



TO HARVEST, TO EAT AND TO SHARE
CONFERENCE ON COMMUNITY
SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE

Proceedings



Équiterre

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Introduction



In November 2000, at the end of a difficult growing season, marked by rain that was too abundant and a sun too often hidden by the clouds, more than 200 people met for a unique event: the first Quebec and Canadian conference on Community Supported Agriculture, held in a small village of Laurentides, in Quebec, in Lac Supérieur. The participants and lecturers of the conference were the people directly involved in CSA or simply interested in finding out more about a mode of agriculture that has grown tremendously in the last few years.

Even though CSA projects differ considerably from region to region, the CSA formula exists since the Seventies and has now spread to Europe, the United States, Japan and Canada. Here in Quebec, CSA has become an alternative for more than 5000 consumers who seek a more supportive and ecological agriculture. After five years of direct involvement in the growth of this movement in Quebec, Équiterre saw the need to organize a conference that would be an opportunity for exchange and training to feed the movement with new ideas, new inspirations, and new energies.

By attracting lecturers and participants from Quebec, Ontario, British Columbia and several American states, many different CSA models were discussed. Even if the formula varies from one area to another, the CSA projects all have similar elements: a local organic farmer (or a farmer making the transition to organic) in a direct relationship with consumers (called sharers or members), who make a financial commitment to their farm for the season.

As this conference was a single event and because many people could not participate, we thought of producing a document that would summarize the content of the meetings. This document is different from traditional conference proceedings. The summaries of the workshops were written by participants, instead of giving this duty to the lecturers (although the lecturers gave their approval to the final text of the summary of their presentation). The style of the summaries reflects the style of the workshops: presentations by one or two

lecturers followed by a discussion with the participants. Because of a limited number of pages, we chose the workshops that would be appropriate for a wider public. The summaries of the workshops touch several aspects of the CSA: production, relationships with sharers, innovative CSA models, and CSA in context.

Before the workshop summaries you can read you can read the presentations of two of the keynote speakers: Elizabeth Henderson and José Bové. The text of Elizabeth Henderson, who opened the conference, sparked many of the stimulating discussions during the conference. Its style is very personal, describing us the sorrows and the joys that marked her path in CSA during the last ten years.

The closing speaker of the conference was José Bové, farmer and militant French, president of the Confederation Paysanne. His presentation gives an outline of the global context in which CSA finds itself. He recounts the course of the movement for a peasant agriculture in France which began in the 1970s. It also notes the harmful effects of the institutions of globalization, such as the WTO, on small producers. Its presentation finishes on an activist note, encouraging the participants to use their political power to change things.

And do things change! Since the conference, Équiterre and the Quebec Network of CSA Projects finalized a process of evaluation and developed a strategic plan for the consolidation and the development of the CSA Network. The farms already involved in CSA projects continue to grow, and new CSA farms start up each year. The Network will undoubtedly have again a new dynamic at the time of the next CSA conference... in 2005?

Happy reading!

Sara Mayo
Conference Organizer

Isabelle Joncas
Coordinator of the
Network of CSA projects

One of the pioneers of the CSA movement in the US, Elizabeth Henderson has been a farmer with CSA projects for the last 12 years. Her farm, Peacework Organic Farm in the State of New York, produces 238 baskets a week and emphasizes active sharer participation. She is the author of *Sharing the Harvest*, the seminal guide to CSA including the stories of more than a hundred CSA farms in the US.



TAKING YOUR CSA TO THE NEXT GENERATION

Elizabeth Henderson

Greetings! It is an honor for me to be here. I wish I could say that I stand here representing the American Peasant Federation... In the US we have growers, producers and agribusinessmen, but no peasants. Not even many farmers anymore.

I come to you fresh from the warm glow of our CSA's end of the season dinner, and from the stinging cold of Thursday's harvest. The dinner has become an annual ritual, a massive pot luck supper, with dishes made from the food from our farm, attended every year by more people — this year we had seating for close to 200 people. The warmth and appreciation of our community offsets the discomforts of mornings like yesterday.

The Global Food System

The food system of the future is happening right now in cities in the US. The retailers are the nerve center of food distribution. The dominant food production and distribution sectors are pursuing the path of industrialization to its logical conclusion, reshaping themselves in the image of computerized information systems gathering data from shoppers' cards to schedule just-on-time deliveries. 27,000 new food products a year dazzle the eye and tempt the palette. With communication, strategic corporate alliances, and transportation links reaching all over the world, the seasons no longer influence what is for sale. Sourcing is global, and the supply is unlimited for those who can afford to pay.

The consumer in the US no longer needs to know how to cook, or even wash food. Fast food restaurants, work place food services, convenience stores, and vending machines supply 60 % of the meals people eat. Half of the population eats breakfast in the car on the way to work. As the traditional housewife becomes an endangered species, food stores are becoming more like take-out restaurants, selling pre-cooked or half-cooked meals that can be eaten at home. My father-in-law, who lives in a suburb of New York City where a large proportion of the inhabitants commute to work, reports that every evening swarms of commuters drive from the train station to the supermarket where they pick up ready-made dinners before they zip home for the night. Frozen gourmet meals are on the shelf next to TV dinners in the freezer section. A growth sector in the produce industry is pre-cut packaged salads, made possible by improvements in packaging. Sales hit \$1.09 billion in 1997, for a 20 percent increase over 1996. Overall sales of all kinds of "fresh-cuts" including "baby" carrots (full-sized carrots cut into pieces lathe-turned for that baby shape), fruit, stir-fry mixes, and salad, added up to \$6 billion in 1997, for 10 percent of total produce sales. Industry publications predict \$19 billion in sales by 2003. American consumers will pay 2 to 3 times the cost of buying the separate ingredients to have their carrots peeled, their apples cored and sliced, or their lettuce washed and cut up for them.

When polled, these same consumers express more and more concern about health and nutrition. Supermarkets compete on the quality of their produce sections, which market research shows to be the biggest lure for customers.

But, while Americans are eating more fruit and vegetables, there is evidence that the nutritional value of these foods is declining. For almost every vitamin and mineral, the 1997 USDA food composition tables show a decline of 15 to over 50 percent from the figures published in 1975. For example, the calcium in 100 grams of broccoli has dropped from 103 mg. to 48 mg. An exception, is the vitamin A content of the average carrot, which has risen 155.7 percent, although the vitamin C, calcium and iron have fallen. According to staff at the USDA Nutrient Data Lab, the change in values results in part from more accurate testing methods, but also from shifts in the varieties available in the marketplace. As a grower, I have observed that suitability for mechanical harvesting, longer storage life and shipability outweigh nutritional content in the breeding of most commercial varieties. The catalogues I see for vegetable growers emphasize qualities such as stem length in new broccoli varieties that make harvesting easier, or uniformity and smoothness of skin in carrots to make peeling and cutting cheaper and faster.

In the constant scramble for ever new products, the food processing industry keeps its eye on profits and image. Need does not enter the equation. For a few years, when family fortunes were desperate, my mother worked for an outfit called the Institute for Motivational Research. Their unique purpose was to figure out how to induce consumers to buy products, whether they needed them or not. Since vitamin pills and supplements are selling so well, the processors are busy making “nutraceuticals” and venturing into “functional” foods. And I thought that all foods were functional and contributed to human nutrition, but that only shows how naïve I can be. Research is under way to boost the anti-carcinogenic substances in grapes, onions, garlic, and other vegetables.

The seed companies offer growers the choice between “input enabling technologies” (for example, Round-up Ready crops), and “output enabling technologies” (Identity Preserved crops), but no choice about whether to use genetically engineered seed. To purchase these seeds, growers must sign contracts with the patent holding seed companies, which just happen to be conveniently connected to the processors who manufacture the end product. More and more livestock and processing vegetable farmers produce their crops under

contract to integrators who have vastly more economic power than the farmers. In my county, the big processor is Mott, which sets the price each fall for juice apples. Apple growers do not dare cross Mott by selling to other processors or arguing about Mott’s price. Mott takes quick revenge by purchasing its apples from someone else. Each grower stands alone and there is no recourse. With the huge influx of apple concentrate from China, the price of juice apples has fallen from 8 cents to 3 cents a pound. At that price, farmers leave their apples on the tree to rot.

The proponents of the US food and agriculture system never tire of telling us that “we have the safest, cheapest, most abundant food supply in the world”. If I have heard it once, I have heard it 1000 times that US farmers not only feed the growing population of this country, but we keep the rest of the world from starving as well.

US Food Realities

There is no question that food is readily available in the US to those who can afford to purchase it. For a

middle-class family, food requires a smaller percentage of the monthly budget than in other developed countries — figures vary from 10.5 to 15 percent. However, that does not equate with genuine food security for the entire population. While the stores are well stocked with food and have no obvious shortages, the supply of food on hand in northeast cities would last only thirteen days should some emergency occur. A USDA report on a survey of 45,000 households completed in April, 1995, revealed that 11,940,000 US households are “food insecure”, including 820,000 suffering from severe hunger. In the US, the number of Food Banks, community warehouses distributing salvaged and donated food to emergency food providers, rose from 75 in 1980 to 225 in 1990, and the number of pounds of food distributed increased from 25 million in 1980 to 811.3 million in 1995. Second Harvest reports that almost 26 million people rely on the emergency feeding programs their network serves. Congress responded to this increase in need by reducing funding for Food Stamps, a program that provides a significant subsidy to low-income families.

Loss of farms, shrinking farm gate prices, diminished nutritional value, surging multinational control, aching hunger — grim prospects. Maybe we should go home and give up. Does anyone want to leave now? No one?

So what can we going to do to change things? We cannot storm the headquarters of the major corporations, nor undersell the supermarkets. In the words of my friend Gil Gillespie: “we can create protected spaces, for people

IN THE CONSTANT SCRAMBLE FOR EVER NEW PRODUCTS, THE FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRY KEEPS ITS EYE ON PROFITS AND IMAGE. NEED DOES NOT ENTER THE EQUATION.

to comprehend, improve and practice alternatives for the next revolution". Or, as I prefer to put it, we can create liberated territories on our farms and gardens and food coops where we as farmers and consumers transform ourselves.

The movement towards community supported agriculture is part of a response to this complex of conditions. In North America, CSA is just a teenager — 15 years old. People refer to me as a veteran because our CSA has been running for 12 years. No one knows the exact numbers — the growth has been from 2 in 1986 to somewhere around 1000 today. In the spring of 2000, the SAN people at USDA and the Robyn Van En Center for CSA sent out questionnaires to 1,019 CSAs. 356 responded. Dan Lass, a professor of economics at University of Massachusetts, is analyzing the data from these responses and kindly provided me with some preliminary findings. Of those 356, the average years of operation is 5.3, the average CSA cropland is seven acres, though the median is only three acres, in other words, there is a great range in size. The mean number of shares is 52 (and the median 27). That means that somewhere between 50,000 and 100,000 people are members of CSAs. 88 % are organic of which 1/2 are certified. Another 34 farms are Biodynamic. 211 are sole proprietorships, 40 partnerships, and 36 each for corporations (mainly family held) and non-profits, with 4 coops.

What does CSA mean? After writing an entire book on the subject, *Sharing the Harvest: A Guide to Community Supported Agriculture*, I find my definition continuing to shift as my experience unfolds. When I first conceived of initiating a CSA project on my farm back in 1988, I thought of it as a clever way to market our farm products. At that time, we were growing 15 acres of certified organic vegetables and small fruit and selling to food coops, natural food stores and supermarkets within an hour's drive of the farm. Although there was still a decent premium for organic vegetables in US retail markets, I could see that the increased demand was stimulating an increase in production on larger farms in California and Colorado. It would only be a matter of time before small scale northeast organic producers found themselves in the same situation as small scale conventional producers — undersold by imports from the west. To survive, our farm would have to find a different marketing strategy. We were too out of the way to develop a farm stand, and at our county farmers market, a good morning brought \$100 in sales. My friend Robyn Van En made CSA sound like an interesting alternative and I had had the experience of a weekly box of vegetables during a stay in France in 1977 when I stumbled into a French Maoist CSA.

The idea stayed with me, and when I moved to Rose

Valley in 1988, I proposed to my partner David that we try a CSA. During the winter of 1988-89, David and I had a meeting with Alison Clarke, founder and staff person of the Peace and Justice Education Center (today the Politics of Food) in Rochester, NY, and PJEC member Jim Marks, a Xerox engineer. We agreed to the broad outlines of the project and decided to put out a flyer inviting people to an organizational meeting. By today's standards, the flyer was pretty crude, half typed with headlines written in by hand, but it attracted 24 people. At the meeting, we emphasized that this was to be an experiment. To make it work, everyone would have to be flexible, willing to participate and ready to readjust. All 24 households signed up and made the commitment to share in the labor. As it turned out, a few of the chemically sensitive HEAL members were too sick to do more than make occasional phone calls. The participants filled out vegetable order forms that enabled us to set the contents of the weekly packets. Vegetarian households decided to purchase two or more packets, bringing the total to 31. We agreed that everyone would receive the same selection, except for members on macrobiotic diets who could substitute turnip greens and collards for tomatoes and eggplant. We set the fee on a sliding scale of \$5 to \$7 a week for 25 weeks, a modest amount of money, but at the request of the members made the packets much smaller than many other CSAs. We designed a "food unit" for a two person city household. Rather than require a lump sum payment at the beginning of the season, we asked for monthly payments in the hope of making CSA affordable for the lower income members. Social justice has always been high on the agenda of the Politics of Food, a commitment shared by the people at our founding meeting.

We learned a lot from our mistakes that first season. The distribution of the food was the biggest challenge. The members who worked at the farm on each harvest day transported the food the full hour's drive into the city where most of the members live and stored it in the coolers at a church. At six in the evening, two assigned members came to the church to break the produce down into shares. Even with a posted description of the process in excruciating detail that would have been the envy of any technical writer, the distribution did not always go smoothly. We concluded that distribution needed a trained coordinator. One person, Jamie Whitbeck, shouldered the task of scheduling all members, work for the entire season. Jamie did an incredibly conscientious job and burned himself out. We learned that big jobs need to be shared by several people. Jan Cox, the bookkeeper-treasurer for the project, eventually collected all the money due, but not

without repeated reminders, calls and cards to the tardy. The next year, we instituted a contract with a commitment to a definite weekly fee and a clear payment schedule. We also stopped allowing members to cancel their shares if they went away for a week or two, which had meant that every week the number of shares was different. We held a dinner to celebrate the end of the season, the beginning of a lovely annual ritual. The consensus of the members present was that the experiment, despite a few organizational flaws, was worth repeating. All but three of the families signed up for the second year.

For nine years, the Genesee Valley Organic CSA grew and solidified at Rose Valley Farm. Throughout those nine years, each of the members drove the 40 miles from Rochester to the farm three times a season to help with farm work. In the annual evaluations, members ranked enjoyment of the farm work along with appreciation of the vegetables.

During the fifth year of our existence, a quiet coup took place within the core. For the first years of the GVOCSA's existence, I acted as chair and facilitator of the monthly core meetings. After 35 or so years of experience with organizations, I have gotten fairly good at moving a group cheerfully through a long agenda, so people are often willing to let me do this job. In my head, the core members were doing a remarkable amount of work for my farm, but it was my farm. With one of those funny ironies of life, in the very same month that I brought the chapter on meeting facilitation from *The Resource Manual for a Living Revolution* to a NOFA Governing Council meeting, Dennis Lehmann, GVOCSA treasurer, distributed that same chapter at a core meeting! In his gentle, but firm, way, he suggested we take turns facilitating the meetings, set the agenda as a group, and allocate the amount of time for each item. The core accepted his proposal in a speedy consensus: it may have been my farm, but it had become our CSA.

While I enjoyed the intense involvement with members of the CSA, my partner David did not. Things were falling apart between us and at the end of that ninth year, 1997, I had to leave the farm. The GVOCSA core group sent a delegation to meet with David to ask if he wanted to continue providing shares to them. He told them no. The GVOCSA was faced with the choice of dissolving or finding a way to continue without that farm. The core group told me that they would support me if I could find a way to continue growing their food. I spent 2 months reflecting on what I wanted to do. At the age of 55, many people retire. I had the choice of several organizing jobs in which I could have used my writing and networking skills, and several farm manage-

ment positions. I made a chart of the advantages and disadvantages of each choice. Over Christmas, 1997, I spent a day with my son (26 at the time) and a close friend reviewing the chart. My son knows me better than anyone in the world, so it was helpful to have him say about the office jobs, "Ma, you know you don't want to do that!" So I decided to continue farming, with full knowledge of how much work is involved in starting a new farm. I knew that for the next two years, I would have to work harder than I had ever worked in my life.

THROUGH OUR CSA,
WE ADD VALUE TO OUR
CROPS BY PROVIDING SERVICE,
QUALITY AND EDUCATION.

The previous winter, I had attended a workshop in Holistic Resource Management, which had helped me clarify my own values. I drafted a set of 3-part goals for the farm I hoped to create:

- quality of life: fresh air, close to nature, working closely with other people, independent (no debt, political, financial or psychological), with time for my family, culture, politics, learning and spiritual growth, human relations on the basis of mutual respect.
- Form of production: organically managed market farm as self-sufficient as possible, with regional links of interdependence with other farms. Excellent quality, sense of order, and calm. Optimal mechanization.
- Future resource base: land regenerated, healthy soil, biodiversity below and above ground, lots of wildlife and not too many close neighbors.

My primary aim was to produce a year round supply of the most alive possible, fresh and stored vegetables for 100 to 200 families with maximum participation, and within ten years to replace myself completely in the role of farmer-organizer. In January, 1998, I returned to the GVOCSA core group with my commitment to continue growing vegetables for them, if we could find a farm.

The core group formed a "Continuity" committee with two sections, one for short term plans, to figure out how to get vegetables for the CSA for that season, and one for long term plans, to help me find a place to farm. The short term committee arranged with 4 other area organic farms to purchase vegetables from them. One CSA member took on the job of receiving weekly faxes from these farms with lists of available crops and prices, and placing orders for the weekly shares. The core decided not to do any outreach to new members, to only serve the 100 or so families who renewed from the previous year, and to set the share price at \$12 a week. This system worked reasonably well. Only one of the four farms wanted help with harvesting from the CSA. The core agreed to organize the members to do their work commitment at the new farm.

The long-term continuity committee helped me find and examine 20 farm properties, which ranged from a bald hillside owned by some close friends to a 60-acre section of the last 400 acres of farmland within the city of Rochester. A tempting site was a 7-acre former farm owned by the Sisters of St. Joseph adjacent to the campus of Nazareth College in a suburb of the city. Farming there, however, would have required building a 15 foot deer fence. An important consideration was the availability of Greg Palmer, who had started as an intern at Rose Valley in 1992, and had worked with me for 6 years. He was willing to become my farm partner, if we found land within commuting distance of his home. Two of the members of the CSA core group taught at a Montessori School where Rebecca Kraai also worked. They mentioned my quest to her. As a result the Kraai family invited Greg and me to consider renting land from them at Crowfield Farm. Since they purchased this 600 acre farm in 1983, the Kraai's had not used any chemicals on the silty loam soils. Their offer included the rental of a barn and the use of equipment. When they agreed to the concept of a 5-year rolling lease, we decided this was our best option.

At the sign-up sessions for the GVOCSA that spring, Greg and I presented a list of all the jobs that would need to be done to turn 15 acres of the Kraai's hay fields and an old barn into what we decided to call Peacework Organic Farm. Members signed up for such tasks as greenhouse design, field lay out, water system design, lease and contract writing, greenhouse, cold frame and packing shed construction, electrical wiring, plumbing, bed preparation, and help moving my belongings to a new home. As soon as I sent off my manuscript for *Sharing the Harvest*, June 1, 1998, Greg and I got started on the new farm.

...

For me, as a farmer, providing produce for people whom I know and with whom I communicate regularly in person and through my writing for the CSA newsletter, is much more satisfying than our previous marketing through stores and restaurants. The workload is more even week by week. When we grew for wholesale markets, we harvested and sold more than half of our crops in the months of September and October which went by in a stressful blur of telephone calls to customers, picking, packing and delivering. I still experience some pressure from the need to supply food every week for 26 weeks, but after 20 years of farming, I am

OUR FARMS CAN SERVE AS THE LABORATORIES
WHERE PEOPLE LEARN IN CONCRETE TERMS
HOW TO SHARE POWER AND RESPONSIBILITY
FOR THE MOST BASIC ELEMENTS OF OUR LIVES,
OUR FOOD, OUR WORK, OUR EDUCATION,
AND OUR ENVIRONMENT.

fairly confident, that, barring disaster, I can do this. The promise that we ask of our members to share the risk with us has been put to the test a few times. In 1992, much of our farm was under water for several weeks. After five inches of rain on already saturated fields, we proposed to the Core group that we close down for the season and give the members their money back. The Core stuck to their promise to share the risks of farming with us and said if we could supply even one item a week, they would be satisfied. Members were more worried about us than

about how much food they received. Their moral support — and offers of money — got us through that terrible season. They slogged with us through the mud, and at the end of the season dinner, gave us something farmers rarely experience from their customers — a standing ovation.

Our first two years at our new farm, we have suffered through the worst drought in decades, and this year of wet and cold. We started this season two weeks early, by growing the first crops of lettuce and oriental greens in a 22 by 96 foot hoop house. When it came time to harvest from open ground, all that was ripe were radishes. After much wringing of hands, for the only time in 12 years, we cancelled shares for a week. Our members responded with messages such as, "Please don't worry about the shares being light, the quality is fantastic (especially the incredible greens), and with the kind of rain we have had, how could anything thrive!!! Thank you for your wonderful work, as always." "I know it's probably caused you a fair amount of stress to have all this wet weather and have to skip a week of distribution, so I wanted to let you know that although I will miss the veggies, I am actually happy to experience a real-life consequence of the weather. I'm just getting back into gardening after a few years without a garden, and my work is completely indoor stuff, so I celebrate the fact that the moves of nature mean something concrete to me, even if I won't get any spinach."

Through our CSA, we add value to our crops by providing service, quality and education. Member participation definitely helps build loyalty to the farm. Being a member makes people feel good, a pleasant sense of moral rectitude without having to attend many meetings — they are doing something for the planet just by eating good food. I have been reading through our end of the season survey where we ask members what they liked and disliked and whether they plan to join up for another year. The most common complaint is that the farm is so far from the city that members don't get to spend as much time on the farm as they would like.

There is a high level of appreciation with comments such as: “I’ve seen the CSA as increasingly important, and have increased in admiration (awe) of our farmers and dedicated core members.” “I’m proud of being a member. I tell people about it all the time. It’s good for the soul. I am so grateful for it.” The opportunity for their children to learn about where their food comes from is a frequent theme in the responses. “The CSA is a treat to belong to. Our family loves the experience of being on the farm and being a part of bringing our food from land to table.”

For this season, we expanded membership from 165 to 240 families so that we could afford to hire Greg’s wife Ammie. That is as big as we want to get. As it is, we are at the outer limit of the kind of intimacy with our members that we enjoy. We want to concentrate on doing a high quality job of providing for this number of shares and of running our farm as a collective. Our business principles are perhaps the most radical aspect of our farming. The dogma of American business is Grow or Die. We seek to establish a dynamic equilibrium based on the carrying capacity of our land and of our life energies. With each year, we hope to become more deeply imbedded in helping to provide for local food security. Last year, a drug recovery program that runs a house for 20 women and seven children joined our CSA. For next year, a community residence for developmentally disabled people is going to join. Any food that is not picked up by members goes to feed the homeless.

Last winter, the CSA held a retreat. All of us from the farm, including the Kraais, and 14 members spent a day reflecting on where we have been together and where we would like to go. Our visions merged into the broad outlines of an earth education center based on the entire farm protected for perpetuity by a land trust. Weaving together the overarching themes from the Retreat, we wrote this vision statement: “We envision the creation of a land-based community of people of diverse ages, backgrounds and incomes, farmers and non-farmers, who are committed to love, justice, equality, democracy, and cooperation, and who honor the intrinsic value of nature, labor and food. The members of this community will work gently together to learn and teach others to live sustainably, in the broadest sense, for the health of all living creatures and the planet. We will practice an agriculture that supports a whole, healthy, sustainable and loving community.” We have a lot of resources and many talented and skilled people — it will be interesting to see how this will evolve.

Several of the better established CSAs around the US are moving in similar directions. Angelic Organics has formed a not for profit education program. Silver Creek offers farm tours and programs for inner city children.

The Hartford Food System CSA supplies half of its production to community organizations in the city of Hartford and fundraises energetically to be able to bring inner city youngsters to the farm.

CSA projects are a small part of a growing movement in the US for a sustainable food system and for sustainable communities. The National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture, formed to influence the 1990 Farm Bill, has gained the endorsement of 5000 groups and organizations ranging in size from 30 member CSAs to the 300,000 member National Farmers Union and the 1 million member Humane Society. Within this movement, CSAs play a special role. Our farms can serve as the laboratories where people learn in concrete terms how to share power and responsibility for the most basic elements of our lives — our food, our work, our education, and our environment. At the Northeast CSA conference in 1999, Marty Strange, one of the founders of the Center for Rural Affairs and author of *The Family Farm*, talked about CSA as a partnership that transforms. There is no end to the struggle to redefine this partnership to make it good for people and their relationship to the land. As an economist, Strange sees the meaning of this sharing of the risks of production as CSA’s competitive advantage. He challenged us to resist the market forces that drive CSA toward the subscription approach so that we can take back the organic movement from its role as supplier of food for the privileged. The seven principles of cooperatives provide us with a useful guide for our organizations :

1. open membership
2. democratic control
3. return of surplus to members
4. limited rate of return on investment
5. belief in education
6. cooperation among coops
7. work for sustainability

A while back, I asked you look around the room and introduce yourselves to someone you don,t know. When we are alone on our farms or gardens, it is easy to become depressed. The forces of the global supermarket seem so overwhelmingly powerful. But look at who we are gathered here together. We have incredible powers of vision and creativity and capacity for hard work. Gandhi said somewhere — “You must be the change you want to see in the world.” Building our CSAs, we have the inspiring opportunity to learn together how to balance the environmental, the economic and the social, to empower ourselves to create the liberated territory that will survive this era of globalization and bring us into a world of peace, where, instead of bombs and missiles, people will exchange seeds and recipes.

José Bové is a French sheep farmer and a member of Confédération Paysanne, an organization that promotes a vision of agriculture that takes consumers' concerns to heart and focuses on alternate ways to produce which create new jobs for farmers and preserve the environment. Bové led the Confédération Paysanne in their protests at the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle. His recent book is titled "Le monde n'est pas une marchandise" (The world is not a consumer item).



THE EARTH IS NOT FOR SALE: FIGHTING THE COMMODIFICATION OF AGRICULTURE

José Bové

First of all, we in our movement never use the term “farmer”; we prefer the term “peasant.” It’s a term that was chosen in the early 1970s in reaction to the terms “farmer,” “farm operator,” which suggested a mode of production in which farm capitalists owned their own assets and their goal was to yield a profit. In contrast, peasants are people who live on the land and, by working it in a certain manner, bring the land to life. They then pass the land, as an implement, on to their descendents or to the next generation.

In the early 1970s, in a convergent rather than a coordinated fashion, two important movements came into being. One, begun in 1971, was called the Peasants of the Larzac, a plateau region in southern central France. The term “peasant” was used to clearly show that they were rooted on the land, which they were defending against the aggression of the State, which wanted to evict them. Simultaneously, the Working Peasants movement was born in the western part of France, the Loire and Brittany regions, all the way across the country. This movement was created by peasants, “farm operators,” who had understood that the system they belonged to was trying to crush them; that they were to be eliminated, spelling disaster for the farmers, the environment and the consumers. There was this synergy, then, in two places with different agricultural realities. In one case, the people rose up to reject the government’s attempt to manage people’s lives without their consent; in the other, people were realizing that the ten-year-old European agricultural policy was already

off on the wrong foot. If allowed to continue as is, it would mean the catastrophic elimination of the peasant and disaster for consumers.

These two movements met up in 1973 at a demonstration called the Great March of the Larzac, from which there emerged a popular movement. For the first time, the word “peasant” in France took on progressive connotations. An important statement was made by peasant leader Bernard Langlais at that time: “Never more will peasants be the ‘Versaillais’ of our society; never more will peasants oppose those who seek to change society.” It was a revolution in our perception of the farmer, perpetually regarded as a conservative. The Versaillais, for those who don’t know, were the army led by Adolphe Thiers, President of France, that drowned the popular revolution known as the Commune in a bloodbath in 1871. Many of the soldiers were rural peasants. Mr. Langlais’s statement meant that the peasants of today are affirming their role as people who work for social change.

It has been a long process, that of making peasants genuine agents of social change once again. This potential had been forgotten, even denied to some extent within political circles — and even by the more progressive segments of the left. The left has tended to think of peasants as people who opposed social movements by their nature; it was only in cities, they asserted, that things could change.

Yet when we look at the peasant struggles and movements around the world today, a deeply radical current of thought is evident in this will to alter the relations of production. We can see it today in the emergence of the Landless Peasants Movement in Brazil, or the movement of Indian peasants trying to keep out genetically modified organisms (GMOs). In fact, this radical tendency has become much reduced in industrial unionism, which—to use a nice and not too negative word—has become reformist.

At the outset, we were dealing with conflicts involving the loss of peasant identity; that is, peasants no longer had any socioeconomic status. This was manifest above all in what is called integration. The role of the poultry producer is to deliver the goods; the economic operator provides the chicks and the feed, and when the chickens are grown, he picks up the product and pays the producer a fee per chicken. Industrial pig farms work the same way. Thus, our initial campaigns strove to defend the economic rights of these peasants who had no collective bargaining power vis-à-vis their upstream supplier or their downstream distributor. We needed collective agreements; it should not be up to each person to negotiate individually. We have an economic role, and therefore we must have a social role, i.e. rights. It is intolerable that the price of our labour should be dictated to us.

That was the starting point. Little by little, as we reflected on the need for this status, we pushed our demands further. We began to see this new status of the peasants as something practically unprecedented, since it is tied to the industrialization of agriculture. It is not merely a social problem. It is a problem with the very way we conceptualize agriculture. And we would not have come to that point if we had not been caught up in a process with the European Common Agricultural Policy, in an overall process of agricultural industrialization. We felt that perhaps we had to go beyond protest and advocacy to reflect on our production methods themselves — in a word, on our way of being peasants.

And so, questioning the productivist mentality in agriculture meant thinking in broader terms than social and status issues, agricultural financing: it also meant asking ourselves questions like “How, as peasants, must we act? What is our relationship to work ?

What is our relationship to the land? What is our relationship to the environment?” If we want to get away from productivism, we need a comprehensive answer to these questions. Starting in the 1980s, our strategizing and our actions led toward a definition of what we in

the Confédération Paysanne refer to today as “peasant agriculture.”

The first symbolic manifestation was to hold a press conference where peasants explained that the industry had forced them to inject their veal with hormones. This triggered a vast consumer movement led by the Federal Consumers Union in France, still remembered as the “veal hormone boycott.” This movement spread to other European countries, and by 1987, people were demanding a ban on all hormones in animal production (cyclists excluded!). For Europeans, this was a real victory against the industrial mode of production—a truly emblematic victory.

So it was not by accident that in 1999, almost twenty years after that press conference, when the World Trade Organization (WTO) condemned Europe’s refusal to import US hormone-containing beef, people were aware of the issues. The WTO authorized the US to recover the lost income from these exports by taxing various products. As you probably know, the United States is allowed to draw up a list of European products subject to a 100 percent tariff, so that the price of a product doubles as soon as it enters the US. For example, a kilogram of cheese selling for 100 francs costs the US consumer 200 francs. You can imagine what effect this has on your sales. These are trade sanctions designed to sink the European market. And they are not leveled against Europe as a political union but, more insidiously, against the producers themselves, in the hope that the latter will turn to the European Community and say: “We are being held hostage to a decision of the European community. Please give in so that we can continue to sell our products.”

One of the products in question is quite an emblematic product indeed. In my opinion, the CIA people did not do their jobs properly, because they decided to tax Roquefort. Roquefort, as you know, is the most famous French cheese. Its origins as a reserved name officially recognized by Parliament date back to 1925, the same year Champagne was given that recognition. These products can only be made within a given geographic area, with a certain race of animal and under a given set of specifications. The United States made a tactical mistake by taxing Roquefort, regarded by the French as the king of cheeses, and a very

strong symbol of a different form of agriculture. So we had Europe and Roquefort on one side and hormone-laced beef on the other, and between them, a real fight in the 1980s. And where the CIA people really slipped up, is that Roquefort is produced in the Larzac, where

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we kept the army at bay for ten years!

All this to say that what happened in 1999 didn't just materialize out of thin air. It was the result of a long struggle by people who got organized and created small peasant organizations around 1980–1983 with peasant workers on one side and peasant

unions on the other, who merged in 1987 to create the Confédération Paysanne. The purpose was to organize the peasants into a different model than that of the single union. Here in Québec, I discovered that you have a “single union” type law, which you find beneficial. In France too, we were governed by such a law, and we only won the first decree recognizing agricultural trade union pluralism in 1989—and that law only took effect in 1999. So we're not far ahead of Québec, and you are very likely to make progress in that area too; in any case, pluralism is inevitable. We can talk about this during the question period, the need for peasants to do their own organizing and not to accept the logic of a single movement, as if there were only a single sort of peasant. The people who assert this are the ones who want to eliminate all the other kinds, but you already know this better than I do, given the system you live with here. The debate with the Minister of Agriculture that I witnessed earlier on was eloquent in that regard.

In 1987, we created the Confédération Paysanne, which led us to reflect on the purpose of the peasant “trade” and the nature of our counter-conception to productivist industrial agriculture. We deliberately employed this term of “peasant agriculture,” which may seem a little strange since, theoretically, it could almost mean the same thing. But we felt that a term was needed that could encompass something much broader than a mode of production. The organic agricultural movement had already existed in France for more than thirty years, but we argued that peasant agriculture is more than just organic agriculture. Let me explain. Organic agriculture pays attention to the method of production, with consideration for the environment; it's a way of understanding soil tillage, amendments, and routine agricultural practice in general. Organic agriculture overlaps peasant agriculture, but peasant agriculture cannot be reduced to a method of production, even though that is fundamental, even though it is by means of that method that consumers receive quality products. In other words, French peasants can claim to do peasant agriculture even if they do not practice organic agricul-

FROM THE PRODUCTIVIST STANDPOINT, IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE WHETHER 10 FARMERS PRODUCE 100,000 LITRES OF MILK EACH, OR ONE FARMER PRODUCES THE WHOLE MILLION. IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE WHETHER THE MILK IS ORGANIC OR NOT. THE QUANTITY PRODUCED IS THE SAME. BUT IN TERMS OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION, IT DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE. THE WAY WE STRUCTURE EMPLOYMENT, FARMS, THE ACT OF PRODUCTION, ALL OF THIS HAS AN IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT [AND] THE LANDSCAPE.

ture. For us, the labour organization aspect is equally important. We say that we belong to the peasant trade, that our job is to produce quality products, to feed sufficient numbers of people. However, “peasant agriculture” also refers to employment status and income, to the assertion that as large as possible a number of peasants should

be able to make a living from their work. For us, the social and employment dimensions count. In any form of agriculture — even organic — production volume is an important factor, but of equal or greater importance is that this volume be produced by a maximum number of peasants. Production must be distributed, and cannot be concentrated. From the productivist standpoint, it makes no difference whether 10 farmers produce 100,000 litres of milk each, or one farmer produces the whole million. It makes no difference whether the milk is organic or not. The quantity produced is the same. But in terms of social organization, it does make a difference. The way we structure employment, farms, the act of production, all of this has an impact on the environment, the landscape, and a much broader range of aspects than consumer and environmental health, narrowly defined.

The peasant trade has many dimensions, and this multi-dimensionality, conceptualized and developed by the Confédération Paysanne, was then disseminated to other European nations. But we were not talking about multi-dimensionality at the start. We merely said that through the act of production — when we produce a good — the peasant is engaging in more than a mercantile act; the act has non-market dimensions. There are the aspects of environment, land use, labour and even possibly the reception of people returning from the cities. These are some of the non-market functions of a peasant-style organization which are built into and remunerated by the price they are paid for their agricultural products. That is, peasants are paid for the whole range of these dimensions. In contrast, with the industrial agricultural system, prices are kept low so that mass production can be turned to profit and then society as a whole has to repair the collateral damage.

These are two completely different conceptions, and ours is making progress. I think that you can expect it to resurface here in Québec. I think Québécois are starting to understand it, though perhaps not in the same way as the French. We regard the peasant trade as involving more than production, as having more all-encompassing

qualities. We have tried to integrate the environmental, social/employment and production/quality aspects. Another fundamental aspect is that of the transmission of implements. For us, the slogan of the 1970s was, “the land is our implement,” but we have to know how to hand it down.

We have to think about land use arrangements. Earlier on, I brought up the issue of land and leasing. Obviously, if we want young people today, especially those who are not from a peasant background, to work the land without becoming indebted, we must offer them leasing mechanisms. We spoke earlier about collective financing. Another possibility could be tenant-farming arrangements, which seem to be lacking here. Farmers’ tenure and their professional activities would be guaranteed for twenty or thirty years, thus eliminating the insecurity that comes from the possibility of being evicted at any time. This is one of the fundamental land use reforms: land must be thought as an implement, not only as property. How should the land be used? Agriculture is one use, and so the land legacy issue becomes one of the fundamental things we incorporate into peasant agriculture. This is what will make it possible for young people of all backgrounds to settle on the land. And this brings us to the issue of sustainable agriculture — after all, sustainability means more than just soil conservation, it means that preserving the peasantry. Soil conservation when there are no more peasants is fine if you are interested in rare species, but in terms of social interest, it is fairly pointless.

For the Confédération Paysanne, peasant agriculture is often represented by a flower, a daisy ringed with petals. Settlement, social status, land use: all of these are part of the concept, and our objective is to devise a coherent understanding of the whole. This doesn’t mean that we are at the top of a pyramid, but rather that we have to try for this cohesion in our conception of the peasant trade.

Naturally, this has to be put in its economic context. Today, the peasants are not the only ones losing out to the all-powerful “consumer.” In the course of their activities, they also interact with governments and the European Community. Our occupation is completely governed by the agricultural policy of the French government, but even more so and increasingly, by the European Community and the Common Agricultural Policy. In recent years, the struggle has become much more difficult. Agriculture has become integrated, first under GATT, then the WTO with the Marrakech Agreement in 1995. European agricultural policy was reformed in

1992 and then again in 1999 for progressive harmonization with the WTO. Today, we target our demands at the logic of European policy which is tending toward decreasing prices and the unhitching of subsidies from the price paid to the producer. More and more producers obtain their income not from farming but from subsidies paid by the European Community. This raises a fundamental problem about the legitimacy of this occupation and the possibility of handing it down to the next generation. People aren’t usually attracted to a profession that’s propped up by subsidies — they find it a bit perverse. But this is what we are facing: the logic of the WTO, the logic of the Common Agricultural Policy. Also, the subsidies handed out under the Common Agricultural Policy are strongly biased toward the productivist model, with 80 % of the money going to fewer than 20 % of peasants. The producers of grain, milk and red or white meat surpluses receive the bulk of European subsidies. It’s very perverse.

I’ll give you an example relating to these modes of production. A farmer who grows a hectare of corn for silage to feed her cows earns three million French francs per hectare. If she grows grass, opting to participate in a different agricultural process with a more balanced approach, fertilizer-free, etc., she receives three hundred francs per hectare. That is, the distribution of subsidies is political; we promote one process instead of another. Here’s another example, this one related to mad cow disease. In the late 1950s, early 1960s, when the European Union was created, the United States lobbied Europe heavily, saying: “We’ll let you carry on with this Common Agricultural Policy, if you guarantee that our soy can enter Europe without being taxed.” And so it happened. This explains that in the early 1960s, the maritime areas of Europe like Holland, Brittany, Denmark, were packed with industrial pig farms because they were close to the ports. All of these zones are environmentally devastated today. In Holland, the land area

used to feed Dutch pigs is six times larger than the entire land area devoted to soy plantations. There is something wrong here. That is the logic that was negotiated with the US.

OUR ATTEMPTS TO CREATE A PEASANT AGRICULTURE, TO PROMOTE WIDESPREAD EMPLOYMENT IN AGRICULTURE, AND ALSO A CERTAIN MODE OF PRODUCTION: THESE ARE POLITICAL CHOICES.

In 1993, with the preparations for the WTO, we had the Blairhouse Agreement between the United States and Europe, stipulating that Europe is not allowed to produce more than five million hectares of plant protein. Europe has to purchase all the rest abroad. And that is what Europe does today: it imports 70 % of its plant protein, which is utterly ridiculous. Meanwhile, Europe produces more than four million hectares of surplus grain, which it dumps on foreign markets at low prices. This is



a crazy situation. Furthermore, Europe keeps two or three million hectares out of production, supposedly to keep control over the surplus. In the wake of the mad cow crisis, consumers were demanding guarantees of food safety, and Europe, bound by its WTO commitments, didn't have the courage to say, "We have seven or eight million hectares that we can put into plant protein today, and we denounce the Blairhouse Agreement. We will re-Europeanize our agricultural production and break with the logic that began in Marrakech." There are political choices to be made.

Our attempts to create a peasant agriculture, to promote widespread employment in agriculture, and also a certain mode of production: these are political choices. And for political choices to happen, we need a counterbalancing power. That power consists of the peasant organizations and consumer groups that are building ties with them. The movement you represent is taking important steps in that direction. But they will lead nowhere unless the peasants organize, and then we can put pressure on the governments, or even on the larger multinational structures. We can say: "This is what has to be done."

When a minister such as the one we met this afternoon says, "I am powerless, there's not much I can do," that's a convenient stance for him to take — but only if there is no countervailing pressure on him. If you are organized into a real political force, you can make life difficult for him— to take just one example, by staying home on election day instead of going out to vote the way he wants you to. This is the force of a social movement. We must demand that our politicians make the right choices. That is how we will develop forms of agriculture that are acceptable to consumers. Today, as we know, the consumers are on our side. They want this kind of agriculture. But the agro-industrial, agrochemical and pharmaceutical lobbies, all of the lobbies holding up the system, have a colossal amount of power. They are intensely lobbying our cabinet ministers, our governments, and our international institutions, to keep things the same. To change the power dynamics, we have to work for globalization from the grassroots. That is the strength of the movements emerging today — movements among which you have your rightful place.

Thank you.



CHALLENGES OF STARTING UP IN CSA

Yanilou Plante, farmer
Jardin des Anges

Presentation by Yanilou Plante

Yanilou Plante gave us an account of the problems she ran into when starting up a CSA project. She offered suggestions based on her experience.

Around the age of 30, wishing to make her dream of having a farm come true, this economics graduate continued her studies at the Centre de formation de Mirabel. With a DEP in organic market gardening in hand, she approached the Société de financement agricole (SFA), but they denied her financial support, citing her lack of experience and the inadequacy of her personal finances and business plan. She went back to school, completing a program in agricultural business management, with which she hoped to obtain a larger startup grant. This time around, she went to the SFA with an exceptionally good business plan (in fact, it was awarded a prize in a competition). However, Yanilou once again faced a wall of incomprehension. The SFA had no baseline financial data on organic agriculture with which to measure the strength of her plan. Once again she was sent back to the drawing board!

Undeterred, Yanilou found a solution to every problem she met. Since she didn't have the means to buy a farm, renting was the only option available. The CSA concept solved the financial problem created by the denied line of credit. Yanilou was also the first 'client' of the Mirabel agri-food industry business incubator, which gave her a big helping hand in the form of technical assistance. She made the shrewd decision of working at a wholesaler for

six months as a receptionist, in order to gain in-depth knowledge of the organic market. Finally, she launched her business venture, involving home delivery of 150 baskets to regular customers; she later added 38 CSA baskets.

Yanilou Plante's advice:

- Develop a CSA project.
- Establish a realistic long-term plan of action.
- Prepare well (training, business plan).
- Have a financial cushion.
- Seek support wherever you can get it (family, sharers, government).
- Make sure you have the support of your spouse and/or a reliable associate.
- Acquire experience elsewhere.
- Plan for the startup period to last about 5 years. Don't expect it to be smooth sailing from the outset.
- Use the services of educational institutions.
- Make the season's first meeting compulsory to avoid misunderstandings.
- Have a website.
- Be open to having sharers on the farm.

NO MORE POTATOES! THE CHALLENGE OF PLANNING A DIVERSIFIED PRODUCTION

Nicole Rousselle, farmer, Ferme Samson et fils

Michel Jetté, farmer, Les Serres Michel Jetté et Réjeanne Huot

Nicole Rousselle's Presentation

Nicole Rousselle started her CSA project in 1997 with 20 baskets. In the 2000 season, she distributed 80 baskets over 18 weeks, all the same size and at one drop-off point. The diversity of vegetables offered in CSA represents a managerial challenge for Ms. Rousselle. It is very important to plan a good calendar of successive sowings and transplanting, which she develops with the biodynamic calendar. The farm Samson et fils cultivates 30 varieties of vegetables. She also works in collaboration with two other farms to increase the diversity of products offered (products are exchanged between farms), which decreases the managerial workload that comes with diversified cultivation.

Michel Jetté's Presentation

Michel Jetté has had a CSA project for 5 years. He began with 35 baskets and now produces approximately 180 summer baskets and 65 winter baskets (offered until February). He distributes his summer baskets at six drop-off points over 25 weeks. He cultivates 45 varieties of field vegetables as well as vine tomatoes and cucumbers (principally for wholesalers). The great diversity of vegetables cultivated in CSA is also a challenge for Mr. Jetté. To decrease the workload, Michel Jetté's company is part of Biogroupe, which encourages product exchanges between organic producers in the same region. It is also important to note all important information in a workbook (what problems were encountered during the season, which vegetables were

delivered at what time, etc.), because it is impossible to remember all of this information by the next year. Finally, the basket components are different for each drop-off point, which greatly facilitates production management (it is not absolutely necessary to produce a high quality of one variety of vegetable each week).

Discussion Points

- Increasing the variety of products offered would bring a general increase in production costs, as machinery may differ for each category of vegetable. Moreover, we can see that the amount of losses increases, so it is very important that the necessary amount of vegetables produced be well managed.
- Exchanges between farms greatly simplify management, as it is possible to not cultivate all varieties of vegetables and/or to make up for insufficient production.
- Winter baskets do not necessarily bring an increase in the variety of products offered, since they are usually vegetables found at the end of the summer season. One must plan for large quantities, however, and have sufficient available storage space.
- It is impossible to fill all the partners' requirements. One must know where to stop in terms of the varieties of vegetables produced.

CRABGRASS AND POTATO BEETLES: STAYING IN CONTROL

Jaime Quinn, Ferme La Terre bleue, Quebec

Vern Grubinger, Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, University of Vermont

This session ended up concentrating on weeds. Mr. Quinn discussed what works in his farm's conditions: namely heavy, cold soils and relatively scarce labor, while Prof. Grubinger reviewed practices of farmers in diverse situations all over New England.

Jamie Quinn

His farm has 10 acres total plow land, 3 in cash crops in any year. It has rocky, clay soils. He uses permanent beds to provide solid ground for his tractor in the spring and minimal compaction in crop root zones. This required some customization of equipment to his standard bed-width (e.g. seed drill).

He has a six-step tillage system using different methods of cultivation.

Conclusion: To “stay in control”, leave a lot of room to maneuver in your production schedule because timing is everything. He is happy with a tenfold improvement in weed control efficiency since he started. He attributes this to judicious use of tools appropriate to his farm, and looks forward to further gains. He cautioned to plan expansion carefully because it only takes a few missed steps to create a disaster.

Other participants concurred that the most common error in scaling up is neglecting to budget for unavoidable increases in skilled management and skilled labor.

Vern Grubinger

Weed control fundamentals are rotation, sanitation and cultivation.

Rotation: Credits Nordells for the observation that the cover crops should drive farm planning and crop rotation. Decide what are good soil building cover crops then figure out the cash crops that fit well with them. Ideally would like to see half of plowed land in covers annually, at a minimum he would like to see minimal bare land over winter although he recognizes this as a challenge in short season areas. (A participant concurred; in his opinion, the farmers in his area could justify prioritizing cover crops on the basis of weed control alone. Often it is something that is done only “if there is time”.)

Rotation plans can segregate crop families to interrupt insect, disease, and weed life cycles.

Here are some tips for rotation:

- Group crops in “management units” to simplify things on diversified farms.
- Include summer cover crops or fallow periods.
- Use under - or over - sowing to establish cover crops early in short season areas.

Other tips: watch out for complications (example: legumes hosting TPB), don't obsess on ever-increasing organic matter; cycling organic matter and maintaining constant organic matter level may suffice to constantly improve soil structure.

Sanitation:

- buy clean (certified) cover crop seed
- clean equipment between blocks (galinsoga)
- compost to kill weed seeds
(watch out for OG mulches harboring weed seed)

Cultivation:

- Precision cultivation begins with precision planting
(Perfecta for level land, match planters to cultivation system)
- Transplanting is weed control;
you get a jump cultivating.

In conclusion, as organic growers, we don't have a single weed management solution, but are left with Matt Liebmann's "many little Hammers", which can be categorized into "Rotation, Sanitation, Cultivation", with rotation being the key, and the key to rotation being to follow the Nordells' dictum: "Cover crops drive the rotation."

STRATEGIES FOR EXTENDING THE SEASON: DISCUSSION ON ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES

Vern Grubinger, Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, University of Vermont
Roger Samson, REAP-Canada

Summary: This session developed into two discussions. The first was Vern's overview of season extending techniques with an emphasis on design considerations for built structures. Then Roger led a brainstorming session on techniques using little or no capital or energy input.

Vern's view:

Noting that season extension runs from very low-tech or no-tech to extremely high-tech, Vern told us that the average farm he sees has a range of strategies from the middle of the spectrum, often row covers, unheated polytunnels, and a heated structure on the same operation, with the typical farm having one to two acres of season extended production to complement thirty-five or so acres of field production.

Which ones you chose will follow more easily when you can clearly state the goals you're trying to accomplish with them: know the product, the competition, the price, the customer and the market window. Typical crop choices Vern sees are tomatoes, ornamentals and budding plants, and cucumbers. As for row covers, he sees a trend towards more fabric, less clear poly.

Greenhouse design tips:

- Observe building codes
- Many farmers use greenhouse as a retail sales area
- Unheated polytunnels speed the growth more than they provide frost protection, same daily low temperatures, higher daily temperatures, many growers add heat or a second poly skin.

- Ventilation is critical to avoid diseases. Heat the house in the morning, and then open ventilation and blow out all the hot air, which will carry moisture. Out-ridge vents are best, roll-us side limit you to seventeen inches width.
- Other disease prevention tips: benches, bottom heating, drip or bottom watering, sterile potting mix
- Site your greenhouse to maximize air and water drainage
- As for insects, freeze-out kills bugs and host weeds scout for pests "before you see a cloud".

Roger on no-tech strategies:

The group generated a list of crops that are candidates for unprotected late harvest, row-cover or straw mulch protected harvest, and over-wintering for spring harvest. Crops that can all be left late with no protection and pushed later with straw and/or rowcovers:

Roots: carrot, parsnip, rutabaga, turnip, celeriac, winter radish, salsify, sunchoke

Greens: mache, arugula, lettuce, napa and other asian brassis, chicories, spinach, cabbage, kale

Others: leeks, green onions, kohlrabi, perennial herbs

Crops for overwintering:

Perennial herbs: sorrel, oregano, chives, etc

Overwintering herbs: parsnip, mulched carrots, leeks

Others: Egyptian onions, sunchokes

One participant pointed out that farmers in his area are using sandbags to secure rowcovers. Another said she has an early distribution day to give out rootcellared and overwintered crops to her CSA so they have these to supplement early CSA shares in June (which can be monotonously leafy).



HOW MUCH IS A BASKET WORTH? STRATEGIES FOR DETERMINING SHARE PRICE.

Elizabeth Henderson, Peacework Organic farm

Presentation:

When you are trying to determine the share pricing for the CSA there are many factors that need to be evaluated and understood before a price can be established. Because there are so many different ways to approach CSA it really becomes a very individual process. Goals need to be developed to determine how much of your life you are going to devote to the farm and if other goals are in your life off the farm, they need to be considered. If it seems that the farm will be your only income then you want it to be large enough so you are assured a fair income 100-150 shares. If you have other goals then you want your CSA small enough to allow you to keep your life in balance. Elizabeth feels that 1 acre can yield 20-40 shares, therefore 5 acres can support a family if they run a large 150-200 member CSA.

The following are different systems that were discussed to establishing your price per basket or per share:

- Based on farmer's market price. Add up the average price for a basket in the spring, summer and fall and then divide by three to establish price.
- Subscription farm. Also based on farmer's market prices, this is when a dollar value is given at the beginning of the season and produce is deducted from this. The season length is then determined when a certain value has been given.
- The budget approach. When the members have access to and pass the CSA budget. Then two things can happen in this scenario. Either the members can

bid until they meet the proposed budget or the CSA members can contract to sell as many shares to meet that budget. These two approaches were a key point of discussion, as they must have a core involvement group for success.

Member participation builds loyalty and strengthens the connection of consumer to farmer to the land that sustains them. The core group at Peacework farm consists of 9 members. They work closely with Elizabeth to identify what their skills are and how they can contribute, then they are assigned a very clear task for the season. They are given job descriptions and a clear outline, including hours. Most importantly they are given responsibility and the ability to be creative within their task. The tasks range from organizing the web site to the treasurers all of the administrative tasks are undertaken by the core group. This high level of efficiency cuts down the number of hours tremendously for Elizabeth and her partners, they can concentrate more on the farm. Every share works. The time commitment for the other members is 17 hours, 2 on the farm and 5 distribution, or the members commit to 3 days on the farm. Members are given a handout as to how to come to the farm. The farm is also equipped with extra gloves and boots.

A scholarship fund is also a key aspect of the CSA. Basically members contribute to a capital fund which is used for large purchases for the farm and also towards the scholarship fund. The fund is accessed by members who are experiencing economic changes. They may access the fund for the entire season or just for a few

weeks. There is a CSA cookbook designed for the CSA by Elizabeth and David Stern. Two dollars from each sale goes towards the scholarship fund.

Discussion

Holistic Resource Management is an approach that Elizabeth and her partner have towards the farm and towards all decision making. It considers the economic, personal and spiritual aspects of decisions. They have goals in each of these areas; this type of decision making allows them to revisit these regularly. This approach is out of New Mexico. More info can be given from Elizabeth's web site <www.gvocsa.org>.

The quantity for each box varies from 8-12 items for a large box and 5-7 for a half share. It is a matter of balance between green and non-green eaters. Members are given an option to purchase more greens each week, also chicken, eggs and buffalo meat.

The core group organizes several events throughout the season. There is a may day celebration each spring, a few socials after the pick up at the distribution point and an annual pot luck dinner at the end of each season.

Conclusion

The core group really is the crown jewel of this CSA. Not only do CSAs with core groups net on average, \$10 000 more per season, they are generally more efficient and the commitment from year to year by the members is stronger. This form of CSA is not for everyone but if it is, the community that develops and the deep enrichment that stems from having a core group is very special for both the farmer and the consumer. Peacework is a shining example of this.

Workshops



COMMUNICATION BETWEEN FARMERS AND SHARERS: AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT FOR SUCCESS

Joscelyne Charbonneau, farmer, Jardins de la montagne

Joscelyne Charbonneau is a market gardener at Jardins de la montagne in Rougemont. She has been a farmer for 18 years and an organic farmer for 4. She has been a member of the Équiterre CSA network for the last 3 years. In 1999, her farm produced 192 weekly baskets for her sharers.

There are two sets of motivations for participants to attend this workshop: They want to know what sorts of communication problems arise with sharers and, as well, how to convey the information necessary to educate and sensitize sharers to the issues of organic agriculture.

What constitutes good communication?

It is important to be clear, precise, expressive, warm, concise, respectful and welcoming.

Avoid long monologues and vague language.

Methods of contact and communication:

1. First meeting of the season: Present the farm and its produce and describe how the project works. People really appreciate visuals. Describe the relationship between the sharers and the farm and don't be shy about interacting with the meeting participants: discuss the concept of sharing in the risk in a way that is sensitive to the sharers' concerns. Tell them about the produce, both the positive and negative aspects (e.g., harvest is dependent on weather conditions; certain crops are particularly sensitive).

Problems: To avoid conflictive situations, it is important to establish clear rules. Know your limits and your sharers' limits. Remember that people have limited attention spans.

Make sure that your sharers are not being taken advantage of: when the harvest is poor, the sharers should not be the only ones shouldering the risk.

2. Written communication: First, for people who did not attend the initial meeting, give a concise information sheet and highlight the important points. Phone calls can be used to clarify important information (date of first delivery, time and location of drop-off point). Second, newsletters are a way of keeping in touch with sharers. You can include articles on how to prepare unfamiliar vegetables.

It is important to emphasize that people cease to be "customers" as such when they become "sharers". This new status should be acknowledged by involving sharers in the project as much as possible (encourage participation by providing sufficient information). Don't forget to mention some of the drawbacks of this system: some vegetables delivered week after week, some of the vegetables are unfamiliar (share ideas on how to cook them).

3. Drop-off point: Welcome sharers with a smile. Get to know them on a first-name basis. Write a weekly information sheet with useful information, e.g. "melons and zucchinis need 110 growing days". Provide information

on how to keep the vegetables from spoiling: “Potatoes should be stored in the dark... Tomatoes, if kept in the fridge, lose their flavour and vitamins”. The recipe of the week should be easy to follow, and all of the ingredients should be in the basket. Always add a sprig of fresh herbs to the baskets to encourage culinary creativity. Try to provide the information your sharers want to know.

Don't be afraid to state your limits. “If I'm honest with them, they will be honest with me.” Respect individual philosophies and try, insofar as possible, to meet your sharers' needs. If there is a misunderstanding, don't hesitate to return a check. An unhappy sharer may spoil your good humour — which is important for healthy sharer/farmer relationships.

4. Visiting the farm: On their first visit to the farm, sharers do not work: It is strictly an “open-farm” visit. With this approach, sharers more readily come back to the farm. Respect their needs and rhythms as a matter of course.

The cost of a basket may be reduced for sharers who participate in project activities such as farmwork, helping out at the drop-off point or making phone calls. The discount, though, should be provided as an end-of-season rebate, not up front: i.e., participants can get a \$50 rebate if they have participated in the project.

CORE GROUPS: SHARERS AT THE HEART OF A CSA PROJECT

Elizabeth Henderson, farmer, Peacework Organic Farm, NY

Presentation by Elizabeth Henderson

Elizabeth Henderson and her 2 partners on Peacework Organic Farm, in New York State, provide 240 baskets of organic vegetables every week to the members of their Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm project. This is Elizabeth Henderson's second CSA farm, having now grown from an original 31 shares (2 farmers and 2 shares, making up a core group of 4 people), to a two-day per week distribution system with a core group of 24 people drawn, from about 500 members who hold the 240 shares. All CSA members of Peacework Organic Farm, except those participating in the core group, are required to work 12 hours on the farm, where they then transport the produce into the city to the distribution point. Each member is also required to spend 5 hours, during the season, helping with the weekly food distribution.

The core group is a vital part of Peacework Organic Farm whose duties range from distribution chief, membership recruiting, treasurer, registrar (mailing list), special orders (chicken, eggs, buffalo, grape juice, wine, etc.), to the social director (end-of-season banquet), new-member buddy system coordinator, newsletter, telephone, and poster making. More than an advisory group, this core group is given a real share of the responsibilities of the CSA project. The members of the core group sign up at the beginning of the year and hold meetings every month all year round, except December. Clear explanations of the individual responsibilities and the number of

hours required enables people to know beforehand what they are embarking upon. The other members sign up for work slots at the farm and on distribution, at the beginning of the season.

Peacework Organic Farm sets its annual budget and then divides the number of shares that it can accommodate within that budget. They have established a scholarship fund from the sales of *The Food Book*, by Elizabeth Henderson (pictures of vegetables, history, storage, nutritional value, and recipes), to allow families in critical economic situations to continue as members of the CSA group. They also offer a sliding scale of \$11, \$14, and \$17 per week that the members choose from, according to their economic situation, as the price of the seasonal share. This system has miraculously worked so far to cover the farm budget for each season.

Peacework Organic Farm web-site: <www.gvocsa.org>

Discussion

Daniel Lass has done a study of 50 CSAs in the American Northeast and his preliminary findings suggest that most CSA farms are undercharging, and that those farms with core groups net around \$10,000 more a year because of the better organization that these core groups provide.

is the address for the Robyn Van En Center for CSAs which offers technical support in the form of free telephone conversations, then \$20/hour for consultations involving travel to farms. The center also offers slide

shows and has a video that is available for rent. Elizabeth Henderson is inviting submissions of interesting writing from CSA newsletters to include in a book she intends to publish to help fund this CSA center.

Peacework Organic Farm has a project to possibly integrate with an urban neighborhood project in Rochester, run by the Northeast Neighbourhood Association, which this summer hired 7 teenagers who garden on 2 1/2 acres and sell their vegetables from a booth. This garden would become a CSA group, with Peacework Organic Farm producing part of the produce.

BOTH FEET ON THE GROUND: SHARERS WORKING ON THE FARM

Elizabeth Henderson, farmer, Peacework Organic Farm
Frédéric Fournier, sharer, Cadet-Roussel Farm

Presentation by Elizabeth Henderson

Elizabeth Henderson began by stating that farmers should not be shy about asking sharers to work on the farm. At Peaceworks, sharers agree to work for three 4-hour days during the season. This agreement is written into the contract signed by the sharers at the start of the season. It is simply a matter of being organized and clearly defining what we expect. At Peaceworks, a schedule is handed out at the beginning of the season. It indicates the days each sharer is expected to work on the farm or at the drop-off point. The sharers also receive written recommendations about bringing children to the farm and about the farmwork itself (e.g., how to dress, insects, snacks, etc.). The sharers' participation in farm work is largely managed by the core group, who make the phone calls and organize additional work groups on behalf of the farmer. Sharers have to travel for an hour to get to the farm and are given work that is clearly defined and easy for the farmer or apprentice to supervise: weeding, planting, harvesting, removing rocks from the fields, etc. The farmer's workload is lightened; she gets moral support and the chance to teach people about agriculture. The sharers experience a feeling of satisfaction and a sense that they really share some of the responsibility with the farmer. That is why we do not speak of "volunteers" but rather "sharers": to convey the idea that in some sense the farm belongs to everyone.

Presentation by Frédéric Fournier

The Cadet-Roussel project asks that sharers work for 8 hours during the season. If they are unable to participate, \$50 is added to the cost of their share. The carrot and leek harvest days are the two "main events", when more than 100 sharers are busy at the farm. The day ends with a large communal meal followed by an evening of song and amusement. Most sharers choose to do farmwork. They enjoy getting in touch with the land and the animals, and being a part of the extended Cadet-Roussel family.

Points discussed

- The farmers are apparently afraid of asking too much of their sharers. They worry that the latter's presence may hinder the smooth operation of the farm.
- There is a lot of interest in the role of the CSA core group.
- Participation should no longer be considered volunteer work, but rather an inherent part of the CSA agreement.

Conclusion

Sharer participation in the work of the farm is a basic component of CSA projects. In order for CSA projects to fully meet the objective of bringing farmers and consumers together, it might be beneficial for everyone to involve sharers officially when they sign their contracts at the start of the season.



THE PASSIONATE PARTNERSHIP: INCREASING LOYALTY BETWEEN SHARER AND FARMERS

Robert St-Arnaud, farmer, Campanipol farm

Campanipol was one of the first farms in Québec to use baskets, which was well before the creation of the CSA network. The farm now delivers 300 baskets every two weeks. Interest in this project was born out of the difficulty of having diversified agriculture when selling to distributors. It was thus necessary to search for partners, which was a difficult step and required billing daily for vegetables in order to reassure them.

For two years now, Campanipol has retained 85 % of its partners from year to year, and in its last survey 95 % of people were found to be satisfied. Various methods are used for satisfying partners. Firstly, if a vegetable would not qualify for a store, it does not go in the basket. In terms of presentation, vegetables are packaged and placed in a labelled basket left at the drop-off point, since nobody is present when baskets are collected. They also offer a diversity of products while assuring a continuity of standard vegetables in each delivery. The season is regular in length, being 22 to 24 weeks long.

Since communication with people is a priority, a note is slipped into each basket offering news from the farm, information on the vegetables and occasionally recipes. As well, partners are brought together in two annual meetings where they can evaluate the program (participation rate of 20 %). Since the farm's location is not accessible for everyone, continuous contact with the farm is ensured through telephone, fax and e-mail. For those who are interested, two days at the farm are set aside for collecting potatoes and strawberries. On top of all of this, they offer add-on services, which are monthly

accounts (people pay monthly) and the possibility of subtracting or adding other regional products (frozen chicken, cheese, maple products, etc.). All of this comes at an attractive price.

Although he is satisfied with CSA, Mr. St-Arnaud also offered the flip side of the coin. Basket preparation and administrative follow-up are demanding. As well, it is difficult to develop a real partnership with those who do not fully understand the concept. All of this makes profitability uncertain... There are thus adjustments to make in basket prices, in reinforcing the partnership aspect, and of course in continuing to improve the quality of production, work techniques and services.

INNOVATIVE DISTRIBUTION STRATEGIES

Jim Sluyter, farmer, Five Springs Farm, Michigan

Tara Lindsay, CSA Coordinator, LifeCycles, BC

Scott Chaskey, farmer, Quil Hill Farm/Peconic Land Trust, NY

Jim Sluyter

Market-style distribution

At Five Springs Farm, the sharers mostly live within 20 miles and come to the farm to pick up their share every week. Vegetables are laid out “market-style”, where sharers are given a lot of choice, for instance between beets or chard. This system has evolved from the understanding that sharer satisfaction increases along with choice. Vegetables are allocated by either quantity or weight. People are generally very conservative in taking produce, worried that they will take more than their share, and usually by the end there are leftovers which latecomers are encouraged to take. Some people come early for the best choice, some come later for quantity.

Other farmers use a ‘debit system’ in which each vegetable is given a value and partners have a total ‘credit’ which they use to determine the total quantity of vegetables to take home.

Tara Lindsay

Box system

The LifeCycles CSA program is essentially a multi-farm CSA involving four fairly small farms (all less than one acre) in the Victoria area. Each week the farmers bring their produce to the LifeCycles office, and each week a different farmer is responsible for sorting produce into shares. LifeCycles gets 20 % of total revenue of the CSA, for staff costs, with the other 80 % going to farmers. The project is currently competing with a large organic box

program which gets most of its vegetables from California (though claiming to use local produce “when-ever possible”). Unfortunately, most people in Victoria don’t realize the difference between food box programs and CSAs. Farm tours and work parties are held on a rotating basis to each farm.

Most boxes are picked up directly by sharers at LifeCycles’ offices. Many of the boxes are delivered by bike (at an extra cost to partner) via a big bike trailer, which can hold sixteen CSA shares. The trailer is owned by LifeCycles (value: \$1600) but is also leased to a bike delivery service in Victoria.

Scott Chaskey

Sharer harvesting

At Quil Hill Farm, there is no distribution: partners come to the farm to harvest for themselves. There are currently 150 partners, all of whom live within fifteen miles. Partners can come on either Saturday or Tuesday, between 8a.m. and 5:30p.m. A welcome table near the parking area explains which crops are ready and where they are on the farm. At the beginning of the season, new members are required to take a 1.5 hour long introductory tour of the farm with the farmer to see how things are run. Bulk vegetables, such as potatoes, get harvested by farmers and interns, and transported to a central space on the farm. The layout of the farm is pretty dispersed, having fields scattered in the area up to five miles away.

The system of having partners harvest reduces farm labour by about 1.5 to 2 days per week. But the real goal behind this is to get the partners connected to the land more closely. This system also asserts the 'openness' of the farm, rather than the dominant 'closed', private aspect of most farms.

One of the challenges of this system involves ensuring that popular crops are not over-harvested, or harvested too early, such as red peppers before they turn colour, and onions. These are sometimes grown in separate fields. But partners generally do not over-harvest. "The only policemen you need are the members themselves". Another challenge is to design seed beds and farm layout to facilitate manual harvest by non-farmers.

COOPERATION BETWEEN COMMUNITY GROUPS OR BUSINESSES AND CSA PROJECTS

Shana Berger, CSA coordinator, Just Food, NY.

Moira O'Reilly, former co-owner, Le Petit Prince store.

Presentation by Shana Berger

Just Food was founded in 1995 to address the issues of food access, the lack of education about the food system, and the demise of local farming in the New York City Area. Aside from work in community gardens and developing marketing strategies for farmers, Just Food has also been facilitating the growth of 13 CSA projects, which involve farms within 2-3 hours of NY. In 1999, it was noticed that the CSAs were involving primarily upper income sectors of the NY population, and were not fulfilling the goals of JustFood to address food access issues. A strategy was developed to involve already-existing community groups that work with communities in which good food access is a problem. These include settlement houses for new immigrants and refugees, youth groups, cultural centres, welfare rights groups, and community centres. There are now 13 farmers involved, 20 groups, and 2100 sharers.

“When it works, it works well”. Success has come from the integration of the CSA into other roles that the community group provides. Some of the challenges have involved a lack of funding (each community group requires a ‘CSA coordinator’ that must work between 20 and 30 hours per week), and the prioritizing of ‘making sales’ over the educative aspect of the CSA.

Presentation by Moira O'Reilly

Though one of the goals of CSAs is partly to “eliminate the middle man”, there is a role that small retailers can play in facilitating CSA projects. Stores could take on the

traditional role of a general store, acting as a nexus for community interaction, education, and development. Hosting and administrating a CSA at a small business can provide benefits to farmers, consumers, and retailers.

For farmers:

- Transfer of administrative duties to retail store (no need for a core group).
- Higher profile of the drop-off point.

For small business:

- An increase in both customers and sales (during the first year of the CSA at Le Petit Prince, fruits and veggies sales doubled).

For CSA partners:

- Being able to purchase other goods that are not usually part of CSA, but are available at food store.

One of the challenges for this development is the trend within the health food industry towards ‘nutraceutiques’ and techno-food.

Points of discussion:

- There is an ever-present danger that the market economy could subsume CSA projects
- Care needs to be taken when responding to consumer demands in order not to uproot the original principles of CSAs, such as education and farmer security
- Having intermediary organizations such as community groups or businesses can sometimes threaten the

direct contact between farmer and partner. Extra care must be taken to maintain this relationship, for instance, by organizing ‘meet-your-farmer’ potlucks and farm tours.

- Community organizations and businesses are good ways of reaching people with the ideas of CSAs who would not normally hear about it.
- Customers in a strip mall where CSA drop off site exists will stop to learn what is going on.
- Many community groups are already dealing with communities for whom food access is a problem.
- Many community development networks already exist, and often those working as networkers within ‘umbrella organizations’ are great resources for finding community groups who have the infrastructure to organize and implement a CSA. For example, through a staff person at the alternative education network in New York, Just Food found several school groups to organize CSAs.

ORGANIC FOR ALL: MULTI-INCOME CSAS

Shana Berger, Just food, NY

Jamie Quinn, farmer la Ferme Terre Bleue

Presentation by Shana Berger

Shauna coordinates Just Food in NY. It is a non-profit organization dedicated to developing a sustainable food system in the New York region. They foster partnerships between farmers and niche community groups in the city. The city farm project began in 1997 with 4 farms and now there are 17 CSAs facilitated by Just Food in NY, this is a roughly 1100 share.

Just food facilitates the initial discussion and actually partners the community group with the farm. Organizations apply to be a part of the program and then a suitable farm or farms are chosen. Shauna revealed that making the right match is the key factor for success for the program, for example; they would never partner a new farmer with a new community group or vice versa. To have lasting relationships the match must be carefully evaluated.

The prices are sliding scale \$300, \$350, or \$400 payment levels. This is based on trust. The members can choose a number of installment plans. A lump sum in January, 3 monthly installments, or payment every month of the season with a down payment. Just food is also certified to take food stamps.

Presentation by Jamie Quinn

Jamie and his wife have come up with an interesting way to make shares for their CSA available to lower income families or to members experiencing sudden financial difficulty in the CSA. This is similar to what

Elizabeth Henderson calls a scholarship fund. On their brochure they give people the option to contribute to the fund. They ask for a contribution of \$10 or more from members. Naturally some contribute more and some cannot contribute. The response has generally been positive and they have received \$500 in contributions. They do not have a core group, so this means that members know the money is there and available so it is up to them to ask. Jamie sees them all each week during delivery so he has a good sense of members changing situations and reminds members of the fund if he feels it necessary.

Discussion

There is a revolving loan fund that farmers can access. It is an equity trust loan that Just Food co-signs with the farmer at the start of the season and then the farmer pays it back throughout the season. More information on this can be gained from NOFA in Vermont.

Farm share is a fund that was discussed. Farm share gains access to CSA shares and then they distribute them to lower income families.

Socially Responsible investments and Montreal Community Loan Association are micro-credit lending fund available for Canadian groups.

Conclusion

Just food is a long-term food education program. It recognizes that farmers are struggling to survive and lower income families need access to better food. This program is thriving as they nurture relations that boost food production and make it a win-win situation for all.

FARM APPRENTICESHIPS: WORTHWHILE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES?

Geneviève Chagnon, director, Carefour bio-local-emploi
Dylan Lafrénière, ex-intern at a few farm

Presentation by Geneviève Chagnon

“Organic farms: few people, many tasks.” How do the characteristics of Quebec’s organic agricultural industry affect interns?

- Organic farms are small family-run farms with diversified production and few or no employees. Farmers have a variety of tasks and responsibilities: they are managing an ecosystem. They have multiple skills. Sometimes it takes more time to delegate a complex task to an intern than to do it themselves.
- When farmers are overworked, the training dimension tends to be forgotten and the intern’s status slides from apprentice to employee. There is a danger that interns will come to be considered a form of cheap yet motivated labour. When this happens, internships become less empowering; indeed, they become frustrating as the intern’s personal goals are ignored.
- Interns are immersed in a family’s private life and may experience culture shock.
- Interns have trouble finding work after their internships: organic farms don’t contribute much to job creation.
- It is often difficult to measure the skills acquired during an internship.

Presentation by Dylan Lafrénière

Urban dweller turned farmer, Dylan has been involved in several successful internships, but some others have been disappointing. He has reflected on the “thorny issue of internships.”

- Intern profiles: Interns may be part of a vocational program (DEC or DEP students on short-term internships or work-study programs, reinsertion program participants) or motivated by individual initiative (WWOOF volunteers, young people during the summer and CSA sharers). The first category of interns have training materials such as manuals, exercises, etc. They have or should have a specific mandate. The ideal internship supervisor performs two functions: teaching the theoretical component and transmitting skills.
- Sign of a major malaise: out of the 12 students in the organic farming school he attended, Dylan, after 3 years, is the only one to have graduated. He attributes this to the fact that the supervisors are more interested in the “philosophy of life” aspect than the transmission of skills.
- Too often there is a mismatch between the supervisor and the intern. The recruitment of supervisors should be improved.
- It is symptomatic that the same interns never return to the farm in consecutive years. Every year, farmers benefit from new interns with subsidized wages who

therefore represent a form of cheap labour. Meanwhile, past interns are unable to find work. Organic agriculture, after all, continues to be a marginal industry.

The farmers do not see themselves as entrepreneurs. “The market” and “productivity” are taboo subjects in this milieu. On the contrary, farmers stress the value of small-scale ecosystems and adhere to the “small is beautiful” philosophy. The downside of this is a lack of sound management. The farmers do not use management tools, and adequate meetings and communication are often lacking. Yet these things are essential to the activities of produce distribution, job creation and intern supervision. Many training programs fail because of these management deficiencies.

Some participants in the workshop, while recognizing the need for sound management, emphasized the dangers of applying entrepreneurial logic to the running of organic farms.

Follow-up/conclusion

How can internship conditions be improved?

- Improve supervisor recruitment; select interns with care and give them a proper introduction to the subject.
- Match interns and supervisors appropriately.
- Use internship course materials.
- Use contracts to detail the goals and responsibilities of the parties.
- Balance practice and theory.



IN THE SHADOW OF THE GLOBAL SUPERMARKET: CSA AND GLOBALIZATION

Guy Debailleul, professor, Université Laval

Mireille Audet, community organizer and activist, Opération SalAMI

Guy Debailleul's presentation

From the discovery of the Americas to the present day, passing by way of the industrial revolution, many people have won renown through reacting to the growing openness of economic exchanges by proposing social alternatives. In the current context of market liberalization, the CSA network is part of the social movements which hope to redefine society. Will this embryonic alternative for organizing society around agriculture bring a re-evaluation of the role of the consumer? Is it the start of consumer control over globalization? Will it remain in a state of utopia? In order for our societies to live and consume differently, the CSA initiative should be part of a more holistic ethical project in which citizens will become aware that buying a product or investing in a company (notably through stocks and pension funds) validates the social conditions and techniques used to produce consumer goods.

Mireille Audet's presentation

Globalization is a phenomenon of conquest on an unprecedented scale, in which wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few individuals. In the shadow of the global supermarket, across the world, there is food insecurity — hunger and malnutrition are primarily political problems — and ravaging of local economies, which brings the loss of small producers' means of subsistence. CSA takes back the power of the consumer by saying “no” to the agricultural oligopolies that currently control the contents of our plates at the expense of our

health and our local producers. CSA projects support the redistribution of wealth on a human scale and encourage a multitude of market ventures that are adapted to local settings. They also allow the development of a different relationship to food, notably by raising awareness of the work involved in food production and of the citizen's responsibility to make good consumer choices. By favouring exchange to marketing, CSA is an alternative to the conventional system of agricultural production, which promotes intolerable living conditions for a growing number of people.

Discussion points:

- The debate on genetically modified organisms has given a boost to the CSA project. Some wonder about the future of CSA and organic food consumption when fears about GMOs have been allayed.
- CSA has a fundamental educational aspect. The network creates an openness of mind and is based on values of democracy and harmony, which are tools for awareness-raising that could eventually bring us to the ideal of living together differently.
- CSA is an equitable North-North market form, which permits supporting our own people, reviving the local economy, and preserving the rural way of life.
- Should we limit organic food to alternative circuit? Does not the commercialization of these products risk imposing the dominant market's devastating logic on organic producers?

- Is our involvement in CSA coherent with our other consumer habits and with the space that we occupy on the political scenes?
- What is the position of our governments on introducing ethics that go against dominant economic structure?

Conclusion

- Participating in CSA is already taking a position, and is a concrete action through which we take on a political role. Each exchange deprives a multinational of a part of its anticipated profits.
- Preserving the small family farm: utopia or viable social project? CSA will not be enough to protect the small farm; we must speak out so that its conditions for survival are put into place.

THE EDUCATIONAL ROLE OF CSA PROJECTS

Madeleine Roussel, farmer, Cadet-Roussel farm

Mike Ambach, master's of education student

Madeleine Roussel's presentation:

At Cadet-Roussel, CSA's educational role is very clear and extends over many aspects of life. It starts first with the partners who come work at the farm; this experience allows them to gain knowledge of all aspects of the farmer's work. Urban youth have the chance to find out about another way of life (without television, for example) and most importantly about where the food that they eat comes from. We also receive students from a Waldorf school for three-day internships at the farm. By helping out in the garden, an incredible amount of information is exchanged between the farmer and the people. In learning how to sow, prick out, transplant, water, weed, and so forth, the "volunteer" becomes aware of all of the time and steps involved in vegetable production. It's also an opportunity to learn about diversified organic agriculture, about the notion of vegetable seasons and about rural life (legacy, debt, etc.). CSA is a social development project where everyone shares the same cause: the environment. Without its being officially stated as such, CSA's educational role is implicit.

Mike Ambach's presentation:

Mr. Ambach found that the word "education" was mentioned several times over the course of this CSA conference. As a student in a master's of education program and as a CSA partner, he became aware of the size of CSA's current and potential impact. From the therapeutic aspect to the management of a small business, from protecting the earth to awareness-raising, CSA has the

power to change society's values. Which tools it will use to fill its educational role, and which lessons will be communicated, remain to be defined, as well as how we will reach the masses to educate them on all of these aspects.

Discussion points:

- We recognize the importance of sensitizing children to the world of nutrition, since they represent the future generation.
- CSA could become a life setting for teenagers, including a specific support system.
- Several people related their experiences of total transformation after contact with nature and work at the farm.
- People must "wake up" and support all initiatives that work to protect the environment.

Conclusion:

In brief, CSA has much to bring, but its educational responsibilities remain to be more clearly defined and specified, as do the avenues that it should take in order to reach and educate the masses. Everyone agreed that food touches all spheres of life, and because of this, CSA is part of a promising movement towards social change.

WHAT FUTURE FOR CSA IN QUEBEC? DISCUSSION AND EVALUATION

Elizabeth Hunter, Coordinator of Ecological Agricultural Projects, Équiterre

Presentation by Elizabeth Hunter

CSA in Quebec has progressed significantly since its creation in 1996.

Year	Farms	Estimated Households
1996	7	250
1997	15	300
1998	27* (2)**	500
1999	32 (6)	1,600
2000	38 (8)	2,700

* Principal farms are those that sell directly to partners.

** Associated farms (numbers in parentheses) are farms that specialize in certain products and that sell through principal farms.

Équiterre's role is to develop and help anchor CSA projects. Équiterre supports the network by producing and distributing educational and promotional material: a list of farms, various informational booklets, kiosks, etc. Équiterre coordinates the farm network, working to increase the number of exchanges between farms and to develop and clarify the starting criteria for CSA projects: farms are local and organic, sharers must commit financially to the project, and a social aspect is ensured. Équiterre thus puts sharers and farmers into a relationship without being a permanent intermediary: "Imagine a circus that has a clown, Équiterre, in the middle. When everyone begins to play together, the clown disappears and lets everyone have fun on their own!", adds Jonathan, a future member.

This work reached a pivotal point in 2000-2001 with several important projects:

- the CSA conference was organized and took place.
- the guide Community Supported Agriculture: Harvest to eat to share was published.
- a CSA project evaluation process was carried out at both the sharer and farmer levels of the network.

A general evaluation, in which farmers and sharers are being interviewed, is underway. Équiterre's work in the CSA network is also being evaluated.

A financial evaluation will also be carried out, analyzing the finances of selected farms. The goal is to evaluate the elements of success in CSA farms, looking at financial outcome as a function of size, level of mechanization, and participation of sharers.

The evaluation's objective is to judge CSA's success for sharers and farmers, as well as the roles of Équiterre and the Network, in order to continue CSA projects and to ensure that Équiterre's work and the Network are heading in the right direction. The workshop discussions are part of this evaluation, and were intended to foster in-depth examination of relevant questions. Two groups were thus formed: one represented sharers and the other, farmers. The wrap-up discussion took place with the whole group.

Sharers' group

The main reasons that motivate them to take part in a CSA project are the qualitative (organic, health, the environment), social (supporting farmers, solidarity and taking care of neighbours), local (at an economic level and fighting globalization), and political aspects of their choice. Taking back the power of the consumer is all-important, especially with the new food issues of today (growth hormones, GMOs).

The CSA project activities that were the most important for sharers were: visiting the farm, which allowed them to make a first contact with the farmers. Working at the farm also seemed important for sharers, as it allowed them to breathe fresh air, to show their empathy, and to understand the reality of farmers' lives. "We don't look at the food baskets the same way since we went to help at the farm," one sharer stated. The drop-off point also seems to be for some a good way for sharers and farmers to meet and share their experiences and knowledge. With respect to participation in the bulletin, sharers were not sure what to do or how to do it. With a good core group, the Education wing should expand. Équiterre's work was not discussed, as the workshop ran out of time.

Farmers' group

Reasons for belonging to CSA for farmers are that the project responds to their values, that they have a sense of belonging to a community, that they have direct contact with sharers, and the value of financial security.

The farmers' feedback varied as to the sharers' participation at the farm. With respect to the organization, some wanted to keep their independence, while others recognized the opportunity to share the farmers' efforts and investments. The sharers' work at the farm was very important for some and not at all for others.

With respect to Équiterre's work, some depend on it to promote their products; others would be capable of running their project without the organization's help, but appreciate the networking and solidarity aspects of the Network.



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