

New entrants

Many people who set up community supported agriculture schemes are either new to farming or new to CSA, so starting a CSA can be a big learning curve. Fortunately though there is a lot of training and support available to help you on your CSA journey. The following are just some of the courses and sources of support available at the current time. They're often run by other CSAs. There are of course lots of other agricultural courses available around the country.

CSA Network UK Mentoring Programme

The CSA Network UK runs a mentoring programme to enable you to get one-to-one advice from successful CSAs or other organic farmers. We offer a day's advice from one of our mentors including a written report. Our mentors can either visit you or you can go to their farms if you prefer. Mentoring covers a variety of skills from finance to food production to promotional activities.

We try to match you up with the most suitable mentor based on location and type of CSA. Currently thanks to funding from Awards for All, the programme cost is subsidised and we hope to secure further funding to continue this.

communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk/mentoring

Chagfood setting-up and scaling-up CSA training course

Chagfood are being funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to offer a series of subsidised on-farm training courses throughout 2017 and 2018. These courses will build on the first-hand experience they have gained in establishing their own CSA over the past seven years to provide the necessary skills, knowledge and confidence for you to start a

CSA in your own community. The courses will also be targeted at individuals and community groups who have already established a CSA enterprise but are looking to take it to the next level in terms of membership or new enterprises.

chagfood.org.uk/courses

Landbase

LandBase seeks to provide opportunities to those wishing to involve themselves in land-based activities on a range of levels. They aim to close the gap between the growing interest in rural living and skills and the lack of structured learning facilities for new entrants to small-scale food production in the UK. LandBase provides experience-led, affordable, long and short-term courses for motivated landworkers, both current and aspiring. They offer variety of courses and also give a discount for CSA Network UK members.

land-base.weebly.com

Future Growers programmes

The Soil Association's Future Growers programme has been training the next generation of organic growers since 2007. Since its formation the scheme has trained over 80 organic entrepreneurs many of whom work for, or run, CSA schemes.

Future Growers is changing the way it works and the new scheme will focus on the providing a six month course of farm-based training events. The programme will offer six weekend field trips where growers will hear from expert tutors; go on farm tours; have access to an online resource centre; undertake recommended reading; attend specialist conferences and events; interact and understand the wider organic network and, importantly, learn





from each other. soilassociation.org/farmers-growers/supporting-you/future-growers

Kindling Trust Commercial Growers course

Each autumn the Kindling Trust run a four-day commercial organic horticulture course offering people an opportunity to learn how to set up an organic food growing business from the growers themselves. The course is designed for people considering applying to join their FarmStart programme, so they get priority. It is not directly CSA related but the training covers the key areas for setting up and running a food growing enterprise, including:

- ▶ Running a food growing business (including finances, legal issues, record-keeping, health and safety, managing volunteers) and co-operative business models.
- ▶ Understanding and maintaining soil fertility
- ▶ Small-scale market gardening - focusing on plant propagation and salad leaf production
- ▶ Field-scale vegetable production, including pests and diseases and machinery maintenance
- ▶ The course also involves two additional placement days at local organic farms. kindling.org.uk/horticulture-training

School Farm CSA

If you are completely new to growing School Farm Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is offering two courses in partnership with Bickton College, Level 1 and Level 2 practical horticultural skills. Both courses take place at School Farm CSA, a certified organic community farm on the beautiful Dartington estate near Totnes, Devon.

The farm grows a variety of crops, utilizing different methods to provide enough vegetables for their 60+ veg box customers. This provides an opportunity to learn at a working CSA where community, education and care for the land are at the heart of the business. schoolfarmcsa.org.uk/education-and-tours

Sutton Community Farm

Sutton Community Farm currently runs two trainee programmes. Their sustainable farming assistant programme enables volunteers to have a structured, practical experience, learning the basic principles of organic farming over a six-month period. It's a great way to get skills and gain experience in growing. suttoncommunityfarm.org.uk/projects/sustainable-farming-assistant-programme

Sutton Community Farm's apprenticeship programme offers practical, work-based learning over a period of two summer seasons and one winter season, paid at the London living wage. You learn about organic vegetable production on a community project with mentoring and support from an experienced team. The post suits someone looking to develop a career as an organic grower in a community setting on a small-scale commercial farm. suttoncommunityfarm.org.uk/projects/apprenticeships

Traineeships

Many other established CSAs also offer more informal traineeships, usually over the busy growing season. These differ from formal apprenticeships as you may not get paid a salary but will often get a modest stipend, food and/or simple accommodation (such as a caravan). These

can be very popular so make sure you demonstrate your enthusiasm for CSA and willingness to work hard if you choose to apply. For more information about traineeships have a look at this publication. communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/FutureFarmers2.pdf

Surviving and Thriving on the Land

Rebecca Laughton's excellent book *Surviving and Thriving on the Land: How to use your time and energy to run a successful smallholding* is highly recommended. It is very easy to become caught up in the practicalities of running a CSA as there is always too much to do on the land. Unfortunately burn-out and exhaustion in CSA are not unknown: you need to take care of yourself. You and your fellow CSA members are your most valuable resource. Rebecca's book demonstrates the best possible chance of making good use of your energy, while making sure you have some time to relax as well.

Running a CSA involves a great deal more than "just" the farming work. A CSA farm is a small business

with all the responsibilities that involves, including a sizeable membership of people who want to feel involved in the process. It is well worth seeking experience with, or training on, an established CSA farm as you will learn endless intangible things which will make your own start-up phase far smoother! Ideally, visit or at least read about several CSAs as they all have their own approach to sharing the risks and rewards of farming.

Funding for new entrants

The Scottish Rural Development Programme provides help for new entrants through three dedicated funding schemes.

ruralpayments.org/publicsite/futures/topics/all-schemes/new-entrants/

Unfortunately there is no funding available for other areas of the UK at the moment but the Land Workers Alliance are campaigning for this to change. landworkersalliance.org.uk/2017/08/newentrants/#more-44692



OTHER USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES

- ▶ Other organic growing and farming courses soilassociation.org/farmers-growers/supporting-you/future-growers/future-growers-course-details/other-courses-and-opportunities
- ▶ Agriculogy: agriculogy.co.uk
- ▶ Agricultural and Horticultural Development Board (AHDB): ahdb.org.uk
- ▶ Agroforestry Research Trust: agroforestry.co.uk
- ▶ Innovative Farmers: innovativefarmers.org
- ▶ SRUC: sruc.ac.uk/info/120157/organic_farming
- ▶ The Organic Growers Alliance: organicgrowersalliance.co.uk
- ▶ The Organic Research Centre: organicresearchcentre.com
- ▶ The Soil Association: soilassociation.org