



# Events and educational activities

**Events and educational activities are a great way to keep your members involved, to recruit new members, to promote what you're doing to the local community and potentially to raise funds. Events offer fantastic stories to tell via the local press, radio, or social media - people having fun on the farm is always of interest to people who may know little about CSA.**

CSA is about fostering links between the producers and consumers of food, so it's good to get your members to visit the farm and get involved as often as possible. In practice, it may be easier to stick to agreed visiting times such as when members collect produce or help out on the farm, rather than have an open door policy and to encourage your members and the local community to come along to the farm for special events and activities. This means that someone can be around to supervise, which may simplify insurance requirements.

## Open days, festivals and celebrations

There are plenty of opportunities in the seasonal calendar to organise a get-together on the farm such as the first day of spring, midsummer's eve, harvest celebrations, Halloween and so on. Pagan and Celtic festivals are built around seasons and food production. Events like a Winter Solstice Bonfire can be very popular to celebrate the return of the lengthening days.

The national CSA Network UK Farm Open Day offers the opportunity for CSA farms around the country to open their doors to the public, to raise more

awareness of what CSA is all about. There are lots of free resources available to promote the Open Day on our website [communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk/csadays/open-day-resources](http://communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk/csadays/open-day-resources). There are also lots of other national events throughout the year themed around farming and food, e.g. Open Farm Sunday, Organic September and Apple Day.

Some suggestions for activities include:

- ▶ Harvest suppers, barbecues or bring-and-share meals
- ▶ Plant and seed swaps
- ▶ Wild food foraging walks
- ▶ Farm tours
- ▶ Juice pressing
- ▶ Harvesting produce
- ▶ Wildlife events, such as a dawn chorus walk
- ▶ Feeding and caring for animals
- ▶ Barn dances or other parties

Try to divide up the responsibility of event organisation, as it requires a lot of time and effort. This is a job ideally suited to a CSA sub-group or working group rather than being another task for the core group or farmer.

As well as being lots of fun, events and festivals can be great fundraising opportunities for projects, especially if they are open to the wider community. For example, some projects put on live music, run

bars, hold promise auctions or raffles and sell food made with produce from the farm. You can generate income by charging an entry fee or just making a profit on other activities.

## Training courses and workshops

Running a CSA is also about sharing your knowledge of food and farming with your members and other local people. Research by the Making Local Food Work (MLFW) programme in 2011 found that CSA schemes in the UK help people to develop and share skills, with over three-quarters offering training programmes. CSAs can act as training centres for young people wanting to learn about farming by offering both formal training and apprenticeships, or more informal traineeships and volunteering opportunities.

CSA members who volunteer their time also benefit from gaining knowledge about farming or other areas. A third of members surveyed in the MLFW research said they had developed new skills by being part of a CSA.

Offering training and workshops is a great way to generate more income or secure external funding for your CSA and to attract new members but you do need make sure you have the capacity to do this on top of your day-to-day activities producing food. Some CSAs have secured grants to employ education workers. Examples of more informal workshops you might consider are: cooking with seasonal veg, jam making, fermented foods, organic gardening, permaculture or composting.

## Volunteer workdays

Some CSAs require all members to work on the farm on a regular basis, whereas others just offer members the opportunity to volunteer if they want to. A good way to get more people involved and to encourage local non-members to help out, is to organise volunteer work days on specific dates. More people are probably likely to take part if these are held at weekends. See the Volunteer section for more information.

## Conservation days

As well as growing activities, volunteers could also help out with conservation projects around the farm. These could include creating new wildlife habitats, tree planting, pond digging, or maintaining existing habitats, coppicing woodland or learning to lay hedges.

This could be combined with relevant training like example chainsaw use or charcoal making, if you can get someone to run a workshop, or have someone in-house with the relevant skills.

Your local Wildlife Trust and the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group should be able to provide advice and suggestions for good conservation practice on farms.

## Kids' activities

Many people will choose to join a CSA largely because they want to ensure their children have the opportunity to eat good, fresh, healthy food; learn where it comes from; and get involved with growing. So it's a great idea to run activities for families and children on the farm as this may also help you recruit more members.

You need to consider any health and safety risks, as your CSA farm or growing space is a working environment. There may be tools, equipment and machinery that could be a hazard to unwary little people but with a proper health and safety policy in place all these potential risks can be managed. (see Health and safety section). Very young children will need to be under the supervision of a parent or appropriate adult at all times. You might want to set suggested ages for other events and activities and say whether children need to be with an adult or not.

Collecting eggs, sowing seeds, camp fire cooking, potato digging, and visiting animals are just some ideas for specific activities but you could also have areas that are "self-serve" like self-guided trails, I-spy insect and bird sheets, and pick your own herbs, sweet peas, runner bean or fruit.



What does  
CSA mean  
to you?

Joining in  
fun activities  
for all the family  
on the farm

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If you have enough space you may want to set aside a picnic area with benches where children and adults can sit together to eat or enjoy activities such as shelling peas or making crafts. Some CSAs also have play equipment or other facilities to occupy children on pick-up days.

As well as children's activities for their own members some CSAs go a step further and work with local primary schools, nurseries or other pre-school groups to run more formal sessions to help young children learn about good food, for example Cae Tan CSA [caetancsa.org/en/children-schools](http://caetancsa.org/en/children-schools).

Running educational sessions can provide valuable additional income to support your CSA. Normally CSAs either charge for such sessions or they apply for grants to enable them to run them for free. For example these are the costs for workshops at Sutton Community Farm [suttoncommunityfarm.org.uk/projects/after-school-cook-clubs](http://suttoncommunityfarm.org.uk/projects/after-school-cook-clubs)

There are several organisations and websites like [countrysideclassroom.org.uk](http://countrysideclassroom.org.uk) and [face-online.org.uk](http://face-online.org.uk) that have free resources and advice to help you run sessions with schools.