

CASE STUDY: CHAGFOOD

A HORTICULTURAL CSA IN RURAL DEVON



Established: 2010

Type: Producer-led

Legal Structure: Ltd Co. (formerly Community Interest Company)

Paid staff: 2 FT

Trainees: 1 FT

Volunteers: 1 FTE (Five people)

Produce: Vegetables

Members: 148. They vote on box price, wages and varieties at AGM

Member radius: 10 miles

Shares: Year-round with some solidarity shares and two funded shares distributed via GP practice

Buy in to supplement produce: Yes

CSA turnover: £95,000

Non CSA turnover: Small amount of wholesale

Land: Three hectares of rented land on farm business tenancies

Infrastructure: Two large and two small tunnels for propagation and seed saving, packing shed, tool store, office and shipping container cold store

And... two annual events (summer open day and harvest festival) and 10 educational visits per year

The seed...

Ed and Yssy were interested in starting a local farm in the community where they were living to create a livelihood. They chose the CSA route after Ed visited 8 CSAs across the country who convinced him. Their beginning coincided with a New Economics Foundation meeting looking at energy in their town which identified a clear demand for local produce. After a year of holding community meetings to assess demand, the project was given a further boost by the Big Lottery's Making Local Food Work scheme



Grew...

The first year they grew for 25 households on one acre. In the second year they took on another acre and went up to 50. They continued increasing gradually up to six acres and 75 households producing everything that went into their boxes and stopping shares during the hungry gap. In 2016 they introduced year round shares and went from 75 to 95 members. In 2018 they began offering door drop for £2 a week extra and members went up to 110. By 2021 they had 148 members.



And...

They wish they'd known they didn't need to panic about growing membership - it has just continued to grow. Now they have reached 150 members they feel they are at a comfortable carrying capacity and don't want to grow any further. Ten years in they were entirely self-supporting and didn't rely on any grants. The pandemic solidified the integrity of the model for them and now they are concentrating on maintaining membership, improving quality year on year and streamlining cultivation systems. They want to grow the best veg possible.

