

# Publicity and promotion

## Why publicise your CSA?

It's vital to keep members and regular volunteers in the loop. It's equally important to keep the wider world informed about what you're doing and why. People in your immediate community, other CSAs and similar organisations, local media, community groups and so on all need to know for the following reasons:

- ▶ You're likely to want or need new members at some point so this is a great way to get them on board.
- ▶ Local people will feel involved and regard your CSA as an asset to the community.
- ▶ Should you ever need planning permission, or concerns are raised about increased traffic at events, people are less likely to complain if they feel involved and understand the benefits of your CSA.
- ▶ You'll get more volunteers from the vicinity - and maybe from all over the world, if people are looking for WWOOFing opportunities.
- ▶ You can share your successes and achievements, funny moments and disasters - and other CSAs will share theirs - resulting in a lovely sense of CSA family!
- ▶ You need to publicise any events you're organising if you want lots of people to come and not just members, especially if you are using them to raise funds.
- ▶ Many CSAs consider it part of their responsibility to demonstrate that there is

“another way” to grow food beyond intensive, large scale production.

- ▶ If you ever need to raise money through crowdfunding or applying for grants you will want as many people as possible to know about your CSA and why they should support you.

These are some of the main ways you can promote your CSA:

## Via the CSA Network UK

The CSA Network UK is here to help promote CSAs across the country so make sure your farm is listed on our online map [communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk/find-csa](http://communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk/find-csa). The map provides links to your Facebook page and website, as well as a photo and location map. If you have any special events coming up or are doing a crowdfunding campaign let us know and we can promote it via our website and social media. We also list job adverts for our members on our website. Please tag the CSA Network UK in any posts on Facebook [@CSANetworkUK](https://www.facebook.com/CSANetworkUK) - Community Supported Agriculture, Twitter [@csanetwork](https://twitter.com/csanetwork) or Instagram [@csanetwork\\_uk](https://www.instagram.com/csanetwork_uk) to make sure that we see them, and then we can share them. If you are sending out a press release please mention the CSA Network UK and include us in your mailing list. We can also promote your CSA as part of our national events like CSA Network UK Open Day and we provide our members with free promotional materials [communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk/csadays](http://communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk/csadays).





## Facebook

Facebook is vital to CSAs at the moment, as it's where so many people are who hold the domestic purse strings, i.e. older women and women caring for young children. But remember that social media users are fickle and this could change very quickly! Facebook works best with short, frequent posts that deal with a single bite-sized topic or news item at a time. Each post should include an image, or perhaps a video. Pictures of people busy doing things always grab more attention. Keep the really pretty images for Instagram!

Make sure you like or share other CSAs' posts that interest you and also share the CSA Network UK's posts. Get in the habit of sharing your own more relevant posts like weekly box contents to community Facebook pages and groups within your area. Remember "buy and sell" groups too. Use the Facebook page manager app on your smartphone to upload posts and monitor activity on your page. Schedule posts to be published at a specific time. Think carefully when to publish your posts. Facebook users are more likely to be active during their "downtime" in the evenings and at certain times at the weekend.

Maintain a sense of humour and a light touch, even when posting on serious topics. share pictures, media articles, other people's posts, and useful info. Use topical issues to get over your own message e.g. seasonal food / the courgette crisis. ask questions or start a discussion e.g. Do you know wild garlic's in season....?

If you find a topic interesting or if visitors to your farm are fascinated by something, however trivial or simple the topic may seem, then most likely social media users will be interested too. Be aware that an extra-large or strange-shaped carrot may well attract more interest than the latest serious news on farming policy!

If you are planning a special event, create a Facebook upcoming event on your page. Always add your location, such as nearest village or postal town. If you've added your CSA to Google Maps, you can use that more specific location. Remember to tag the CSA Network UK and we will share your posts.

Facebook wants more of their business page users to advertise. "Boosting" a post can be a cost-effective way to promote events or offers. You can target a very specific geographical area or type of person within a certain age group with particular interests. Costs begin at £15/day.

## Instagram

Instagram is far more popular among younger people. Update regularly, aim for at least once a week and always use very good photos or other images. Remember to add your location to alert other like-minded people locally. Follow fellow CSAs, food organisations and other foodie people e.g. chefs. Look at who your followers are following and like and comment on their posts.

Instagram users attach a lot of tags. Use tags like place names to attract like-minded people locally, also #organic #communitysupportedagriculture #CSA #localfood #eattheseasons etc.

You can share your posts from Instagram directly on to Facebook and this tends to get more views (Facebook owns Instagram and wants more people to use it). But don't be tempted to do this too often. At the moment you can't put hyperlinks in Instagram posts so you need to make sure there's a link to your website in your profile.

To save time you can use software like Hootsuite to post to all your social media accounts at the same time, and also to schedule your posts.

## Twitter

Twitter can be a tricky medium for non-profits like CSAs as it's dominated by politicians, celebs, journalists and the big corporates. However it's important to have a voice on Twitter in order to get noticed by journalists, farming and rural organisations and environmentally-conscious politicians in particular. Like Instagram, it's also extremely useful for having conversations with other CSAs and sharing your own pictures, forthcoming events and news with them.

Engage more with other CSAs by liking and retweeting their tweets. Share and comment on media news items and topical issues that you think might interest other CSAs. Tag your tweets if they relate to what's topical, seasonal or trending e.g. #Brexit #Christmas #Sundaybrunch or #courgettecrisis. Again tag the CSA Network UK [@csanetwork](#) in your posts and we will share them. Remember to add your location to alert other Twitter users in your area. Make use of lists to help you sift out the tweets that interest you. Remember you can adopt other people's lists, you don't have to compile your own. You can also save draft tweets and post them later.

## Press releases

These are perhaps more "old school" but still absolutely valid. Press, radio and TV journalists still rely to a great extent on receiving media releases to hear from you about interesting and newsworthy things that are going on that you can share with their audiences.

You can do a press release about forthcoming events, exciting news, your CSA's response to things that are going on in the wider food world. The shops may not have courgettes, but your members do have lots of seasonal alternatives, for instance. They especially love to hear about anything that's visual and potentially fun or muddy! It's far more likely to be used if you include a picture every time, even if you send the release before the event.

Writing an effective media release takes some time and effort and there are definite dos and don'ts. Remember the five Ws - What, Who, When, Where, Why and How? You need to get your key points across in the first sentence or short paragraph.

See [theguardian.com/small-business-network/2014/jul/14/how-to-write-press-release](https://www.theguardian.com/small-business-network/2014/jul/14/how-to-write-press-release)

The CSA Network UK can also provide sample press releases for some events and activities, e.g. for CSA Open Day.

## Websites

CSAs need to have some sort of web presence but you don't have to spend lots of money. Unless you're a very small CSA you will need a website in addition to a Facebook page, so you can provide basic information about how you run, prices, location, ethos, etc. plus links to the CSA Network UK and other food and farming organisations.

You may be fortunate to have someone among your staff or membership who has good IT or design skills and is willing to take on building and updating a website.

There are various software programmes that enable you to build your own website for free. For instance, it is easy to use WordPress software to set up a

simple website with a static home page. See [codex.wordpress.org/Creating\\_a\\_Static\\_Front\\_Page](https://codex.wordpress.org/Creating_a_Static_Front_Page). However it's important that your website looks professional and is kept up to date. So if you have enough funds available then paying for a website is a good investment. Also use a web hosting service to ensure you have your own domain name (web address).

## Leaflets and posters

It's good to have leaflets and posters to distribute in your local area, as there will always be people who are more likely to take notice of printed materials. It is also worth spending the money on getting a high quality design with photos and logo or a nice illustration.

Remember - a picture tells 1,000 words. So keep the text short and to the point - it must be taken in at a glance. Maximum images, minimum text!

Get proper printing done, rather than doing your own on a photocopier. Make sure you don't include any information that is likely to change and have contact details so people can get in touch easily.

Leave some leaflets in places that are likely to attract food lovers and people who like to stay healthy, for instance cafes and health food shops as well as community centres, libraries, schools, surgeries, health and sports clubs. The Food Co-ops toolkit has fruit and veg images you can download and use [sustainweb.org/foodcoopstoolkit/promotion](https://sustainweb.org/foodcoopstoolkit/promotion) as does this US site [memberassembler.com/hub/csa-share-graphics](https://memberassembler.com/hub/csa-share-graphics)

The CSA Network also provides free promotional resources you can use e.g. postcards, posters and banners, as part of our CSA Open Day. [communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk/csadays/open-day-resources](https://communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk/csadays/open-day-resources)

## Word of mouth

Getting existing members to tell their friends, family and colleagues about your CSA is one of the best ways to spread the word and to recruit new

members. If your members are happy with the produce they're getting and love being involved with a CSA then this will hopefully happen anyway. If you're a new CSA you may need to provide a bit of encouragement to your members to get them to spread the word. Ask them to talk about your CSA or give leaflets to family, friends, workmates or neighbours or to share your news on Facebook.

## Local events

It can be worthwhile attending local community events such as green fairs, Big Lunch, church and school fundraisers, open gardens, and events at local wildlife reserves. Potential members are often persuaded by actually meeting the people involved in a CSA. A CSA stall or stand can be quite simple: laminate nice photos and posters, take a sample veg box (consider offering it as a raffle prize), some flowers, and your leaflets and lay them out on a table.

Custom designed PVC banners are a cheap and effective way to attract attention. As with your leaflets and posters make sure the information on your banner(s) will still be relevant in a couple of years' time.

## Give talks to local groups

If someone involved in your CSA is willing to give talks to local groups this can be an effective way of spreading the word. It is quite normal to charge to give a talk, so why not ask for a donation to the CSA farm? Groups often struggle to find interesting speakers, and CSA is a story with very wide appeal that many people still aren't familiar with.

Women's institutes, local gardening groups, rotary clubs, young farmers' clubs, environmental groups and local churches all offer potential audiences for an entertaining talk. A simple but effective strategy is to put together a simple photo slide show of CSA members on site and project it automatically on to a screen behind you while you talk.

## Special offers

A CSA will need to compete with other food outlets to get members, so like any other business you may need to provide special offers and incentives to encourage people to sign up. Many CSAs offer a trial membership, perhaps including the first box for free, so that people can try it out and see if it works for them before committing long term.

You may also want to do special offers to encourage more people to sign up at the start of the season, and possibly pay in advance so that you have more money coming to pay for seeds, compost, insurance and so on. You can do this as part of our national CSA Sign Up Day [communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk/csadays](http://communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk/csadays)



## OTHER USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES

- ▶ Sustain's Food Co-ops Toolkit has lots of useful tips on promotion that are also relevant to CSAs [sustainweb.org/foodcoopstoolkit/promotion](http://sustainweb.org/foodcoopstoolkit/promotion)
- ▶ This Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens has lots of promotional ideas for community growing groups. [farmgarden.org.uk/resources/promote-your-project](http://farmgarden.org.uk/resources/promote-your-project)
- ▶ Small Farm Central in the US have lots of marketing tips and free resources for CSAs [smallfarmcentral.com/farmer-free-resources](http://smallfarmcentral.com/farmer-free-resources)
- ▶ Also refer to the Communications section of this toolkit for ideas on how to communicate to existing members and volunteers.