

# COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE

## Is it for me? How do I choose a farm?

### WHAT IS CSA?

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a way to directly connect local farmers and food consumers. Often called a CSA "share," "subscription," or "membership," CSAs provide entire seasons of healthy and delicious produce and other farm favorites to families and individuals for agreed upon terms and prices. Customers pay up front so farmers can purchase materials, supplies, seeds, and other beginning of the year items. Farmers and consumers share the risks, rewards, and responsibilities.

Here in Michigan, the second ranking state in the nation for agricultural diversity, consumers are fortunate to have numerous CSA farms to choose from and to be offered an increasingly wide variety of options.

With over 50 years of momentum building for the CSA concept, more and more consumers are finding themselves interested in CSA and seeing for themselves what it's all about.

### STEPS BETWEEN FARM AND YOUR TABLE WHEN YOU PURCHASE FROM

#### SUPERMARKET



#### FARMERS MARKET



#### LOCAL CSA



## 5 REASONS TO CHOOSE CSA

### RECEIVE HIGHER QUALITY PRODUCE AT A BETTER THAN RETAIL COST

Fresh and healthy in a way that pleases the taste buds and the budget

### KNOW WHO AND WHERE YOUR FOOD COMES FROM

Increased transparency and trust, as well as, a personal connection to the land and people producing the food

### SUPPORT LOCAL FARMERS

Stimulate the local economy and boost small-scale farm success with up front commitment

### BE PART OF A GROWING COMMUNITY

Encourage positive culture and connection

### PROMOTE SUSTAINABILITY

Lower your carbon footprint by reducing packaging and transportation of fresh foods

## IS CSA RIGHT FOR ME?

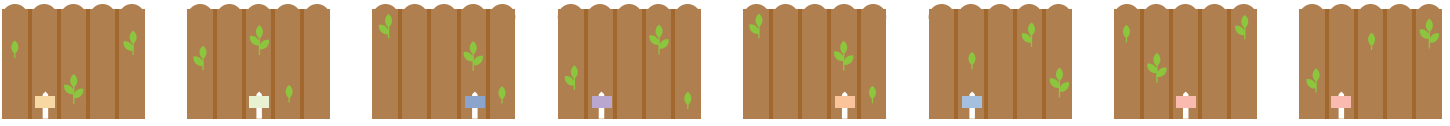
Before signing up for a season of CSA, it's important to know your preferences and what you can commit to. To help evaluate, try asking yourself and/or your household some of the following questions:

*Will I enjoy preparing homemade meals on a regular basis?*

*How will I handle new or extra produce?*

*What is my availability? Can a friend or neighbor fill in for me if I'm gone?*

*Am I ok with potential risks that I take with the farmer regarding produce availability due to environmental or other related factors?*



## HOW DO I CHOOSE A CSA FARM?

With all of the different CSA options available now, you may be asking yourself, "How do I choose?!" Matching your preferences and lifestyle with the right CSA farm will ensure that you and the CSA farm are on the same page and have a successful season together. Talking with multiple CSA farms will help give you a better idea of expectations.

### CONVENIENT PICK UP

Look for a CSA farm that offers close and convenient pick up to your home, office, or regular travel route. While some CSAs only offer pick up at their farm, more farmers are also offering direct deliveries to worksites, community centers, and other central locations with coordination or partnership options.

### QUANTITY & DIVERSITY

Not all CSA farms offer the same produce amounts and availability!

Choices to consider include:

- "Full share" "Double" "Family" = 10 - 14 items weekly
- "Half share" "Partial" "Single" = 5 - 8 items weekly
- Weekly or Bi-weekly pick up options
- Vegetable and/or fruit selections - ask the farmer upfront what you could expect to receive
- "Add-On" options such as bread, eggs, beans, meat, cheese, coffee, honey, etc.
- Personal selections - Will your CSA be packed and ready for you to go (most common), have a "swap basket" (switching out something you don't like with something you do), or distribute in a "market style" (fully or partially choose your produce, possible depending on pick up location)
- Season Length - Spring/Summer/Fall/Year-Round or combinations

### PAYMENTS

Traditionally, CSA participants support their farmer with full payments or at least with security deposits early in the winter/spring so that the farmer has positive cash flow when they need it most to purchase seeds, production supplies, and hire labor to help plant the fields (steps that all need to happen well before the first harvest and distributions).

Choices to consider include:

- Up front payments (typically February - April, with rolling availability in the spring and summer)
- Security deposits with scheduled payment plans
- EBT/SNAP/Double Up Food Bucks payment acceptance at some farms and farmers markets
- "Work Share" - offers CSA at a reduced cost in exchange for coordinated help on the farm

### LOCATE A CSA NEAR YOU!

Visit the links below to connect to a farm page and find out more about availability and options!

- [glfoodbank.org/lansingroots](http://glfoodbank.org/lansingroots)
- [allenmarketplace.org/what-is-csa](http://allenmarketplace.org/what-is-csa)
- [localharvest.org](http://localharvest.org)

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