around 100 households, mainly in Martin but also surrounding villages, were members in 2010/11.

Several members suggested that the initiative was very successful in reaching certain sectors of the community but they suspected it remained unused by others, possibly through an unjustified perception of cost or a feeling amongst some residents that they were not part of the community of participants.

Impact

Futurefarms is successfully feeding many residents of Martin and surrounding villages, even if it remains some way off its ambition to feed the entire village.

A good range of meat, vegetables and eggs has been successfully produced and sold since the initiative's establishment 7 years ago.

Perhaps the most significant effect has been the social impact: several villagers described Martin as having previously been a dormitory village of inward-looking households, with minimal community activity. The market has created a vibrant social forum, particularly since the introduction of the café earlier this year, with up to a dozen people sitting down together at the single long table at any one time.

The establishment of the shop has provided a valuable service to the village, absent since the 1980s.

Futurefarms has provided considerable volunteering opportunities in a small community, with almost 50 regular volunteers. While volunteers turn out in large numbers for major work events on the farm, such as potato harvesting, it is generally easier to recruit volunteers to work in the shop than on the land.

Lessons

- The very local focus of Futurefarms – aiming to feed just Martin and surrounding villages – represents a challenging ambition: a very high proportion of local residents must buy produce to provide a viable market.
- The size of the community presents a further challenge in the limited pool of volunteers, with the result that a small core group of committed individuals provide the majority of volunteer effort.
- The effects of personalities and village politics are magnified in a small community: participants referred far more to the individuals involved than to the enterprise itself.
- Despite the above challenges, a viable market can be found for very local produce, contingent on sufficient volunteer effort.

- Skills can be successfully developed from a minimal base with largely informal support.
- A successful food producing initiative can deliver further benefits, such as the establishment of a village shop offering a wider range of goods.
- However competitive the offer of a local food outlet, some sectors of the community, particularly the less affluent, remain hard to reach.
- A vibrant community enterprise can be off-putting to those that don't feel part of the community.

3.7 Growing Communities

History and operation	
Approach	Producer-community partnership
Established	1993
Location	Stoke Newington, Hackney (urban)
Products, services and prices	<p>Vegetable bags weekly Standard / small (no potatoes) £44 (£50) / £26 (£30) per month</p> <p>Fruit bags weekly Standard / small £35 / £19 per month</p> <p>Organic eggs sold at main pick-up point</p> <p>Weekly organic farmers' market</p> <p>School visits to urban market gardens</p> <p>Urban Apprenticeship scheme trains four growers each year</p>
Membership	All bag customers are members No additional charge
Holiday arrangements	Refunds to members taking over 4 weeks holiday / year
Payment	Monthly by standing order (preferred) or cheque
Work contribution	Voluntary
Distribution	12 pick-up points across Hackney; pick-ups from Wednesday afternoon each week
Production	Mixed salad produced on three urban market gardens (total area 268m ²) and smaller areas of "Patchwork Farm".
Trade	Regular trade with network of 25 small organic farms; additional produce bought from independent wholesalers.

Overview

Growing Communities (GC) is a long-established community-led organization providing weekly bags of fruit and vegetables to over 650 households across Hackney, with the aim to "transform food and farming through community-led trade".

Salad leaves are produced on GC's three urban market gardens – comprising just 268m² – and the "patchwork farm" of small areas of land in gardens, churchyards and on estates where trained apprentices grow food for sale. All the land is organically certified by the Soil Association.

Other produce is bought directly from local small scale organic farms and independent wholesalers. GC has established long-term trading relationships with its network of farms.

GC also runs the weekly Stoke Newington farmers' market – the only wholly organic / wild farmers' market in the UK.

Many of the farms supplying produce for the box scheme trade at the farmers' market, alongside a wider range of farmers and other producers. Through the box scheme and market GC estimates that it provides sustainably produced food to around 3,000 people every week.

GC's Start-up Programme supports the establishment of new enterprises following the GC model, providing support, training, materials and loan funding.

Key indicators

Human capital	
Regular volunteers	172
Volunteers / member	0.25
Employees	21
Employees / acre	1 grower working on 268m ²
Social capital	
Legal structure	Company limited by guarantee
Governance	Management committee elected from and by members
Members	673 (July 2011)
Length of membership	Average 2.5 years
Natural capital	
Land worked	Under 0.5 acres – three urban market gardens and smaller areas of "Patchwork Farm"
Tenure of land	Urban market gardens rented from local authority (Hackney) for peppercorn rent and for no fixed period.
Improvements to land	Increases to: diversity of production, land managed under organic principles, wildlife areas, accessibility
Physical capital	
Buildings	Offices and packing area rented from local authority
Equipment	All necessary equipment owned: handtools, irrigation equipment, harvesting equipment, delivery vehicle (electric milkfloat)
Financial capital	
Turnover	£394,510 (year to March 2010)
Turnover / member	Approx £600
Reserves	£155,161 (year to March 2010)

History

Growing Communities was established in 1993 as a CSA initiative along the community-producer partnership model, linking 30 families with a farm in Buckinghamshire providing weekly vegetable boxes.

In 1997 GC started working a small plot of land in Clissold Park in Stoke Newington, the first of its urban market gardens.

As the box scheme grew, GC moved from an explicit CSA relationship with a single farm to "community-led" trade with a network of small organic farms, buying in from an independent wholesaler to supplement local production.

In May 2003 GC launched a weekly farmers' market with the intention of helping producers find new markets. The market was initially attended by eight to ten producers and took place in the backyard of the Old Fire Station, Stoke Newington. As producer and customer numbers grew the market moved to a new larger site in a local school playground and recently moved to the car park of a local church when the playground was refurbished.

In 2008 two graduates from GC's apprenticeship scheme set up the first micro-site, independently producing salad leaves for the box scheme and other local outlets on an even smaller scale than the urban market gardens. A further micro-site was set up in 2010, joining the first as the beginning of the patchwork farm. A grant from the Local Food Fund in 2011 is helping to expand the patchwork farm by establishing 12 more micro-sites of at least 10 by 15 metres each.

The Start-up Programme was launched with funding from UnLtd in 2009 to support new enterprises following GC's business model.

Operation

GC's core business is the organic fruit and vegetable box scheme, currently supplying around 1,000 bags of produce each week to almost 700 members. Produce is sourced from GC's own urban market gardens, the patchwork farm, local organic growers and an independent organic wholesaler. Although there is no formal agreement between GC and the local farms that supply it, regular trade within a relationship of trust ensures that these trading links provide mutual benefit and support.

Salad for the vegetable bags is supplied from GC's urban market gardens and the patchwork farm. In the 2010 growing season the urban market garden produced 795kg of salad from 268m², a yield of 26.3 tonnes/hectare. Production now exceeds the demand of the box scheme and surplus salad is sold to other local outlets. The urban market gardens do not yet cover their costs and remain effectively subsidised by the box scheme.

GC operates a successful Urban Apprenticeship scheme, training four apprentice growers each year through a weekly training day with GC's employed grower. Past

apprentices have gone on to set up and run micro-sites of the patchwork farm or to become GC's full-time grower.

As described above, GC also manages the weekly Stoke Newington Farmers' Market.

GC's Start-up Programme has so far supported five new enterprises across England and Scotland to start trading along the lines of GC's business model. The scheme provides training, materials, a web-based support tool and repayable loans for start-up capital.

Impact

Growing Communities has a clear impact through its provision of sustainably produced food to around 3,000 Hackney residents each week. Veg box customers are provided with a high proportion of their requirements: 67%³⁵ have all or nearly all of their needs met; 28% have about half their needs met.

The farmers' market provides a very wide range of food: from fruit, vegetables, meat, fish and milk to bread, cheese, chocolate and ice cream.

Members report significant individual impacts:

- 72% say their overall quality life has improved through membership;

“ *I feel pleased to be part of an excellent community organisation, enjoy cooking more, contributing to reduction in food miles, local business and use and awareness of organic farming.* ”

- 58% say their overall health has improved;

“ *Tremendously - my intake of vegetables is much higher and I have directly noticed significant weight loss (which was needed) and I am sick much less frequently (a drastic reduction). My overall mood levels are also up.* ”

- 28% say their skills have increased;

“ *I've learnt about sowing, planting, harvesting, marketing.* ”

- 41% say membership has provided other benefits, most frequently a source of sustainably produced food, but also high quality food and social connections.

“ *The lack of food miles and support of local farmers makes me feel like I'm helping to contribute to a better method of growing and sourcing food.* ”

³⁵ n=165 (Growing Communities members responding to our members' survey)

- 90% say they have changed their cooking or eating habits;

“ I eat a bigger range of healthy food including things I wouldn't normally buy. It makes me cook more.

- 77% say their other shopping habits have changed: 65% of members used a supermarket regularly before joining, compared with 34% after joining;

“ We try not to visit any big supermarket and try to get any additional foods from the local shops. Generally I have become a lot more conscious of what I am eating and where it comes from...

GC attracts high numbers of volunteers, particularly on its urban market gardens. The organisation's high profile and wide range of activities attract many volunteers from outside the membership

Trade is largely with farms outside London, for whom the reliable and steady business is highly beneficial. Traders at the farmers' market include a wider range of producers, including several more local secondary and artisan food producers. GC is currently working with around 30 small scale local organic farmers and producers. With 21 full and part time employees, GC makes a significant contribution to the local economy.

Lessons

- "Community-led trade" is a powerful approach, having allowed Growing Communities to scale up far beyond the capacity of one farm or its own urban market gardens;
- Community-led trade can be a viable business model with no grant funding for the core elements: the box scheme, urban market gardens and farmers' market;
- The box scheme and farmers' market provide a sizeable and secure market for the producers involved, offering fair prices;
- The box scheme has provided a secure platform and supporting finance for many other elements of its work: the farmers' market, urban market gardens, apprenticeship scheme, "Patchwork Farm" and start-up programme;
- The urban market gardens remain subsidised by the box scheme, indicating the need for additional trade to make this approach to small scale urban growing economically viable;
- The urban market gardens and patchwork farm demonstrate the productive potential of even small pockets of land in a densely populated urban area;
- Urban growing can introduce a large audience to sustainable food production: GC's growing sites attract over 150 regular volunteers and around 1,200 visitors a year.

4 The future for CSA

CSA is a still small but growing movement, with at least 80 initiatives now active in England, 20 or more of which have started trading in the last year, and many more in development. Far greater growth and scale have been achieved in some other countries and there is evidence of latent interest amongst the wider population. Is CSA in England poised to grow beyond the niche it currently occupies? Would such growth and the enterprises created prove sustainable in the longer term?

A growing movement

Several factors suggest potential for increasing growth in CSA in England:

- The current increasing rate of growth, with marked acceleration in recent years;
- The number of new initiatives known to be in development: the Soil Association has over 100 developing initiatives on record;
- Still greater growth in other countries;
- CSA lacks of public awareness but the concept is appealing to a large proportion of people when explained.

Growing enterprises

Many CSA initiatives, particularly the newer ones, are economically very small, but most are dynamic: 38% would like to expand, 56% to develop their offering and 31% to diversify into other areas. Only 22% have no plans to develop. Many newer initiatives are still growing towards their target scale of production and membership; others, particularly those supplementing production with trade, are following a model that allows continuing growth.

Although most initiatives plan to expand, develop or diversify, some are limited in what they can or would like to achieve. The limitation may be one of capacity, particularly where available land or the accessible market is limited. Others have a conception of an optimum size, beyond which community engagement and the initiative's ethos might be eroded.

A majority of initiatives reported growth in turnover between 2009 and 2010 – 83% of those trading in both years. 67% reported a profit in the last year, while 22% broke even. 89% of those reporting a profit invested it back into the initiative; 17% invested in a new business or other projects in the community. None distributed profits to members.

The history of some longer-established initiatives (and research on CSA in the United States³⁶) indicates that many change and evolve over time, reflecting flexibility in the CSA approach. This change may be in response to members' wishes or changing external circumstances and opportunities, including availability of land and finance.

Opportunities

The diversity of CSA initiatives across England is meeting the needs, ideas and ideals of many local communities and the producers involved, and offers opportunities to others through flexible models that can be adapted to meet the particular circumstances of participants.

For individuals

- CSA appeals to the desire of many to connect more closely to the source of their food, to know more about where their food comes from, to be confident that it is produced in a sustainable and resilient way, and to help build a more sustainable society.
- CSA members can benefit from a tangible supply of food that meets many of their expectations: it may be trustworthy, sustainable, tasty, reliable, interesting, affordable and healthy.
- CSA can also provide wider benefits to members: a sense of community and social opportunities, the chance to learn new skills, a developed understanding of food issues and increased wellbeing.

For communities

- The increasing number of existing successful initiatives can provide instructive examples³⁷ of tested models to new initiatives, which can adapt any chosen model to their local circumstances.
- A local CSA provides an opportunity for a community to take control of part of its food supply and to build a sustainable local enterprise that can act as a focal point for community activity and awareness raising.
- The diversity of initiatives and the individuality of the producers involved contribute to local distinctiveness, providing food of character and diversity through a genuinely local enterprise.

³⁶ Brandon Lang, K, 2010

³⁷ In addition to the case studies in this report, many more are available among the resources provided by the Soil Association and Making Local Food Programme:

- Soil Association CSA project: <http://j.mp/CSAresources>
- Making Local Food Work: <http://j.mp/MLFWresources>

- Initiatives can also contribute to their local economies, through direct employment, volunteering and training opportunities, and indirectly, through trade and stimulation of other local businesses and enterprises.

For producers, farmers and landowners

- Producers can benefit by connecting more closely with the consumers of their food, helping to build a more secure market over which they have greater control and a closer relationship with the community they supply.
- A CSA approach offers much flexibility in the details of its operation: the initiative may be led by the producer or delivered in partnership with a community enterprise.
- CSA can contribute to income across a wide range of scales: annual income from sales and subscriptions varies from under £5,000 to over £250,000. The larger turnover of some longer established initiatives demonstrates potential for a CSA approach to provide a viable basis to build substantial sales.
- Availability of volunteers may provide producers with additional labour, though appropriate skills and reliability are essential.
- CSA initiatives provide opportunities for publicity and promotion of CSA as part of a wider enterprise. The alternative approach they represent – to land management, food production and supply – offers appealing stories for local and national media.
- Community-led CSA is providing opportunities for new entrants to farming and food production, through employment of growers, apprenticeship schemes and volunteering opportunities.
- A CSA approach can help secure the tenure of a farm or provide necessary capital through community investment.
- Landowners can also benefit by renting land to a community-led initiative, deriving rental income and increased engagement with the local community.
- CSA can provide access to a relatively secure market even for smaller-scale growers who may struggle to find markets elsewhere.

Contributing to policy objectives

Community supported agriculture is little known compared to other community enterprises, but the diverse range of existing initiatives provide a wide range of economic, social and environmental benefits, including:

- Providing employment, including in relatively deprived urban and rural areas (at very high levels for land-based initiatives);
- Offering opportunities for new entrants to agriculture and horticulture;

- Providing opportunities for volunteering;
- Developing skills of employees, volunteers and members, though formal and informal training, and volunteering;
- Promoting more sustainable land management;
- Encouraging more sustainable behaviour amongst members.

Many of these benefits directly contribute to policy objectives of central and local government. For example Defra's Framework for Sustainable Lifestyles³⁸ includes the following key behaviours as components of a sustainable lifestyle, all enabled and encouraged by CSA:

- Volunteering;
- Enjoying the outdoors;
- Working with community to grow food;
- Choosing foods grown in season;
- Increasing proportion of vegetables, fruit and grains in diet;
- Cooking sustainable and healthier food.

CSA has potential to contribute to objectives of Defra's recent Natural Environment White Paper³⁹, which include increasing access to the outdoors and volunteering.

Challenges

If CSA is to grow as a movement and individual enterprises are to thrive, a number of barriers, weaknesses and threats must be addressed. We identify some of these challenges below with *tentative pointers* to how they might be confronted or answered.

Challenges for the movement

- The funding environment is likely to provide less assistance to new and developing initiatives in the coming years.
Alternative sources of finance, particularly loans targeted at the voluntary sector, may become more widely available. More food initiatives are raising funds through community share issues⁴⁰.
- The possible absence of any central co-ordinating organization is likely to result in less availability of support, mentoring and networking opportunities.
- Formal support may become less available.
Existing resources, such as those provided by the Soil Association, are expected to remain available online.
- Mentoring and study visits, which are effective in developing understanding and skills in newer initiatives, may become less available.

³⁸ Defra, 2011a

³⁹ Defra, 2011b

⁴⁰ <http://www.communityshares.uk.coop/>

- Networking opportunities may become less available. As dispersed and often small enterprises, CSA initiatives benefit greatly from meeting and communicating to share experiences, plans and ideas, at both a regional and national level.
As the movement grows, informal networking may become more prevalent. Regional groups are already forming in the South East and West of England.
- CSA suffers from a lack of public awareness and understanding, lower than for other types of community food enterprise.
As the movement grows and individual enterprises communicate more, levels of awareness should rise.
- The lack of a clear model for CSA in England – unlike AMAP in France or the prevalent producer-led model in the United States - may be slowing the rate of growth.
Examples of successful initiatives may provide multiple models for new initiatives to replicate.
- Moves by the supermarkets to offer more local food and demonstrate support for British and local farmers can erode the perceived points of difference offered by CSA.
The movement should communicate its radical approach while making clear its accessibility.

Challenges for enterprises

- CSA in any form is a complex model that requires continuing attention to the needs of all participants and the underlying viability of its operations, whether primarily reliant on financial or volunteer support.
Successful initiatives can provide model solutions.
- Potential members are often deterred by a lack of information or understanding: they may not know how to join an initiative or perceive excessive demands on their time.
Initiatives must communicate more clearly what they offer and how they work.
- Potential members can feel excluded from an initiative's community: there is a tension between an initiative successfully fostering commitment and cohesion among its members, and remaining open and inclusive of potential new members.
Initiatives must strive for openness and accessibility.
- Community-led initiatives often face the large and much underestimated challenge of establishing production from scratch – with minimal skills, land and equipment. **Working with an existing producer removes many of the hurdles faced by community groups starting growing from scratch.**
- For many initiatives their tenure of land is among the least secure elements of their operation, presenting a fundamental risk to their ongoing viability.
- Grant funding can have unforeseen negative effects: it may shape the establishment of an initiative in ways that are not ideal in the long-term; it can cause resentment among other local producers who perceive unfair support for a threat to their business; at the end of a funded period an initiative must survive a difficult transition to financial and social viability.

Unanswered questions

This study represents the first opportunity to attempt a systematic survey of CSA initiatives in England. As such we hope that it will provide some valuable benchmark information for future studies, which will be better placed to assess the sustainability and impact of CSA over a longer period.

We suggest some unanswered questions: some that fell outside the scope of this study, others that will only be answered in time:

- How well do initiatives with significant grant funding in their start-up phase survive the transition to self-financing operation?
- How successful are enterprises in accumulating reserve funds?
- How do rates of pay for CSA employees compare to other sectors, particularly comparable agricultural wages?
- How reliant are initiatives on a single founder or small core group? Can they survive the transition to new leadership?
- What geographic factors encourage or discourage the development of initiatives?
- To what extent do existing initiatives help seed new ones?
- How agriculturally productive are CSA initiatives by comparison with alternative approaches to farming?
- Do CSA initiatives help reduce food waste, at both the pre and post harvest stages of food production and supply, and by members in the home?
- How well does the application of CSA to existing farms help to improve financial sustainability, cashflow and quality of life?

5 Appendices

5.1 CSA initiatives in England

Abundant Earth	Broompark, Durham	www.durhamlocalfood.org.uk/?q=node/10
Bathampton CSA		bathamptoncsa.wordpress.com
Beenleigh Meadows Farm	Totnes, Devon	www.beenleighmeadowsfarm.org.uk
Bosavern Community farm	St Just, Cornwall	www.bosaverncommunityfarm.org.uk
Bradford on Avon Community Agriculture Co-operative	Bradford on Avon, Wiltshire	www.boaca.co.uk
Broadclyst Community Farm	Exeter, Devon	farm.broadclyst.org
Bungay Community Bees	Bungay, Suffolk	www.sustainablebungay.com/bungay-community-bees-2
Camel Community Supported Agriculture	St Kew Highway, Cornwall	www.camel-csa.org.uk
Canalside Community Food Ltd	Leamington Spa, Warks	www.canalsidecommunityfood.org.uk
Chagford Community Agriculture	Chagford, Devon	www.chagfood.org.uk
Church Farm Membership - "More Than A Box Scheme"	Ardleigh, Herts	www.churchfarmardeley.co.uk
Community Harvest Whetstone	Whetstone, Leicestershire	www.community-harvest-whetstone.org.uk
Cropshare, Burnley	Burnley, Lancashire	burnleyfoodlinks.org.uk/cropshare
Crowhurst Community Agriculture	St Leonards on Sea, E Sussex	www.crowhurstcommunityagriculture.org
Diss Community Farm	Diss, Norfolk	disscommunityfarm.wordpress.com
Dragon Orchard Crop Sharers	Ledbury, Herefordshire	www.dragonorchard.co.uk
Edcombe Farm Harvest Share Scheme	Rodney Stoke, Somerset	www.somersetcommunityfood.org.uk/index.php?page=case-studies
Exeter Community Agriculture	Shillingford, Exeter, Devon	exetercommunityagriculture.wordpress.com
Farnham Local Food Initiative	Farnham, Surrey	www.farnhamfood.com
Fir Tree Community Growers	St Helens, Merseyside	www.climatefriendlyfood.org.uk/fir_tree_farm
Fordhall Community Land Initiative and Fordhall Organic Farm	Market Drayton, Shropshire	www.fordhallfarm.com
Fork and Dig It	Brighton, East Sussex	www.forkanddigit.co.uk
Futurefarms - Martin Ltd	Martin, Hampshire	www.futurefarms.co.uk
Grace & Flavour	West Horsley, Surrey	www.graceandflavour.org
Growing Communities	Stoke Newington, London	www.growingcommunities.org
Growing local is Going Local	Whitecross, Herefordshire	www.growinglocal.org.uk
Growing Well	Kendal, Cumbria	www.growingwell.co.uk
Growing with Grace	Clapham, Lancashire	www.growingwithgrace.org.uk
Handmade Bakery CSA	Slaithwaite, W Yorkshire	www.thehandmadebakery.coop
Harrowbarrow & Metherell Agricultural Society	Harrowbarrow & Metherell, Cornwall	tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/hamagriculture
Hayfield Community Garden	Wyecliff, Herefordshire	racquetyfarm.co.uk/hayfield-garden
Headingley Pig Co-op, Leeds	Headingley, West Yorkshire	www.headingley.org/node/2951
Headingley Fowl Co-op, Leeds	Headingley, West Yorkshire	
Hebveg	Hebden Bridge, W Yorkshire	hebdenbridgetransitiontown.org.uk/hebveg
Hemsworth Arts and Community College CSA	Wakefield, West Yorkshire	www.incredible-edible-wakefield.co.uk/index.cgi?page=13&div=10
Highbridge Farm Community Farm	Eastleigh, Hampshire	www.transitionnetwork.org/projects/highbridge-farm-community-project
Hounslow Community Farming Association (HCFA)	Hounslow, London	www.hcfa.org.uk
Kippax CSA	Kippax, West Yorkshire	www.kippaxcsa.co.uk

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Lathcoates Rent a Tree	Chelmsford, Essex	www.eapples.co.uk
Little Marcle Organic Farm shop	Little Marcle, Herefordshire	littlemarclefarmshop.co.uk
Little Wittenham Lamb	Wittenham, Oxfordshire	www.camillaandroly.co.uk
Loaf Community Bakery	Cotteridge, South Birmingham	www.loafonline.co.uk/bakery
Local Greens	Herne Hill, London	www.localgreens.org.uk
Lowarth Brough	Penzance, Cornwall	www.lowarthbrough.blogspot.com
Lower Wood	Wickwar, Gloucestershire	
Loxley Valley Community Farm	Loxley, South Yorkshire	www.loxleyvalleycommunityfarm.org.uk
Matlock Area CSA Co-operative	Matlock, Derbyshire	www.transitionmatlock.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&layout=blog&id=19&Itemid=60
North Aston Dairy	North Aston, Oxfordshire	grassrootsfood.co.uk/realmilk.html
North Elmham Community Smallholding	North Elmham, Norfolk	www.northelmhamvillage.org.uk/community-smallholding
Norwich FarmShare	Norwich, Norfolk	www.norwichfarmshare.co.uk
Oak Tree Low Carbon Farm	Rushmere St Andrew, Suffolk	www.the-oak-tree.co.uk
Ocombe Farm Community Agriculture	Paignton, Devon	www.occombe.co.uk/mainsub.cfm?id=421&parid=418
Organic Lea	Walthamstow, London	www.organiclea.org.uk
Otter Valley Harvest Hub	Ottery St Mary, Devon	www.harvesthub.blogspot.com
Permorganics	Rothersthorpe, Northants	
Rent-a-vine, Sedlescombe Organic Vineyard	Robertsbridge, East Sussex	www.englishorganicwine.co.uk/acatalog/Rentavine-Club.html
Riverbourne	Laverstock, Wiltshire	www.riverbournecommunityfarm.org.uk
Scarborough Shearling Lamb CSA	Scarborough, North Yorkshire	www.envoy.uk.net/localfood/shearling.html
Shaftesbury Home Grown	Shaftesbury, Dorset	shaftesburyhomegrown.org.uk
Sherburn High School CSA	Leeds, West Yorkshire	www.sherburnhigh.co.uk/agriculturescheme.htm
Sims Hill Shared Harvest	Frenchay, Bristol	simshillsharedharvest.wordpress.com
Stroud Communal Allotment	Stroud, Gloucestershire	
Stroud Community Agriculture	Stroud, Gloucestershire	www.stroudcommunityagriculture.org
Stroud Community Woodland	Stroud, Gloucestershire	
Stroud Firewood Group	Stroud, Gloucestershire	
Sutton Community Farm	Sutton, London	www.suttoncommunityfarm.org.uk
Swillington CSA	Swillington, W Yorkshire	swillingtonorganicfarm.co.uk/csa.html
Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch Community Farms	Forest Row, East Sussex	www.tablehurstandplawhatch.co.uk
Tablehurst Orchard	Forest Row, East Sussex	www.tablehurstorchard.co.uk
The Community Farm	Chew Magna, Bristol	www.thecommunityfarm.co.uk
Thornbury Harvest Coop	Thornbury, South Glocs	www.thornburycsa.org.uk
Transition Cambridge Onion Cropshare	Cambridge, Cambs	www.transitioncambridge.org/thewiki/ttwiki/pmwiki.php?n=TTOnionCropShare.HomePage
Trevalon Organic Cooperative	Herodsfoot, Cornwall	www.trevalon.co.uk/csa.html
Vistaveg	Shap, Cumbria	www.vistaprojects.co.uk/vistaveg
Wakelyns Potato Club	Metfield, Suffolk	
Weardale CSA	Tow Law, County Durham	www.weardalecsa.org
Wimpole Community Farm	Old Wimpole, Cambs	www.wimpolecommunityfarm.org.uk
Windmill Community Allotment Veg Box Scheme	Margate, Kent	thanet.veg-box.org
Wye community farm	Wye, Kent	www.wyecommunityfarm.org.uk
Wyre Community Land Trust	Bewdley, Worcestershire	www.wyreclt.org.uk

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