

# Starting up

How you start up your CSA will depend on who you are and whether the CSA is being set up by a group or an individual. In general, there tend to be two main approaches:

- 1. Producer led schemes - with less member involvement.
- 2. Consumer led schemes - with lots of member involvement.

However, whatever your starting point, the steps you have to take in the development of your CSA will be quite similar, what varies is the degree of member participation.

## Getting started - things to consider

It is a good idea not to be too ambitious; start small and grow organically! Try to arrange a visit to an existing scheme and get a feel for how they do it. Contact the CSA Network UK for help on arranging this and check the case studies on the website for ideas on appropriate models to visit.

Making the partnership between producers and consumers work for mutual benefit is what CSA is all about. This takes time so make sure you don't rush the planning and development of your CSA. This A-Z guide aims to cover most of issues you need to take into consideration when setting up a CSA. Although the development of your CSA will be determined by your own circumstances, the following ten steps serve as a useful guide of what stages you need to go through in planning your initiative and key things you may need to think about.

### 1. What is CSA?

- Is CSA right for you?
- Which model fits your situation?
- Are you a producer looking to set up a CSA? Or a community?
- Have you visited any other CSAs?

### 2. Members and Volunteers

- Do you already have enough people involved to get the CSA started?
- How will you recruit members?
- How many members do you want to supply with food?
- Will you offer members the opportunity to work for all or part of their share?
- Are you going to recruit other volunteers to help out?

### 3. Business plan

- What are the objectives of the CSA?
- Who will plan and develop the CSA?
- What types of food are you going to produce?
- How do you want to manage the land?
- What are your long term plans for the future?

### 4. Legal structures

- Do you need a core group?
- Who is responsible for what?
- Which legal structure will fit your model?
- What are the principles that guide your CSA?





### 5. Access to land

- ▶ Have you already got suitable land?
- ▶ If not, how much land do you need and in what location?
- ▶ Are you going to buy or rent?
- ▶ How will you raise funds if you want to buy land?

### 6. Funding and finance

- ▶ Have you set up a CSA bank account?
- ▶ Do you need to apply for a grant or do a crowdfunding campaign?
- ▶ Who is in charge of overseeing the finances?
- ▶ Have you worked out your start up and running costs, and produced a budget?

### 7. Quantities and distribution

- ▶ What is the farm going to produce?
- ▶ What are the production costs?
- ▶ How much will it cost each member?
- ▶ How are you going to get the produce to the members?
- ▶ Will you buy in for the hungry gap?

### 8. Rules and regulations, Health and Safety and Insurance

- ▶ Have you thought about all the legal requirements for running a CSA?
- ▶ How much will insurance cover cost?

### 9. Events and educational activities

- ▶ Are you going to organise any events, and who for?
- ▶ Are you planning to run any educational activities?
- ▶ How can you spread the load of making events and activities happen?

### 10. Communication

- ▶ How will you keep your members informed?
- ▶ Who will be responsible for your website and social media?

### Key factors for success

A report assessing the key factors determining the long-term success of CSA projects in Wales (Roger Hitchings, Organic Research Centre 2013) found they included:

- ▶ Clear structure of the organisation (legal and actual)
- ▶ Good communications
- ▶ Realistic pricing and pragmatic forecasting
- ▶ Suitable site for the production of the intended crops and/or livestock
- ▶ Secure land tenure
- ▶ Access to an appropriately large population
- ▶ Able and competent workers of the land according to the system

Other factors for success in a CSA business highlighted by Canalside Community Food are:

- Having a clear vision and idea about what you are doing
- Understanding the motivation of members and striving to keep them involved, and continual recruitment
- Understanding and keeping control of growing costs and being focused on producing good quality organic vegetables (or other produce)
- Providing a range of social engagement opportunities and events (but not at detriment to other requirements)
- Understanding the finances and only taking grants when you really need them for start up or capital investment
- Remember that the CSA is a community business and the risks and strain of running the business should be shared across the community. In the end it is about an improved quality of life!



## OTHER USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES

- A useful guide from the US about what you need to think about when setting up a CSA [growingsmallfarms.ces.ncsu.edu/growingsmallfarms-csaguide](http://growingsmallfarms.ces.ncsu.edu/growingsmallfarms-csaguide)
- This short film of Chagfood Community Market Garden is a great introduction to CSA [communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk/resource/chagfood-film](http://communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk/resource/chagfood-film)
- This Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens pack is a comprehensive introduction to setting up, developing and sustaining a community-managed farm, garden or related community growing space. [farmgarden.org.uk/resources/community-growing-resource-pack-england](http://farmgarden.org.uk/resources/community-growing-resource-pack-england)
- Moss Brook Growers are not a CSA but this manual gives a step by step guide to how they set up a horticultural social enterprise. [sustainweb.org/publications/the\\_story\\_of\\_moss\\_brook\\_growers](http://sustainweb.org/publications/the_story_of_moss_brook_growers)
- Simply start up guide produced by Co-operatives UK [uk.coop/sites/default/files/uploads/attachments/simplystartup\\_0\\_0\\_0.pdf](http://uk.coop/sites/default/files/uploads/attachments/simplystartup_0_0_0.pdf)