

Mendocino County Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Market Analysis

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Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary.....	1
2. Definition of CSA.....	3
3. Method.....	4
4. Farmer Interviews.....	5
5. Central Findings (Farmers).....	16
6. Consumer Survey Responses.....	17
7. Central Findings (Eaters).....	20
8. Comparing Farmer and Consumer Answers.....	22
9. Appendix I: Farmer Survey Answers.....	25
10. Appendix II: Resources for CSA Farmers.....	36
11. Appendix III: Suggestions for CSA Farmers.....	37
12. Appendix IV: Pending Legislation	38
13. Appendix V: Bibliography and References	39

Executive Summary

This white paper analyzes data and comments compiled from 15 Mendocino County farmers, via in-person interviews, who use Community Supported Agriculture as part of their business structure and 140 Mendocino County consumer/citizen on-line surveys (conducted and analyzed using Survey Monkey) and in-person interviews (analyzed using Survey Monkey).

Funded by the USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP), the **Strengthening CSAs by Building Capacity and Expanding Markets Project** aims to provide a market analysis of CSA programs in Mendocino County, support production and management ability of CSA operators, and help increase consumer participation in CSAs. Through March 2014, the project will support jobs and increase access to healthy local foods, improving overall health of the community.

This market analysis of the existing and potential CSA market is intended as a non-academic, community resource to provide a clear understanding of who is buying CSA shares and the reasons why other members of the community do not participate. The analysis assesses: The demographics and socioeconomic status of existing CSA subscribers; barriers to CSA participation; foods that potential shareholders would be interested in receiving through a CSA; and decision points related to CSA participation, including interest in different types of CSAs.

Central Findings

Currently 18 CSAs (vegetable, meat, eggs, grain and fruit, plus miscellaneous value-added products) serve local food to Mendocino County. If we take a look at vegetable production, which the majority of CSA operators grow and sell, in comparison with Mendocino County's population of just over 80,000, the CSA operations serve about 0.4% of the population, approximately 330 households. There is a market for more CSA operations; yet the current ones have struggles.

Like any small business, a CSA operation can't be sustainable with just one or two individuals taking on all roles, but that is often the case and one of the major barriers to scale: burn out, off-farm jobs and the inability to take on marketing, human resources and other management of the farm output. Farmers need help with marketing, education and outreach as they are busy with on-farm tasks.

The unique relationship of a CSA, in that it is community-based and supported, indicates an opportunity in Mendocino County for community involvement in the growth of CSAs. In this large, primarily rural community, those that support CSAs could do more than simply pay money for their shares, they could also support the efforts to encourage more farmers to grow food, and provide some support for marketing, outreach and education. An eater-led campaign, neighbor to neighbor, friend to friend, would help spread the good word and work of CSA relationships.

Historically, in the United States, the first handful of CSAs (which started in 1986 in the Northeast) were initiated by community members seeking a farmer to provide "clean, healthy, life-giving food," according to journalist Steve McFadden, a well-known chronicler of CSAs in America. Those first CSA members were therefore extremely active. In Mendocino County and in the current farm culture in California, farmers have started CSAs operations, not the other way around. This might be because of the upfront financial support needed, causing a narrower view of the CSA in the larger societal consciousness.

Barriers

The greatest barriers to participation lie in lifestyle and shopping habits, perceptions about price and understanding and awareness of CSAs in general.

Of those surveyed who participated in a CSA but stopped:

- 63.8% have their own garden
- 41.67% buy food at the farmers market
- 23.61% could no longer afford the up-front costs

Of those who have never participated in a CSA:

- 41.67% surveyed said they prefer to shop at the farmers' market
- 50.79% surveyed said they don't fully understand what a CSA is
- 11.11% don't want to pay up front without a guarantee of quality and amount

Of all respondent surveyed

- 43.62% think the price is more expensive than retail (36.17% think it is equal)

Recommendations and Possibilities

A variety of efforts are recommended in order to support more CSA farmers and encourage more CSA participation.

Education and Outreach

- Continued and sustained marketing, outreach and education to the general public about CSA operations and opportunities. What is it? How can CSAs help with health and wellness, freshness, and grocery costs?
- County-wide cooking demonstrations and classes using seasonal produce
- Seasonal cooking outreach and education
- Create more opportunities for free and low-cost education for farmers to learn business skills to enhance farm income

Further Study and Data Collection

- Conduct a study of the cost of buying direct from farmers in Mendocino County (CSA, farm stands, and farmers' market) as compared to retail grocers
- Re-evaluate the language of CSA for consumer friendliness. Food boxes, meal box, etc.

Collaborative Partnerships

- Source an umbrella organization to host EBT card reading services for CSA operators and explore matching funds and/or train farmers to accept EBT
- Engage large employers in offering assistance to join CSAs as a path to wellness and incentives to lower health care costs.
- Engage county healthcare officers to initiate a "Prescription RX" program to support healthy eating habits and farmers.
- Engage the faith community in this conversation.

Marketing and Story-Telling

- Create a farmer-owned marketing, education and outreach cooperative organization to support farmers' business needs
- Work with farmers to tell their story and communicate their needs to the community

Recognized Definition of Community Supported Agriculture

“Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a way for consumers and farmers to share the risks and benefits of sustainable agriculture. In its simplest form, Community Supported Agriculture is an agreement between one or more farms and a group of consumer members. Each growing season members pay a pre-determined price up front (or monthly or installments) to support the farm. In return, the members receive an agreed-upon share of the farm’s output.

Community Supported Agriculture offers new opportunities to provide predictable income to small-scale family farms. Several factors help ensure that CSA farmers are able to utilize sustainable farming practices:

- Share price reflects the cost of environmentally sound production
- Receiving payments up front, the farmers avoid the extra cost of borrowing operating capital
- If weather or other factors result in more or less than the expected output, members share equally in the harvest losses and abundance

CSAs emphasize the role of the consumers in consciously taking moral responsibility for the care of the land, animals and people that produce the food human beings need. Community Supported Agriculture has been stimulated by consumer interest in locally-produced food, as well as environmentally and socially conscious values that recognize the contribution of healthy farming activity to both rural and urban communities.”¹

At heart, CSA structure acknowledges “farming is not just a business like any other profit-making business, but a precondition of all human life on earth, and a precondition of all economic activity.”²

¹ Page 256, *Farms of Tomorrow Revisited*

² Page VII, *Farms of Tomorrow Revisited*

A Brief Profile of Mendocino County

Mendocino County is bordered by Sonoma County to the south, Glenn, Lake, and Tehama Counties to the east, Humboldt and Trinity Counties to the north, and the Pacific Ocean to the west. The county encompasses a large, rural area located 115 miles north of San Francisco. With a total area of approximately 3,510 square miles, (approximately 3% flat land) it is geographically the 15th largest county in California. Features of the county include elevations ranging from sea level to almost 7,000 feet, 130 miles of coastline, a coastal mountain range, and vast tracts of timberland.

According to the California Department of Finance Demographic Research Unit, Mendocino County's total estimated 2009 population is 90,206. The City of Ukiah, with an estimated population of 15,711, is the largest city in the county and serves as the county seat. Other incorporated cities in the county include Fort Bragg (6,868), Willits (5,080) and Point Arena (492). 62,055 residents live in the unincorporated areas of the county.³

The median household income (2007-2011 average) is \$44,527.⁴

Existing CSAs

18 known CSAs in Mendocino County
15 Interviewed
2 didn't respond, 2 out of business (1 out of business responded)

Survey Method and Questions Asked

The questionnaire was conducted via phone or in-person meetings, January through March of 2013, and consisted of 40 questions aimed to gain a greater understanding of the CSA structure and practices as well as capacity and needs. We created questions that would assess interest and capacity for serving Mendocino County's low-income community as well as the population in general. We also offered West Company's no-cost business and farm operations consulting and classes as part of the interview process.

Of the 15 interviewed, all but one currently operates some form of a CSA model for their farm output; one recently stopped farming and operating a CSA. (A loss to the Fort Bragg community.)

Questions were developed with the help of Paula Gaska, Project Organizer for the grant project and a CSA farm operator, and Gloria and Stephen Decatur, operators of the oldest CSA farm in California.

The following questions were asked:

1. Farm Name
2. Contact
3. Contact Number
4. Location
5. How many acres are you farming?
6. How long have you been in business?
7. Why did you start a CSA?
8. How long have you operated the CSA model?
9. What types of food/product are in the share?
10. Do you buy supplemental products?
11. What's your CSA season?
12. Number of shares?
13. Do you need more customers?
14. Are you interested in scaling up production?
15. What's the price for shares/share structure?
16. What's the minimum payment period?
17. Do you feel confident about your pricing?
18. How do you deliver?
19. Where do you deliver/distribute?
20. What days? Times?
21. Do you take EBT/Food Stamps? If so, how effective has it been? How many people use it? If not do you want to? Would you like help setting it up?
22. Are you interested in bartering for services?
23. Do you know your customer demographics?
24. How do people hear about your CSA? How do you market it?
25. Do you have a schedule for promoting your CSA?
26. What sort of supplemental information to share with your shareholders? Farm info, budgets, crop plans, recipes? Communication and educational tools...
27. Do you have an on-line presence?
28. Do you take in-put from customers/share holders?
29. Briefly describe your environmental, social and economic values of your farm operation.
30. Are you interested in participating in CSA as an activist route for creating change in our society, our food system?
31. Do you involve members in your operation?
32. Where were you trained? What support have you had?
33. How did you finance your farm when you started?
34. Have you received technical assistance? If so, from whom?
35. What technology, if any, do you use to manage your business?
36. Do you have a farm manager? A CSA manager?
37. What sort of resources do you think you need to take it to the next level?
38. What are your projections/plans for the future? Is your CSA a small piece or large of your business development?
39. Have you given any thought to succession planning?
40. Interested in West Company trainings?

We also asked if they had any additional comments to share.

³ Source Data: U .S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008 American Community Survey

⁴ Source Data: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 QuickFacts

Responses to Farmer Interviews

Assessing Our Farms

We found CSA farmers via a number of methods. We conducted outreach through the Anderson Valley Foodshed e-newsletter, the MCFARM e-newsletter and made a presentation at the annual meeting. LocalHarvest.com and the Mendocino Food Guide listed a number of CSAs.

The farms that responded to our survey included: Anderson Valley Community Farm, Covelo Organic, Emendal, Foxglove Farm, Greenjeans Farm, Happy Days Farm, Live Power Community Farm, Noyo Hill Farm, Mendocino Grains Project, Mendocino Organics, Owen Family Farm, Oz Farm, Petit Teton, Roseman Creek Ranch, Round Valley Raised,

Out of business farms: Red Dog Ranch, Noyo Hill Farm

Known CSAs not in the survey as they just started their farms : Lovin' Mama Farm (Spring 2013), Floodgate Farm (start date unknown)

A Note About Location

CSA farms are located across the county, serving almost every large area except Mendocino County's far northern areas. This study did not go into depth as to why that is but it can be hypothesized that the reason the north county lacks farms is due to its remoteness from larger communities and topography of mostly timberland and forest (According the California Department of Agriculture's California Agricultural Statistics Review 2012-2013, Mendocino County ranks fourth in timber production in California). CSA farms currently exist in the following locations: Covelo, Comptche, Boonville, Gualala, Hopland (meat and grains only), Laytonville, Potter Valley, Pt. Arena, Redwood Valley, Ukiah, Willits, Yorkville (only deliver to San Francisco).

Noyo Hill Farm located in Fort Bragg is out of business. They served the Fort Bragg area, creating an open market in this city.

Length of Time in Business

There's a wide range of length of time in business associated with Mendocino County CSA farms. Some have been in business/farming since the mid-1970s (Live Power Community Farm and Foxglove Farm), since the 1980s (Covelo Organics and Oz Farm) and the majority have been around 10 years or less (Mendocino Organics, Petit Teton, Anderson Valley Community Farm, Noyo Hill Farm, Mendocino Grains Project, Round Valley Raised, Happy Days Farm, Greenjeans Farm, Roseman Creek Ranch). The family that runs Emendal has been in agricultural production since the turn of the century (1908).

A few of the farms and farmers have been in business for less than five years. The farmers in these instances (Mendocino Organics, Happy Days Farm, Anderson Valley Community Farm) are young (in their 20s and 30s) and have chosen farming as a first career heeding the call for new farmers to sustain local food system needs. Still others have taken on their CSA operation as a second or third career (Mendocino Grain Project (Petit Teton, Greenjeans Farm, Roseman Creek Ranch). These farmers tend to be older (50s and 60s).

Round Valley Raised, which has just begun, is a cooperative effort of five ranching families who have raised livestock for a variety of years between them.

Regardless of time farming the particular CSA farm, all of the farmers surveyed have numerous years and often decades or lifetimes of farming experience behind them. The younger farmers surveyed have studied at community college or university level agriculture programs and/or apprenticed under more seasoned farmers before establishing their operations while the second career farmers either grew up in farming families and have some level of experience (Doug Mosel with the Mendocino Grain Project for example) or had an interest in becoming a farmer due to study in agricultural philosophies like Permaculture or Biodynamics® (Petit Teton, for example).

Why did you start a CSA?

The answers to this question were as diverse as the farmers themselves. Responses ranged from economic necessity, to creating greater connections with consumers to pure happenstance. And, for many, it was a combination of many factors.

The need for financing is often stated as a reason for starting a CSA operation. Many farmers view it as a good economic model for keeping their important work funded. Farmers need financial support especially at the beginning of the growing season to purchase seed, farm inputs, cover infrastructure costs and operating capital for the year. Farmers also need financial resources to secure seasonal cash flow imbalances and provide gap funding during slow times. Still others started the CSA as a second income resource to supplement off-farm income—a way to utilize land they owned and the production capacity of their own time and ability.

Others quoted a need for an alternative marketing channel. Some see a CSA as a beneficial means to sell direct to consumers without the need to seek additional markets; and still others use the CSA model to supplement and support their other marketing channels like selling to restaurants or at the farmers' market.

"A part of it was the disappointment of going to market and not selling all the product," says Amber Cline of Happy Days Farm. "CSAs take the guesswork out. We started to

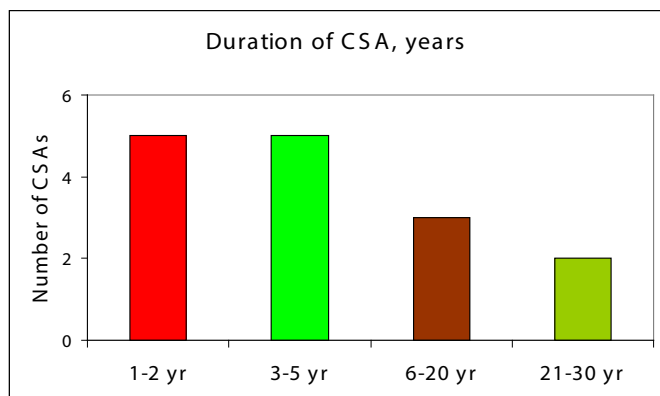
double or triple our sales just buy boxing it and selling it.” Some Mendocino County farmers started their CSA because they were inspired to be a part of a new food production and distribution paradigm—a system based in community. “We were attracted to the possibility of creating a new economic paradigm and creating a new economic interface between the farmer and the eater,” said Steven Decatur of Live Power Community Farm, the first CSA in California. CSA farmers value operating outside of the commodity market and delivering fresh, local food to local residents.

For many the social aspect of the CSA relationship is also a rewarding reason to start a CSA. “We are able to connect with the people who eat our food on a more intimate level,” said Paula Gaska of Mendocino Organics. One farmer surveyed stated that her CSA was a response to the “dysfunctional food system;” that engaging in the operation helped provide purpose and meaning. “It’s a great way to expose people to good food and educate them slowly.”

See Appendix for direct quotes.

Length of Time with CSA Model

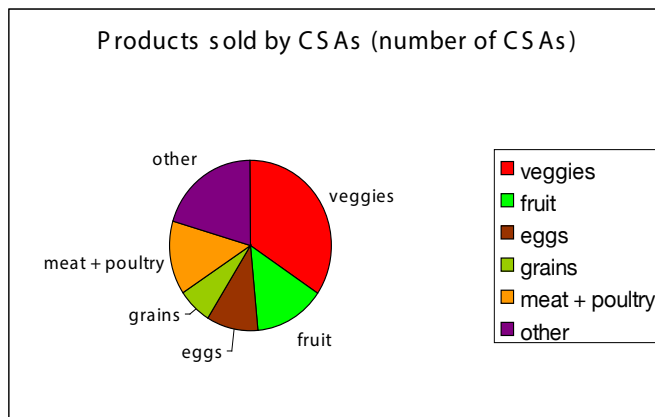
Mendocino County CSA farmers have been operating CSA programs for a range of two years to 25 years; the majority in the two to three year range. The bar graph below illustrates the diversity.



CSA Production: What’s in the Box

The majority of Mendocino County CSAs produce a seasonal variety of vegetables. Some vegetable CSA operators also offer other items like fruit, eggs, meat and poultry and value-added products. Still others offer non-vegetable food, like meat, poultry, lentils and grains.

The pie chart to the right shows the breakdown in offerings.



Supplementing and Offering Other Products

Selling supplemental products is a way for CSA farmers to support other farms by offering products they do not grow or produce (like value-added products, fruits or eggs). Typically these products are offered to shareholders as an add-on for an extra charge. Many of the surveyed farms collaborate with neighboring farms and businesses to make this available to their members.

In summary, five farms have purchased products from other farms. A few farms offer supplemental products that shareholders purchase directly from the non-CSA farm (juice, stone fruit, berries, rice, grains). A few farms offer food items for sale from the farm but these items are not part of the CSA program (fruit, berries and eggs).

What’s your CSA season?

A 30-week season starting in May and running through November was the standard answer. A few smaller farms offer a shorter season, 16 to 22 weeks, due to preference and production capacity. As the majority of CSAs offer seasonal vegetables, the typical CSA season coincides with Mendocino County’s primary growing season, with a few farms planting winter crops as well. Since vegetables are highly perishable, they need to be sold immediately whereas non-perishable foods can store and be sold year-round. Grain is a storable crop, hence the year-round distribution season. Meat, though operating in a seasonal model can be frozen and offered year-round as well.

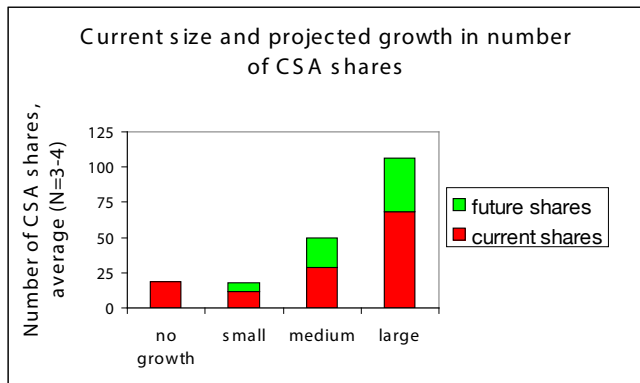
See Appendix for specifics per farm.

Assessing Size and Capacity for Growth

Shareholders Served and Need for More

Mendocino County’s smallest CSA aims to provide for five vegetable shares while the largest is willing and able to provide up to 120 vegetable shares. The majority of farms have a capacity to support a range of 10-25 households. Over the next year, most CSAs are interested in increasing CSA participation, especially the larger farms. Mendocino County’s smaller farms are at capacity.

The following chart shows the range.



See Appendix for specifics per farm.

Acreage and Earnings Observed

According to Ross Korves, Deputy Chief Economist for the American Farm Bureau Federation, there are eight types of farms in the United States that can be grouped into two categories:

Small Family Farms (sales less than \$250,000), which includes:

- Retirement farms—Small farms whose operators report they are retired (excludes limited-resource farms operated by retired farmers).
- Residential/lifestyle farms—Small farms whose operators report a major occupation other than farming (excludes limited resource farms).
- Limited-resource farms—Any small farm with: gross sales less than \$100,000, total farm assets less than \$150,000, and total operator household income less than \$20,000.
- Farming occupation/lower-sales farms—Small farms with sales less than \$100,000 whose operators report farming as their major occupation (excludes limited-resource farms whose operators report farming as their major occupation).
- Farming occupation/higher-sales farms—Small farms with sales between \$100,000 and \$249,000 whose operators report farming as their major occupation.

Other Farms, which includes:

- Large family farms—Farms with sales between \$250,000 and \$499,999.
- Very large family farms—Farms with sales of \$500,000 or more.
- Non-family farms—Farms organized as non-family corporations or cooperatives, as well as farms operated by hired managers.⁵

Mendocino County CSA farms fall squarely in the “Small Family Farms” category.

Available acreage (along with personnel, time, water access and other resources) is a huge factor in a farm’s

capacity to grow. According the California Department of Agriculture’s California Agricultural Statistics Review 2012-2013, statistics for 2011 indicate that an average size of a California farm is 312 acres. Mendocino County ranks 35 in commodity value with a total value of \$141,171. Wine grapes, pears, cattle and calves, milk and pasture accounting for the majority of sales revenue and use of acreage.

Acreage size statistics are not available, separately, for small farms, earning incomes in the \$1,000 to \$249,999 range in the report referred to above. However, according to Ryan Galt’s 2011 report entitled *Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) in and around California’s Central Valley* average CSA farm acreage for the study sample was 151 acres with 20 acres as the median, with 41 acres on average in cropland (harvested) with 6.3 as the median.

The statistics for “Number of Farms and Land in Farms; by Economic Sales Class, California, 2001-2011” indicate that in 2011 there were 35,600 farms earning \$1,000 to \$9,999, 26,300 farms earning \$10,000 -\$99,000 and 6,600 farms earning \$100,000 to \$249,000. Total farms earning \$100,000+ was 19,600 with a total of 81,500 farms, leaving 61,900 farms earning less than \$100,000 per year.

This study did not inquire about farm income and it is unclear from the census report the average acreage for farms in the less than \$100,000 range as the report does not focus on the output of these small farms that essentially make up the profile of the majority of California agriculture.

Given that the majority of Mendocino County CSA farms have acreage of less than 40 acres in production, with most of the vegetable (specialty crop) producers in the one to six-acre range, provides a picture of the scale of farmland base in the County compared with the average acreage in California.

Mendocino County CSA farmers are decidedly small farms, operating at a very small scale outside the scope of the highest earning commodity crops for the county serving a small percentage of the population.

See the table on the following page for a breakdown of total acreage versus how much is in vegetable production. Note that the overall vegetable production for CSA farms in Mendocino County is at 129 acres with many of those serving households in the Bay Area.

⁵ Source: USDA-Economic Research Service

Mendocino County CSA Total Acreage and Acreage in Vegetable Production

Farm Name	Total acreage	Vegetable acreage	Additional crops
Anderson Valley Community Farm	28	4	eggs, range, hay, pasture
Covelo Organic	6	2 (estimate)	fruit, berries
Emendal Soup CSA	1	1	
Foxglove Farm	3	2.5 (estimate)	berries
Greenjeans Farm	1.5	1 (estimate)	flowers
Happy Days Farm	1	1	
Live Power Community Farm	90 (own 50, lease 40)	4	(fruit, berries, rice sourced from other farms)
Mendocino Grains Project	50	0	grain, lentils
Mendocino Organics	280	6	range, hay, pasture, grain
Owen Family Farm	20 (estimate)	0	range, hay, pasture
Oz Farm	7	7	
Petit Teton	5	5	
Roseman Creek Ranch	4 (estimate)	1.5	fruit, eggs, flowers
Round Valley Raised Buying Club	12,500 (estimate)	0	range, hay, pasture

Assessing Costs

Price for Shares and Share Structure

We told respondents that their answers to this question would remain anonymous. Interested parties can contact the farmer directly or visit their website for specifics. For the purpose of this study, we wanted to identify a range of prices. The table on the following page shows prices by category and share type.

Minimum Payment Period

Farmers provided a range of answers reflecting how flexible they are with their finances and ability to manage their shareholders. Farmers resist extra paperwork, so the easier the process on them, the sooner they can get to what they do best—producing food. Interested parties should have a conversation with a farmer to discuss options. All the farmers we talked with want to work with people so that the payment structure works for them and creates an affordable and fair relationship. Payment terms vary. Only two farms indicated they ask for it all up front,

no exceptions. The table on the following page shows the variation and flexibility

Do you feel confident about your pricing?

Overall, farmers feel very confident about their pricing, though a few do not. Surveyed farmers expressed confidence in the value of what they provide to eaters as it compares to the work they put into creating produce and other products. Again, we told them that answers would remain anonymous.

Many of our CSA farmers farm organically, sustainably and with care, putting a premium on the nutritional value of what they produce. Additionally some farmers took it upon themselves to survey local retailers including the Ukiah Co-op and Mariposa Market (which sell comparable organic produce) and compared their prices, on average, to retail, on average. Admitting methods are not 100% accurate, one farmer found that their price came to “more or less \$50 less [for comparable items during the entire CSA season].” One farmer indicated the price of their CSA is equal to the pricing found at the farmers’ market. Some farmers heard from customers that their offerings were underpriced. Still

CSA type	Share type	Pricing (\$)
Vegetable	Mendocino County, 30 weeks, full share	400 to 600
	Mendocino County, 15 weeks, ½ share	250
	Mendocino County, weekly, full share	18 to 30
	Mendocino County, weekly, ½ share	10
Grain	San Francisco, 30 weeks, full share	900 to 1180
	whole grains	180
Meat	flour	230
	pork, 25 lb	200
	pork + bacon + ham, 25 lb	225
	pork, 25 or 40 lb box	8/lb
Eggs	beef, 10 to 12 lb/month	100/month
	beef, 25 or 40 lb box	7/lb
	30 weeks (1 dozen/week)	180
	per dozen	5 to 8
Soup and/or bread	quart of soup + loaf of bread weekly	75/4 weeks
	loaf of bread	6
Flowers	bouquet	6

Note: The table above shows the range of price per share of type of CSA offered in Mendocino County. The table below shows the minimum payment period each farm offers and their CSA type.

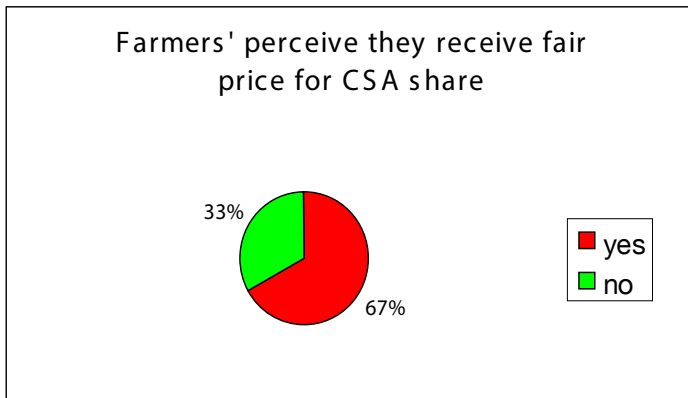
Farm Name	CSA Type	Minimum Payment Period
Anderson Valley Community Farm	veg + eggs	¼ deposit, balance monthly
Covelo Organic Emendal Soup CSA	veg + fruit + berries soup + bread	in advance, in full monthly, in advance
Foxglove Farm	veg + berries	deposit; \$100/month until paid
Greenjeans Farm	veg + flowers	in advance, in full
Happy Days Farm	veg	weekly (prefer in advance, in full)
Live Power Community Farm	veg + fruit + rice + herbs + berries	monthly
Mendocino Grains Project	grain + flour + lentils	½ deposit in spring; ½ at harvest
Mendocino Organics	veg + melons + meat	1/3 deposit, balance thru season
Noyo Hill Farm	veg	monthly (prefer ½ in advance)
Owen Family Farm	meat	in advance, in full
Oz Farm	veg + melons	in advance, in full, by season
Petit Teton	veg + fruit + herbs + flowers	in advance, in full
Red Dog Ranch	veg + fruit	weekly
Roseman Creek Ranch	veg + fruit + eggs + bread + flowers	weekly (prefer in advance)
Round Valley Raised Buying Club	meat	in advance, in full, by box

others researched the average cost of CSA memberships across the United States and Canada and found their prices were “in the ballpark.”

A few farmers indicated they should charge more but don't because their members can't afford to spend more.

CSA farmers typically base their price structure on factors such as demand, expectations, farm inputs and farm/farmer needs, including paying themselves a nominal hourly wage.

The pie chart below shows farmer confidence in their pricing.



See the Appendix for individual answers.

Assessing Access

Delivery and Distribution

We asked the “how do you deliver” question because we wondered if any farmer used a delivery service or other community businesses to assist them in getting product around the county. At the time of this report, Mendocino County lacks a distribution service that supports local farms and local businesses. All of our respondents indicated that they conduct their own deliveries, however Mendocino Organics had a relationship with Mendocino Coast Produce to get their boxes to the coast, for an extra fee.

Responses also indicate how easy or difficult it is for CSA farmers to get food to their shareholders. In general, many offer a mix of on-farm pick-ups and off-farm distribution sites at local businesses or private homes. Many CSAs drop boxes filled with the varieties of produce offered and ask members to fill their own bags or boxes from a list provided.

It's interesting to note that many food service providers bring trucks into Mendocino County to deliver non-local produce to restaurants and retailers; companies such as General Produce, Sysco, Feed Sonoma, Veritable Vegetable, etc., while local producers make their own deliveries, some to the same locations.

The following cities are distribution sites for Mendocino

County CSAs: Boonville, Comptche, Covelo, Fort Bragg (grains only), Gualala, Laytonville, Pt. Arena, Potter Valley, Redwood Valley, Willits

Two farms, Live Power Community Farm and Petit Teton, deliver to the San Francisco Bay Area; with Petit Teton delivering exclusively to San Francisco (Richmond District). Round Valley Raised also provides exclusive delivery to San Francisco via GoodEggs. (Round Valley raised has a refrigerated truck. They deliver direct to San Francisco's Dogpatch neighborhood where GoodEggs is located. GoodEggs then makes home deliveries on their behalf.)

A few (grains and meat) deliver to Sonoma County as well as Mendocino County.

In addition to drop-off locations and on-farm pick-ups, a few farmers schedule pick-ups at farmers' markets. A few offer home delivery as well, for an extra charge and for no charge.

A few CSAs are willing to deliver to new areas if there is enough interest. One farm indicated they are looking to grow in Irish Beach and Pt. Arena in particular.

Note that Mendocino coastal towns and towns north of Laytonville are underserved. Fort Bragg has only small number of shares coming its way. These factors indicate an opening in the market.

EBT/Food Stamps

CSA farmers that have an option and ability to process food stamps can greatly enhance access to fresh food for all people.

Currently two farms accept EBT (Live Power Farm and Mendocino Organics). Live Power Community Farm has taken EBT for two seasons; they have their own card reader and have had minimal usage of the system (four users over the course of two years). However, they would like more users. Mendocino Organics received a permit to accept EBT in Spring 2013. It's unclear if they will be able to accept EBT before the 2014 season. The greatest obstacle for both of these farms is their capacity to conduct marketing and outreach for the service.

Almost all of farmers surveyed are willing to take EBT if they have assistance with the paperwork and/or an organization would be willing to take on acting as an umbrella for the service. All farmers expressed a desire to feed all people in Mendocino County and are willing to be of service in any way they can.

Bartering for Services

In an effort to understand if there are creative ways the lower-income community might be able to offer skills instead of funds in order to get farm fresh, healthy food, we wondered if bartering was a concept that interested our

CSA farmers. Perhaps there is a way to meet a need with a skilled person willing to work for trade. Responses were mixed, often based on past experience.

10 said "Yes"
3 said "Maybe"
1 said "No"
1 didn't answer

Assessing Outreach and Education

Do you know your customer demographics?

Many Mendocino County farmers have a basic understanding of their customer "demographics" as it relates to marketing. Due to the size of their memberships, they know their shareholders primarily as friends and neighbors. Thus, answers were understated and informal. The answers reflect characteristics commonly associated with people aware of this sort of farmer-eater relationship: well-educated, well-off and middle-class, careful and concerned about health, families, and people interested in a direct relationship with a farmer. The majority, though not all, members are Caucasian; some members reflected the Hispanic community present in Mendocino County.

Based on conversations with CSA farmers, we can make a basic assumption that CSA members chose CSA farmers based on proximity and an ability to relate to their CSA farmer. This assumption is based on the fact that some people are self-selecting. For example, it was observed at the CSA Open House held in conjunction with this grant-funded project, that the kind of people drawn toward Live Power Community Farm versus those drawn to Anderson Valley Community Farm or Mendocino Organics were people who tended to "look like" the farmers in terms of race and age group.

See Appendix for individual answers.

CSA Marketing

Marketing is not the easiest task for farmers who are best at tending plants, the land, and animals. When we asked farmers how people hear about their CSA and how they market it, some surveyed had years of experience marketing their CSAs, others less. Much of this disparity in marketing acumen has to do with the amount of time these farmers had operated their CSA and the amount of help they have with the task. Most recommended calling past members, Localharvest.org, community fliers and word-of-mouth as the most beneficial. Overall, most agreed that effective marketing requires a diversified approach with various outreach efforts to be successful. No one method worked over another. They said it simply requires effort.

Mendocino County farmers employ a variety of tactics that can be grouped into a few categories including: In-Person, Printed Literature, On-Line, Traditional Media and Events. To follow are a the variety of ways farmers promote their

CSAs in Mendocino County (and the Bay Area):

In-Person Tactics

- Word of mouth
- "Hustling" to round up members
- Talks with Ukiah Valley Medical Center's Nutrition Education Center
- Via other, collaborative farmers
- Public speaking
- Call members
- Networking
- Just talking to folks
- Being in community

Printed Literature Tactics

- Fliers on community bulletin boards, people's houses
- Sign for the van, truck
- Advertise in select newspapers depending on rates
- A printed a card, hand signed it that read "Dear Neighbor"
- Brochure
- Repetitive visual reminders
- Mailers around the county
- Low key advertising

On-Line Tactics

- Website
- Blog
- Social Media (Facebook profile)
- Community email listservs
- Monthly e-newsletter to members
- Listing on Localharvest.org
- Good Eggs
- Email out to past members

Traditional Media Tactics

- KZYX radio interview
- Article in the *Lighthouse Peddler*, *Ukiah Daily Journal*, etc

Local Events

- Farm Tours
- Barra of Mendocino Earth Day Festival
- Solar Living Institute Earth Day Festival
- Farm-to-Table dinners
- Mendocino County Fair
- Not So Simple Living Fair
- Advertise at the winter farmers markets
- Donate a share at benefits and auctions

Do you have a schedule for promoting your CSA?

We asked this question to gauge the capacity for and attention to marketing that each farm displays. The larger and more established CSA farmers have schedules and methods for building and keeping membership. The smaller, less established and more casual farms do not.

Since most of the CSA farmers grow vegetables, typically, they begin recruiting new members between late January and April via the methods described above. Membership determines crop planning for many of our farmers, for

others it does not. A few farmers answered that since their income is not dependent on the CSA they don't bother.

Farm and Food Information Sharing

We asked farms if they shared supplemental information with shareholders like farm budgets, crop plans, or recipes in order to understand how farmers educate their members about food, cooking, farming and the farming life. We speculated that lack of cooking skills and food knowledge in general might be a barrier to participation and continued participation over time. We also speculated that members value transparency and wondered how much information farmers were sharing and if it was worthwhile to do so.

Providing a "heads up" about what's coming in the box via a weekly email or a printed newsletter placed in the box that may also include stories from the farm and recipes, even photos of each item is highly recommended and is listed in the recommendations at the end of this report. However, much like marketing, farmers are busy with the task of growing food and have little time, or cause to remember to include these extras even if they would like to. Many who do this successfully use the help of interns or member support to get it done. It's definitely a value-added service that can have big impact.

- Recipes/Cooking Suggestions: 7
- Weekly Newsletters: 3
- Field Notes/Storytelling: 1
- Advance Notice of CSA Contents: 2
- Budget: 1
- Photos of the Farm: 3

On-line Presence

In today's highly digitized environment it's recommended by most mainstream business advisors that businesses of any size have some sort of on-line presence (if even simply a Google location page, with contact information and an address). This is now seen as a modern imperative in order to connect with customers, new, old and potential.

For many farmers computer time is not always forefront on their minds nor, especially for Mendocino County farmers, is it easily accessed. According to the Broadband Alliance of Mendocino County's 2011-2012 public broadband access survey, "most of Mendocino County remains broadband un-served or underserved, using the California Public Utilities Commission's current standard for fully served access as 6Mbps down, and 1.5Mbps up."⁶

Given time, Internet speed and general interest, it is difficult for farmers to maintain and update sites and consider being on-line at all. This impacts marketing and communication efforts. However, some surveyed said they utilize the following to some degree or another:

- Email
- Website
- Various online farm directories
- Facebook/Twitter

See Appendix for specific answers.

Shareholder Input

Almost all the farmers take input from their shareholders. Some farmers send out surveys to their shareholders to solicit feedback and to get ideas for planting; though they don't always take advise on what to plant. One farmer has an application on which they list things the shareholder can exempt so they know not to put it in their subscription. Many mentioned that they aim to create a process that empowers members to some degree. Some acknowledged difficulty in keeping record of requests.

See Appendix for specific answers.

Assessing Values

Environmental, Social and Economic Values

Inexpensive fossil fuels and chemical fertilizers have made it easy to produce cheap, abundant food and ship it all over the world. This has led to the increased disassociation between consumers from farmers and the land. Therefore we asked farmers to describe their environmental, social and economic values of their farm operation to gauge interest in and commitment to farming practices that support the overall health of the land and people. On another note, CSAs have grown in popularity in urban areas creating a demand that has inspired a few companies to create "farm box schemes" that do not represent the true spirit of a CSA. We asked this question to ascertain the unique bond between farmer, farm and eater in each farmer's words.

Not all of our respondents answered this question because we added it after the first few interviews. The answers we received communicate an overall commitment to sustainability. Not included: Mendocino Organics, Owen Family Farm, Petit Teton, Round Valley Raised. Interested parties can contact these farms directly for a full description. Here's what the responding farmers had to say, in their own words:

"We're not certified organic though the farm has been organically farmed for the last 33 years and that's very important to us, we use hardly any off-farm inputs and use mostly our own compost. That's important to how we want to farm; we want to make our own soil, and it's why we have vegetables and livestock for a closed loop system. We have hardly any waste. We want to be really involved in our community and in providing food for our community and want the farm to be a community hub. People are welcome to stop by whenever. The great thing about CSA pick up at the farm is the interaction with people in the community and

⁶ Source: Mendocino Broadband Plan

give them a chance to have a community space as well.”
Tim and Renee at **Anderson Valley Community Farm**

“Workers are paid a fair wage, organic farming is better for workers, soil and earth. We use fossil fuels but our fertility comes from green manure and zero synthetic fertilizers.”
Brandon, **Covelo Organics**

“I believe in saving the world one bowl of soup at a time. As a human I take from the earth, I don't want to take too much. I use fossil fuels, I use plastic, I think of myself as an environmentalist, etc., but I have four kids and I drive to town. I'm trying to be a good steward of the place I live.”
Tam, **Emendal**

“I have a very odd take on the world. I think we're here to serve each other. I'm thrilled if I have enough money to do the work I do (animals and plants), if I can pay my bills I'm thrilled. I was lucky to buy some land with a USDA farm loan. I think small-scale farming will save the world farm by farm. If we have small-scale farms that serve the surrounding community the world will be a better place. I feel organic farming is the only way to feed people. I think industrial farming has destroyed our soil, which is our blood. There's too much screen time and not enough nature time but a small farm provides the opportunity to engage in nature. All over England and Europe they have plots of community gardens. In the U.S., it should be a moral incentive to return to a nature-based way of life. We are all connected. That seems to have been lost. My values are that if I can even help small numbers of people I've done my job on earth.” Kate, **Foxglove Farm**

“Organic and whoever needs it can have it.” Toni,
Greenjeans Farm

“I come from a Biodynamic inspired background and we're working toward the farm being a whole sustainable unit. We aren't really there yet. We have some chickens. Farming is about the closest thing to active social change that exists; today there's a systematic attempt to keep people from providing for themselves.” Amber, **Happy Days Farm**

“We are Biodynamic. We create all inputs for the farm organism: feed, compost, energy from the sun, animals to pull the equipment and have a very high level of sustainability. We are very conscious of our carbon footprint. Socially we try to create the farm as a path to create greater awareness in all realms, and to transform our food system, create a different paradigm for the interface between farmer and eater so they become co-producers in community. We are co-actively re-developing and re-defining the basis of our culture and creating an associative economic paradigm basing the economic paradigm on earth and people in order to meet all parties needs. The good of the community as a whole is the bottom line. We use money in a mutually supportive fashion, rather than to gain advantage. We're creating mutual support through economy. It's important we have examples of that in the world; which is why we've stayed 100% community

based.” Steven and Gloria, **Live Power Farm**

“We are dry farming, use no chemical inputs and are committed to local growing because we are committed to having as low an impact as we can in our grain production. We run three of our four motorized equipment operated on locally produced bio-diesel fuel. We're trying to have as light a footprint as we can though we recognize mechanized grain production is not a low impact activity. We're trying to be transitional that at some point we need to learn to do this on a sustainable scale in a way that the knowledge and technology can be transferred to a plot scaled for food production. We also save our own seed. Trying to close the loop in that way and to be independent of outside seed producers.” Doug, **Mendocino Grain Project**

“John loves to farm. At the peak we felt we were growing for our family, our community and have a deep sense of community and caring about one another. I liked handing out the boxes and being social and knowing that you're producing a wonderful product to make people healthy, to contribute to their health.” Joanne, **Noyo Hill Farm**

“We're surrounded by redwoods and the Garcia River runs through our property, so there's a significant riparian environment. John [owner of Oz Farm] has a significant understanding of timber management and gentlemanly stewardship. He has a positive impact philosophy, thinks about the hardwood understory and making room for a future old growth redwood forest. He's planted thousands of redwoods over the years. He is also very active in a guardian role over the river and fisheries specifically. We are certified organic which indicates subscription to a certain use of chemicals and this year everybody working on the farm is committed to a deepening knowledge of Permaculture and other nature patterned modalities of food production and participating in ecology, not running over it or superimposing on top of nature. We've coordinated our process as much as possible by being sensitive to the kinds of industry we're supporting. Got most of our seeds from Baker Creek Seed Company this year. We think of them as being protectors of endangered foods. I really support their projects like the Petaluma Seed Bank. Everything is connected to some deep emotional root in some way.” Jesse, **Oz Farm**

“Organic in a spiritual way, in the sense that I believe there's an aliveness to the soil and plants (a Biodynamic ethic). We're trying to do a closed system farm. We have horses and chickens and are keeping as much in-house as possible. We make our own compost, buy as little supplemental stuff as possible. We're interested in communicating with people but not so great at that.” Katie,
Roseman Creek Farm

CSA as Activism

Steve and Gloria Decater inspired us to ask if CSA farmers are interested in participating in CSA as an activist route

for creating change in our society, our food system? As the first CSA farm in California, they have a vested interest in maintaining the traditional definition of a CSA which, as mentioned earlier states “farming is not just a business like any other profit-making business, but a precondition of all human life on earth, and a precondition of all economic activity.” In today’s food world, dominated by grocery outlets, processed foods and subsidized commodity crops, the CSA farmer has a unique ability to encourage advocacy for a co-producer model that can work for all humans.

All of our surveyed farmers said “yes,” and here are some of their specific comments on the matter.

“Absolutely. We really believe in the power that CSAs and small farms can hold in the community. It makes total sense. The community shares the risks and the benefits of the farm and keeping food locally is really high on our values list.” **Anderson Valley Community Farm**

“John does think of it as a subversive act. We are going against the norm, big business, agri-business and it’s very satisfying to know that we can take care of ourselves and others. John is always willing to teach and share what we have with others.” **Noyo Hill Farm**

“I think in reality Emandal is but it’s not overtly. Am I interested in being out there and waving a flag? No, but I’m out there doing what I do and think people glean a lot from how I live and how I do my business.” **Emandal**

“For sure. Part of year-round CSA is about closing the gap in food security.” **Happy Days Farm**

Assessing Capacity, Skills and Resources

Participation and Co-Producers

This like many of following questions looks at capacity. In terms of acreage and labor force, as indicated earlier, Mendocino County CSA farmers fall into the decidedly small farm context. As we will see later, almost all of the CSA farmers are owner/operators with somewhere in the range of zero to one or two employees. We wondered how they are able to complete and execute all the various farm tasks required to produce food. We wondered too as to their ability and interest in helping to connect eaters with the land from which their food comes and the skills required to produce it.

We discovered that Mendocino County CSA farmers recognize that regularly scheduled on-farm volunteers or worker CSA shares are technically illegal in California. And, while many farmers would sure love some help, it’s difficult to have untrained members help, on occasion, with special events or work days. Some however hold annual or periodic farm visits, tours and volunteer days (usually to help weed or sort vegetables for the share.)

See Appendix for specific answers.

Training and Support

Mendocino County boasts farmers with incredible training behind them and those who are self-taught with years of experience. Biodynamics®, Permaculture, Alan Chadwick and John Jeavons are key influencers for many.

The following summarizes their responses:

- Some had formal training with experienced mentors or a structured farm program
- Some are self-taught through reading, trial and error
- Some were mentored informally by family members or with the surrounding farming community
- Some worked for other farms before starting their own
- A few expressed interest in more training (personnel management in particular)

First Time Farm Financing

According to a 2007 United States Environmental Protection Agency report [<http://www.epa.gov/agriculture/ag101/demographics.html>] evaluating agriculture demographics, the number of farmers and farms in the U.S. is decreasing and 60% of farmers are 55 years or older. According to the Center for Rural Affairs [<http://www.cfra.org/beginning-farmer-rancher>] “half of all current farmers are likely to retire in the next decade” and one of the biggest barriers to new farmers who want to get into farming is the high cost of starting and financing a farm. We asked Mendocino County CSA farmers how they financed their farm when they started to assess the various ways in which current farmers gained access to the land and capital needed to start their CSA operation. We promised to keep the answers confidential.

Farmers listed the following ways in which they financed their farm operation:

- Personal savings
- Family support (land and/or loans)
- USDA loan
- Off-farm income

Personal savings and family loans were top answers. Interestingly not a single farmer mentioned getting a loan from a bank.

Technical Assistance

Only one farmer indicated they received technical assistance from a conventional support structure like University of California Cooperative Extension.

Farmers received assistance from the following:

- CSA members
- Other farmers
- Equipment dealers
- NRCS
- UCCE

- Farm certification (organic/Biodynamic®) agency

Using Technology

Based on interviews, Mendocino County CSA farmers are generally defined as limited-resource farmers. They tend to prioritize capital investments into the physical farm rather than in technology. However, they do use some available technology, as it works for them. Here is a sampling:

- Quickbooks
- *“An Excel spreadsheet that looks at what's produced.”*
- Small Farm Central. They make websites and offer e-commerce solutions for CSAs and specifically their Member assembler program
- General Microsoft Office
- *“Our landlord's weather monitoring service to track precipitation and weather.”*
- PayPal
- On-line banking
- *“Last year we had someone who did our books at the end of the year and did a P&L. We didn't do a great job and I'm interested in learning more how to do it myself.”*
- *“A pick list and a name list.”*
- *“Good Eggs takes care of a lot for us.”*
- Turbo Tax
- *“Google's version of things.”*

Extra Hands

We asked if Mendocino County CSA operators have a farm manager or someone who manages their CSA. The overall majority are owner-operators and answered “no.” However a few have the resources to hire out and some divide and conquer with their partner(s). We got the impression that very few if any of the surveyed farmers had employees.

Growing to the Next Level

We wanted to know how to help increase farming and production capacity in Mendocino County. We asked: What sort of resources do you think you need to take it to the next level? By “it” we explained that the answer should refer to any aspect of the farming operation, CSA included, that needs growth. Of course, not all of our respondents wanted to grow their business. Smaller, less-established operations seemed to be in need of information, labor and members, while larger operations mentioned infrastructure improvements, time and help with marketing. Working capital was among the top answers for all.

Other top answers included:

- Infrastructure such as greenhouses, community spaces, equipment
- More members (to increase capital)
- Labor: employees or occasional volunteer help
- Land: leasing other properties to extend farming output
- Access to credit and lower interest rates
- Time
- Technical help with communications and marketing

Assessing the Future

Projections and Plans

We needed to know if we can accurately rely on these farmers to continue to feed us through their CSAs and wanted to know whether they had given thoughts to the future. We asked them about their plans and if the CSA is a small or large part of their business development. The answers led to an almost equally divided mix of CSA being a small or large part of the farm.

- CSA is large piece of future: 7
- Small piece: 8
- Not sure yet: 1

This leaves continued openings for more CSA farmers to enter the field.

Answers included a variety on the following:

- Continue CSA focus
- Find non-CSA buyers or new markets (wholesale, farmers market, restaurants, etc)
- Develop other products and farm outputs (livestock, tours)
- Become more self-sufficient

See Appendix for individual answers.

Succession Planning

Keeping land in agricultural production for food crops and sharing farming skills with future generations will be key drivers of Mendocino County's ability to feed itself in years and generations to come independent of the modern food supply chain. We needed to know if these farmers have given thought to who will carry the farm after them and how, so we asked about succession planning. As expected, the older the farmer and the longer the length of time they've been farming, the more thought they've put into the question. Younger farmers indicated that they had not considered it. Yes answers can be summed up with the following:

- Keep land in an agricultural trust
- Thought about “sustainability of the farm as a farm.”
- Keep the land and farming in the family
- Find an apprentice to carry on the work

See Appendix for individual answers.

Additional Comments

We wanted farmers to have an avenue for sharing additional thoughts, to speak their mind, about the state of CSA farming in Mendocino County, our industrialized food system and/or their ideas about how more low-income people could get access to farm fresh food.

Their answers expressed the challenges they have faced

as CSA farmers and they offered ideas for how to educate people.

Many expressed some of the same challenges, for example, a need for:

- More cooking and food education
- Seasonal eating and cooking education
- Farm-friendly land policy
- Connection with other farmers to trade, collaborate
- New farmers
- Farmers to network socially
- Breaking the spell of “cosmetically perfect” produce

See Appendix for individual answers.

Central Findings

The questions we asked and the answers respondents provided share the unique story of CSA operations in Mendocino County.

CSA operators in Mendocino County have many similarities:

- They are committed to growing good food for their community, for a fair price.
- They value their land and feel honored to farm
- They operate on small acreage
- They view their CSA as a way to transform the food system
- They value direct interactions with shareholders; they enjoy the social aspect of their work
- They have little acreage and resources to scale up
- They are owner-operated with very few employees if any
- They are self-taught
- They have little time for marketing

There are some differences as well.

- Some consider farming a business while others view it as a lifestyle or an art form.
- Some operate the CSA as their primary model (or financing method) while others use it to supplement the farm income.

We can also make some generalizations.

Most CSAs in Mendocino County grow vegetables. Most existing CSAs have come about in recent years (although a few have been in operation for a while). Finances greatly impact these operations, which is also why some have stopped or plan to stop production in the future.

Barriers to Scale and What’s Possible

A few significant barriers exist that may prohibit the prolific growth of CSAs in Mendocino County but they should not deter prospective farmers. Rather, they should be viewed as an opportunity for inspired action.

Room to Grow

Much of Mendocino County is designated timberland and according to the 2011 Mendocino Crop Report, vegetable production makes up a mere 1% of the agricultural income for the county, with fruits and nuts (winegrapes and pears) at 74%. Field crops, livestock and nursery make up the rest. Given that the majority of land is used for timber, wine grapes, grazing, and non-food cash crops, Mendocino County CSA farmers work to supply food on very small acreage with little room to scale up production in terms of land base available. Additionally, Mendocino County’s CSA farmers serve a very small population segment and only a handful want to continue their CSA programs into the future.

However, if we look at current Mendocino County share numbers, as provided, CSA capacity can serve a total of 330 shares (approximate households) of vegetables for the county and 13 meat shares. So, current vegetable production in comparison with a

population of just over 80,000, Mendocino County CSAs serve about 0.4% of the population. There is potential room for growing CSA participation based on population numbers.

See the chart in the Shareholders Served and Need for More section for further reference.

Labor and Time

Another barrier to scale is that farmers tend to be independent, enjoying solitary work and are therefore stretched thin. Some work hard to maintain a balance between on-farm work and off-farm wage earning, leaving little time left to market their products, find new shareholders and run the business of a successful farm. Almost all of the surveyed farms have no employees, making it difficult to scale up as well.

Resources: Money

Mendocino County can support more farmers in terms of a potential growing demand for local produce (if the trend towards local food continues to grow, as evidenced in nearby Sonoma, Marin, Alameda and San Francisco counties), but land and alternative financing options are needed for farmers to take on the projects that will help

“Here’s an idea. Meal Boxes or Meal Market Baskets. Also, I want to reach out to schools to connect with people who are hungry. One of the things that I can’t wrap my mind around is that it’s strange that the school system doesn’t use all the fresh vegetables available in our area.”

“People have high expectations of what’s in their boxes. There is a real corruption because of cosmetically perfect food. But on a farm, if you harvest and make it sparkly and beautiful that’s a distortion of how perfect the food needs to look. It’s a weird world with germ-a-phobes and dirt, good organic Biodynamic dirt and compost are the most awesome thing in the world.”

them reach the next level. However, the existing CSA model is one possible engine for building capital, as many of the surveyed farmers acknowledged.

According to Galt:

“CSA remains an important form of direct marketing, and is especially important for smaller farms who are more likely to be more heavily dependent on CSA as a market channel. Although most CSAs are profitable, CSA is like other forms of farming in the U.S., which often require farm partners to work off farm to maintain. However, CSAs are less dependent on off-farm work than U.S. agriculture generally. CSA also appears to be supporting a new generation of farmers that aspires to start farming who do not have a great deal of capital. CSAs are very powerful economic engines.”

Impact of Retail Organic Produce

CSA operations are impacted by competitively-priced organic produce readily available at retail grocery stores in many Mendocino County locations. CSA operations are in competition with larger organic farms in California and Mexico that supply the commodity market and make lower-priced organic and “wholesome” foods available widely in large chain grocers. This fact also creates an opportunity for CSA farmers to differentiate themselves through storytelling and the unique relationship that can only be found when community members engage in a co-producer relationship with a farmer.

Local Food Access and EBT Availability

Mendocino County farmers are a smart, committed bunch. They want to feed the whole county and make their food accessible to all. They are eager to share what they grow. All that interviewees felt the CSA model is an avenue to transforming our broken food system. All agreed that they would be more than happy to take EBT if there was a way for them to do it with low administrative cost and without taking up too much time.

Farmers Perceptions to Barriers to Scale

Farmers also had a lot to share about barriers to participation. Many of their comments illustrate lifestyle choices they have observed and tell the story of the impact of the commoditization and commercialization of the American food supply:

- People have lost touch with what it means to cook seasonally. They expect everything to be available at any time and they want what they want when they want it
- They don't want to take a risk of losing money by having a crop not perform or by wasting a product that they don't know how to use
- People want to know how to use what's in the box and

use all of it before the next box arrives

- People don't want to eat things that are unfamiliar to them

Education and Outreach

There is a lot of room for education and outreach regarding the true cost of food, availability of flexible payments for CSAs, the true meaning and value of the CSA relationship and seasonally eating and cooking education. This type of work will help create the demand that is needed to inspire more farmers to start CSAs and to provide a living wage for their efforts.

Assessing The Market (Eaters/Co-Producers)

Consumer Survey Responses

Mendocino County Demographics and Sample Size

According to the US Census Bureau (2009), Mendocino County's median household income was \$41,488 (70% of the statewide median of \$58,925). Family income data for 2009 also shows that 21% of Mendocino County families lived on incomes of \$25,000 or less, compared with 15% statewide. According to a 2012 Mendocino County Health and Human Services Public Health Community Health Data report the percentage of people below the federal poverty line is 20% (compared to 15.8% statewide) and 12.8% of families are below the federal poverty line (compared to 11.8% statewide).

According to the 2012 Census estimate, Mendocino County's population is 87,428. With 140 responses, our survey reached 0.16 percent of the population, which is not an overwhelming response. However, when we look at standard survey equations to calculate the number of responses needed to reach a confident conclusion, we fall somewhere around a +/-10% margin of error (for a population of 100,000, we'd need 1,100 responses to be at +/- 3%, 400 for +/-5% and 100 to be at +/-10%). Additionally, 500-1000 is considered an “average” sample size of a regional population. Our sample size was in the 1,000 to 1,500 range, considered as “many.” Therefore, we estimate that of 87,428 people, we received a 9.33% return, which is an average response with a reasonable margin of error.⁸

Methods and Audience

We used two methods to conduct the survey: on-line and in-person. An on-line survey link was sent to personal and business lists of Mendocino County food and wine producers as well as general consumers and posted on and shared on various Facebook pages (the posts were paid for and targeted to reach the population). We provided explicit instruction that you must be a Mendocino County resident to respond. The link was also sent to community members via colleagues, to the Transition Town group,

⁸ Source: Sample Size Chart

local officials and local food listservs. This first set of targeted survey takers represented the low-hanging fruit, people who are aware of CSAs and local food initiatives. The same survey link was then posted on the Mendo-Lake Credit Union’s website and their Facebook page to reach a broader audience.

Since lack of high-speed Internet is an issue in Mendocino County, in-person surveys were included to accommodate that barrier. Twenty-eight responses in-person surveys were conducted at the Tribal Health Clinic in Covelo and the Hillsdale Health Clinic in Ukiah.

All answers were collated in the on-line survey system, SurveyMonkey, and analyzed together. There may be slight discrepancies in the percentages as not all people answered all questions and some questions allowed for more than one answer.

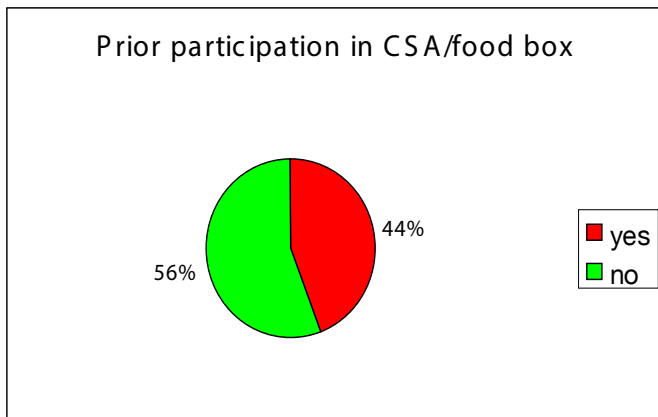
Survey Questions and Answers

We asked 10 questions. The questions were developed with the help of the grant Project Organizer, Paula Gaska.

Have you ever participated in a CSA/food box?

138 answered, 2 skipped this question
Of the 139 respondents, 42.2% responded “yes”, **55.8% responded “no”**.

The pie chart below illustrates the answers provided.



If you have participated in a CSA share, which farm/farmer do you/have you supported? Please specify.

60 answered, 80 skipped this question
Of the 60 responses, answers varied. Some indicated farms that are not in Mendocino County as they lived in other locations during the CSA participation.

The most common Mendocino County producers were: Live Power Community Farm, Covelo Organics and Mendocino Organics, with Noyo Farm a close fourth. Other county answers include: “milk share,” Howard Hospital Common Wealth Garden & Brookside Community Garden, Ukiah High School Garden, Hoyts for chickens, Anderson Valley Community Farm, and Blue Meadows Farm.

These responses represent some options that are no longer available or available to a limited group. For example, Blue Meadows Farm ended their CSA in 2012, the Brookside Community Garden is undergoing a transition, the Ukiah High School Garden CSA is regrouping with an intention to produce again but not as a CSA. Cathy and Greg Hoyt still raise chickens for a buying club amongst friends.

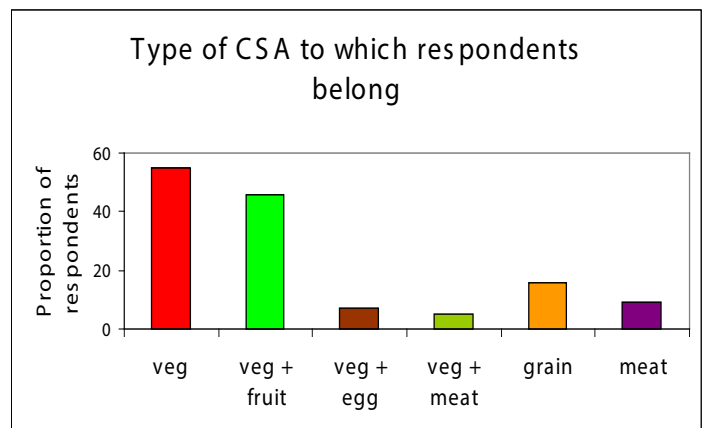
What type of CSA did/do you subscribe to?

56 answered, 84 skipped.

Vegetables mostly (55.36%); Vegetables with added fruit share (46.43%); Vegetables with an added egg share (7.14%), Vegetables with an added chicken or meat share (5.36%); Grains (16.07%); and Meat or chicken (8.93%).

Respondents were offered an “Other” response. It garnered responses such as: “milk,” “herbs and herbal remedies were included as well,” “I had a flower bouquet share once—that was fun!” “bread,” “ALL OF THE ABOVE,” “bread and soup.”

The bar chart below illustrates the general responses.



What do you enjoy most about your CSA? Please tell us in a few words.

56 answered, 84 skipped this question.

In general, responses varied on the same themes of “fresh, local, organic, nutritious and I want to support my local farmer.” Of the responses, which were quite colorful and sincere, here are a few highlights:

“Fresh, local and they provide choices I might never try on my own.”

“Using many heirloom and exotic greens. INDULGING in veggies and having to use them up before the next box arrives.”

“Variety, ease of pick up.”

“Vegetables that I’ve never seen before then learning how to cook with them.”

“Supporting organic agriculture.”

“Diversity of products, learning to eat & cook new things, farm newsletter included.”

“Safe fresh local abundant vegetables prices right”

“I love supporting local farmers, and I MUST have healthy food, having a lighter footprint on the earth (local = less fossil fuels!).”

“Eating what is in season.”

“Diversity and high quality of freshly harvested food, knowing and supporting the people/farm/community my food comes from.”

“The variety, quality, freshness, the way it supplements my home garden, having the refrigerator full of wonderful food every week so I can plan my meals around good food.”

“Fresh organic veggies Hoping/knowing that a local family can make a living providing something so vital to our community.”

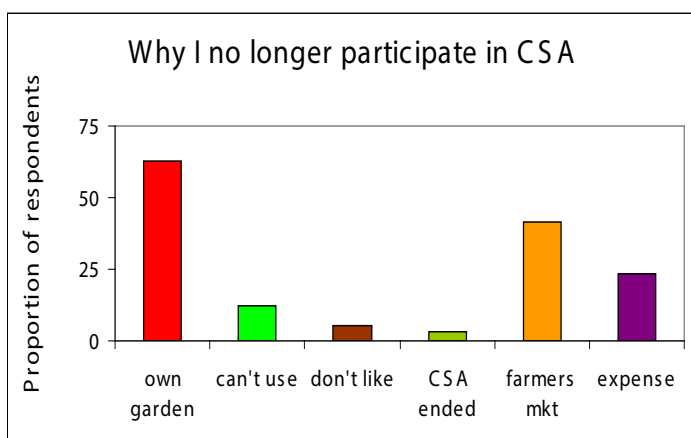
“I like eating locally and in season. I also like the challenge of using what comes in the box. It pushes me to try new recipes.”

If you do not regularly participate in a CSA, or stopped altogether, why? Check all that apply.

72 answered, 68 skipped this question.

I have my own garden (62.89%); I don't know what to do with all the items in the box (12.5%); I didn't like the items in the box (5.56%); The farmer I worked with stopped farming (2.78%); **I purchase food at the farmers market (41.67%); I could no longer afford the upfront costs (23.61%).**

The bar chart illustrates these answers. Note that “I have my own garden” has the most responses.



Respondents were offered an “Other” response. Forty

people answered. Of those responses here are some highlights:

“Moved”

“I don't need that much food”

“Didn't know there was a CSA available here”

“I want more choice, takes too much energy to use it to cook for kids”

“I am single — not sure I could use food soon enough”

“Pick up day conflicted with my schedule”

“Don't know how to sign up”

“Not enough information about availability – who, what, where, how”

“Working out of town and not home every week”

“I'm not sure I would get the vegetables that I regularly enjoy. I suppose I would have to learn to eat something new and that probably is a good thing.”

“Kept forgetting to pick up the box”

“They stopped allowing a shared share and challenging as a single person to get a whole share and logistically annoying to share a share with someone not in my household”

“I purchase as needed to avoid waste”

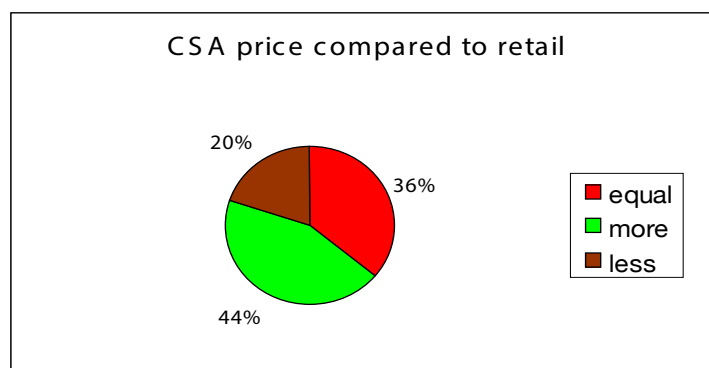
“Upfront costs were an issue, often I would not favor many items and thus did not find it a value”

Do you think the price of a CSA is equal greater than or less than retail?

94 responded, 46 skipped

Equal to store costs (36.17%); **More expensive than store costs (43.62%);** Less than store costs (20.21%)

See the pie chart below. Note that “more expensive” is the leading answer indicating a need for further research and



education.

Please list a few foods or products that you are most interested in having in a CSA box.

96 answered, 44 skipped

Of the respondents, many answers included your “garden variety,” common, everyday food items such as: lettuce, broccoli, tomatoes (very popular), peppers, beets, corn (also very popular), carrots, peas, green beans, cucumbers, melons, garlic, potatoes, eggs, eggplant, cabbage, onions, strawberries, berries, peaches, apples, squash, Brussels sprouts, spinach, avocados, beans, Swiss chard, artichokes, leeks, seasonal mushrooms,

There were mixed comments about greens. Some love the greens, others specifically mentioned they’d prefer none or limited greens.

Some not as common items mentioned: cheese, bread, grain, honey, cut flowers, tea.

In what city/town do you live?

140 responded (this was a mandatory question)

Of the responses; **Ukiah (48.57%)**; Covelo (11.43%), Willits (10.71%), Fort Bragg (9.29%); Boonville (7.14%). These were the greatest responses.

There was a glitch in this question’s answer. Respondents were offered an “Other” choice if their town was not listed (and we offered them 11 choices, however due to the glitch, a respondent had to choose an answer before indicating a clearer response. Once we heard of this error it was fixed but up to 50 respondents had this error in their survey. Please see the full survey responses attached as an addendum to this report. We can however surmise that the vast majority of respondents were from the Ukiah area.

What is your approximate average household income? 134 responded, 6 skipped this question.

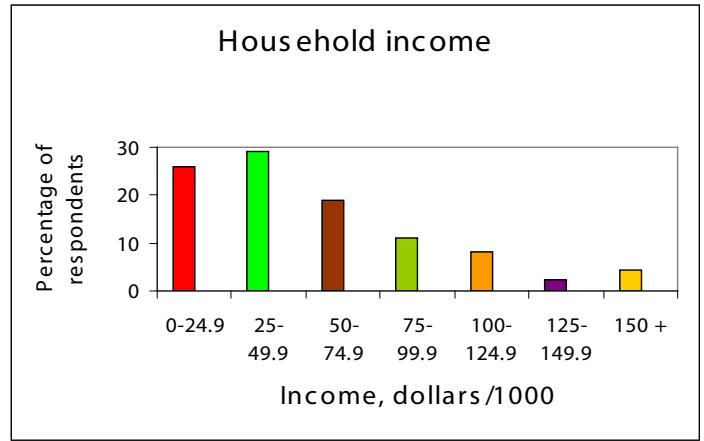
Of the 134 responses: **\$0-\$24,999 (26.12%)**; **\$25,000-\$49,999 (29.10%)**; \$50,000-\$74,999 (18.66%), \$75,000-\$99,999 (11.19%); \$100,000 - \$124,999 (8.21%); \$125,000- \$149,000 (2.24%), \$150,000-\$199,999 (0%); and \$200,000 and up (4.48%). Note the two lowest income levels represent the majority of respondents.

If you have never participated in a CSA, why not? (Check all that apply)

63 responded, 77 skipped this question

Of the respondents: **I have my own garden (46.03%)**; I don’t cook (6.35%); I don’t want to pay up front without a guarantee of quality and amount (11.11%); **I don’t fully understand what a CSA is (50.79%)**.

Respondents were offered an “Other (please specify)” choice, 36 replied. Of those, answers varied, and some



were similar to those of question 5, see the full survey report for details. Some highlights:

“I don’t know a farmer near me that offers it” (a very common response)

“I am concern about the method that the vegetables are produce. I have a farmer tell me she uses her urine as fertilizer”

“Know little of it, do not know how to join”

“Too much for household of one”

“Lack of control over contents”

“I haven’t seen it advertised”

“We never jump into new ideal, we like to wait to see how it goes”

“I am really busy and prefer to eat out in the evening ... but I love juicing in the day ☺”

Central Findings

Please note, it was not within the scope of this report but if one had the time and resources, one could research farmers market sales data, survey people to see who has a garden, look at the Ukiah Natural Foods Co-op sales data, and at the sales data for other local food outlets to see where people are really getting their local food. One could also interview more lower income people and discover through mor ein-depth analysis the true barriers to access.

For the sake of this report we used the data uncovered in the research presented above.

Barriers to CSA Participation

The greatest barriers to participation lie in the lifestyle habits of people in Mendocino County and general understanding of what a CSA is, how it functions and how much it costs.

Lifestyle and Cultural Habits

A majority of respondents indicated that they grow their own food (62.89%). And 41.67% indicated they shop at the farmers' market.

Our surveyed farmers provided additional lifestyle insights based on their conversations with community members. These included:

- Lack of understanding about seasonal cooking and eating
- Lack of cooking skills (although only 6.35% surveyed said they didn't know how to cook)
- Reliance on "fast food" and pre-packaged meals
- Lack of food identification skills and understanding about storage and handling. Lack of ability to distinguish one item from another, for example the difference between a parsnip and a turnip.
- Grocery store convenience. A CSA is unique. A CSA sells a relationship and connection to a farm as well as health and wellness.
- CSA membership requires people be "grounded" and on a schedule
- CSA membership requires curiosity and sense of adventure with cooking and eating
- People need to know they can share a share.
- Farmers want to create value for the box so they load it up with vegetables that people then have a hard time eating in one week, resulting in food waste. People need help understanding how to use all the contents in the span of a week, on a busy schedule.

In looking deeper into contents of the CSA box as a possible barrier, here is what we found: Not a single survey respondent indicated any particular culturally-specific food they wanted to have. Most listed staples like onions, garlic, tomatoes, etc. Some liked a lot of greens, others didn't. Some wanted eggs, some didn't, etc. This diversity of needs speaks a lot about the need for seasonal eating education and education about what is typically in a CSA box as well.

Yet another important note is that joining a CSA is not for everyone. A community still needs farmers' markets, farm stands, and local grocery stores to offer that convenience for eaters who don't want to compromise as far as the CSA relationship requires and for those who want to maintain a certain level of choice with food purchases.

Food Stamps and Access

Not a part of our survey and an important aside, a few of the certified farmers markets in Mendocino County take EBT cards (food stamps/CalFresh) and a Food Stamp Match Program has been in place for a few seasons creating increased access to this fresh food. The Food Stamp Match Program means a shopper with an EBT card, swipes the card at the farmers' market for up to \$15. The local Food Stamp Match Program funds then matches that amount up to an additional \$15 in farmers' market tokens.

The shopper now has up to \$30 to spend on fresh, locally grown food.

According to Scott Cratty, General Manager of MCFARM, the Mendocino County Farmer's Market Association, the organization that operates Mendocino County's eight certified markets, "EBT purchases for the last market season (5/12 through 4/13) were about 8%; very roughly \$30.5K in total EBT redeemed (that includes matching dollars) out of about \$384K in all vendor receipts."

The power of the Food Stamp Match Program is that it builds nutrition and health with economically challenged local families and it supports local farmers by bringing tax dollars back to the community with purchases of locally produced foods. An EBT Match program or any kind of subsidy program for CSA shareholders or for CSA farmers could yield significant return on the community as well.

Additionally, there are a number of uncertified, "renegade" markets in the county that serve micro-locations and small communities like Potter Valley, Albion, Bell Springs Road and others. These markets are undocumented and it's uncertain as to how many community members participate in them.

Marketing and Outreach

That said, CSA opportunities need better marketing and outreach in order to reach a broader audience (50.79% said they didn't fully understand what a CSA is and how it functions). Education and outreach needs to focus "beyond the choir," beyond the people who already understand why buying direct from farmers is beneficial to health and the pocketbook. Additionally, CSA operators who can take EBT cards and have the resources to market them may have an increased chance of reaching lower income communities.

Marketing and outreach activities are a part of the grant funding that funded this research. Included is the addition of an on-line CSA Directory and many outreach activities, including a CSA open house at an Earth Day Festival, newspaper articles and public speaking events. These are positive efforts and their effects can't be known in the scope of this paper. However, they must be sustained and continue beyond the grant-funded period.

CSA Costs

Still other significant barriers are financial. The majority of our responses came from people with incomes in the \$0-\$24,999 (26.12%) and \$25,000-\$49,999 (29.10%) ranges. An important insight from the consumer study is the primary misconception about price. Those surveyed had the impression that the cost of CSA membership is more expensive than store costs (43.62%). These findings indicate a need for greater research regarding the comparison of costs between retail and direct from farmer. Also a need to communicate how the cost of the share compares to weekly and seasonal store shopping for the

same foods and nutritional impact. It would also help to compare how CSA share prices are based on local food production costs while retail prices are based on the ever-changing commodity market.

A few farmers we spoke with, notably, Steven Decater and Michael Foley (not surveyed, and not a CSA farmer) have conducted independent studies comparing their pricing to the pricing at Mariposa and Safeway markets in Willits. Their records indicate that the price of their produce is, in general equal or less than store costs. They also noted that all prices, retail or direct from farm, vary depending on production, weather, season and other factors that the public may not be aware of, indicating the need for further education and awareness raising as well as unbiased price comparisons.

As an aside, just this June, Tarney Sheldon, a Live Power Community Farm shareholder conducted an independent study comparing the cost of her weekly basket of Biodynamic® produce to somewhat comparable items available for sale at the Ukiah Raley's and the Ukiah Natural Foods Co-op. (She replaced non-organic items if organic was not available; it's unknown but doubtful that her comparisons were made with Biodynamically® produced items.) She found that her weekly cost was just about \$2.00 more. She writes, "I have to say that I am pleased to be eating local, farm fresh, AFFORDABLE produce. It's totally worth the extra \$2.00 to know exactly where my food is coming from and to be in a relationship with local farmers. Also, I know that as the summer season progresses I'll be getting WAY more produce in my basket, the tables will turn, and my CSA basket will be much more economical than retail stores."⁹

Another financial consideration is the misunderstanding regarding up-front costs. Of those surveyed who participated in a CSA then stopped, 23.61% indicated that they could no longer afford the up-front costs. This indicates a need for greater education and outreach regarding up-front costs and the flexibility many farmers indicated they are willing to exhibit to get food to people who want it. Farmers may consider advertising that payment plans are available as it can be difficult for some to meet the full-cost at sign-up.

Comparing CSA Interviews to Consumer Surveys

When looking at the specific and general responses to each element of this report we can draw some conclusions based on the data collected.

In Mendocino County, there is a fundamental:

- Lack of understanding of the term CSA or concept of Community Supported Agriculture
- Lack of understanding about payment periods and pricing
- Lack of understanding of the difference between retail food prices and buying directly from the farmer

⁹ <http://www.gardensproject.org/blog/index.php?id=5400399056341783685>

- Lack of food/cooking knowledge (12.5% surveyed said they didn't know what to do with all the stuff in the box)

Potential Markets and Marketing for CSAs in Mendocino County

Market Potential

Farmers and other business owners often have the philosophy of, "If we build it (grow it or offer it), they will come (and buy it)." That is not necessarily a wise course of action, as many entrepreneurs have found after investing time and financial resources in a venture. Individual producers interested in marketing through a CSA should analyze whether or not market potential exists in their distinct area and whether their land and climate can produce what their market research suggests is in demand before developing a CSA. The answers to the following questions are specific to Mendocino County based on results of this survey and can help a producer get started.

Is there a need in the marketplace for a (or another) CSA? Are there customers interested in receiving a regular delivery of a specified amount of product?

According to the US Census Bureau (2009), Mendocino County's median household income was \$41,488 and family income data for 2009 also shows that 21% of Mendocino County families lived on incomes of \$25,000 or less. Our surveyed respondents echoed this with the majority making less than \$50,000 a year. Our farmers responded that the price of their shares was average and many are not making a living wage from their CSA. This indicates that support needs to be given to the majority of the population (via EBT use and or subsidies from employers and insurance companies) or CSA operators.

If CSA operations want to grow they may aim for the higher income brackets for their membership: \$75,000-\$99,999 (11.19%); \$100,000 - \$124,999 (8.21%); \$125,000-\$149,000 (2.24%), \$200,000 and up (4.48%). Or they can look at expanding production to decrease marginal cost of production, reducing what the farmer has to charge to make a profit. However, this approach requires land and capital investments.

Looking toward the future, if we combine the small percentage of the population currently served with added education and outreach efforts, there is indeed room for more CSAs. Additionally, an EBT program could increase this potential.

Currently CSAs serve about 330 households. That's approximately 0.4% of the population. Our analysis does show that Mendocino County needs more CSAs, especially to serve Fort Bragg and the most northern parts of the county. (According to 2011 census data Fort Bragg's population is at 7,270 with an estimated median income of \$31,411.) As some of our CSA farmers move on to other ventures we will need more as well.

However, it's worth saying that the future focus should not only be on whether there is more market potential for CSAs but also on how community-based farms can be sustainable and successful. CSA is just one tool out of many.

Can these customers be identified and reached through promotional efforts?

Yes, depends on who you want to reach out to. CSA operators should get clear on their goals and community and understand who they want to reach. For example, with greater understanding of the product and its health and cost benefits, outreach to businesses, with the message of employee health could help a promotional effort; as well as outreach to churches and community groups. Again, marketing takes time away from the farm, so producers need to be aware that in order to increase shareholders, they have to make the time to really sell the opportunity and the benefits shareholders can find in the relationship.

How many customers who are interested in a CSA are willing and able to purchase a CSA share?

More education outreach is required to address this key question. Roughly half of the people surveyed did not know or were unclear about the nature of the CSA relationship (50.79%).

Which types of promotional efforts are likely to be needed and how much will they cost?

See marketing suggestions. Cost was not analyzed.

How much are customers willing to pay for a CSA share? This is pure conjecture. We can hypothesize they want product that is priced at least equal to or less than comparable retail products. We can also hypothesize that what shareholders are willing to pay for a share can vary from community-to-community across Mendocino County. There is opportunity for increased education about the value of farmers to the overall community and the cost of farming.

What other sources of local products currently exist?

Farmers markets and home gardens are the biggest direct competitors, with grocers a second.

What other opportunities or threats, such as regulations, exist in the marketplace that may affect CSA share sales?

A full business plan should be created by each farmer to analyze this for themselves, but let's look at opportunities and threats in general.

Opportunities: The buy fresh, buy local movement is still a positive force with increased recognition growing through regional and local Buy Local campaigns. The Truth in Labeling campaign as a greater movement, not simply to label GMOS, but new research that uncovers the truth about what's in the food supply will continue to have a positive influence. The rising cost of fuel and food is an opportunity for farmers and local food.

Threats: Many local grocery outlets use the rise of interest in local farms and food to "green wash" or "local wash" their efforts (in Ukiah Raley's, is one example). Their "false advertising" is potentially huge competition. Continued sales of fast food at incredibly low costs distorts the true cost of food production and harms understanding of the benefits of buying from local farmers.

Not necessarily considered part of "the marketplace" but the food safety regulations (local & federal) could become a threat over time. Also, see pending legislation information in the Appendix.

Other Questions for Individual Farmers

Farmers should also consider these questions as they relate to their own operations:

- *What are the characteristics, strengths and weaknesses of competition (other CSAs and other sources of similar products)?*
- *How many shares of the producer's CSA are likely to be sold?*
- *Is the producer likely to be able to produce at a cost low enough and sell enough shares at a price high enough to generate a positive net return or profit?*
- *Is an off-farm site available for CSA share delivery if needed?*

Looking Ahead and Marketing Suggestions

Farmers cannot do this work alone. As mentioned several times, they are busy farming and time is their greatest asset and need. If we are to truly support the notion of a new paradigm in food and farmer security, the community must work to support agriculture and the farmer at all levels, including helping to find new markets and marketing. The system is designed to work in collaboration so all elements must be in concert with each party playing a role.

Community members who are already committed to the idea of buying directly from farmers through the CSA relationship need to help with educating their neighbors about shifting to local food consumption; they need to help with encouraging people to actively engage with local farms; they need to speak out at their workplaces and faith communities to get involved in creating healthy relationships with food and the food system; they need to share their stories of how participating in a CSA has impacted their lives and habits.

As a caution, it's worth mentioning that the CSA movement in California has moved away from this traditional model of community engagement. Interested parties may want to look into how businesses like Farmigo market their services to farmers so that farmers can "do it all." Often, when the process becomes mechanized and the relationships become more distant, the co-producer model fails as the eaters become just "takers" and fail to engage fully in the farm relationship.

To follow are some concrete ways the community and farmers can help share the unique relationship a CSA has to offer.

Seasonal Promotion of Vegetable CSA Opportunities, January through April

- Post fliers with all farms listed, linking to the on-line CSA directory
- Post sandwich boards at key intersections directing people to on-line directory
- Create PSAs and radio broadcasts, in English and Spanish, directing to on-line directory
- Invite farmers to public speaking events and write newspaper articles

Reaching Beyond the Choir

- The Mendo-Lake Credit Union was a big supporter of this survey. Continued education and outreach to their members would be beneficial. Including the possibility of a loan to pay for CSA shares.
- Continued education and outreach to schools, churches, medical, dental and other organizations or businesses with shared values (Lunch and Learns, brown bag conversations and speaking engagements would be helpful.)
- Seek out an “advocate” for you who is already a part of that “new community.” For example, find a liason to the Native American community or from a church, or find a healthcare worker or teacher to advocate for you.

Reaching Lower-Income Communities

- EBT readers for all CSA farmers. This may require an organization to host a card reader for farmers as a service.
- Outreach to Head Start centers, Family Resource Centers and churches.
- * Post fliers and all communications, including the on-line directory in English and Spanish.

On-and-Off Line Communication

Marketing in Mendocino County is an on-line and off-line endeavor. On-line activity connects to a self-selecting group of people who actively search for good local food online.

Other work can be effective in person. To reach beyond the choir, try this: Once a week, during the promotion period, from January through April, go somewhere new and have a conversation with a different community. Get outside the box and engage anew.

See the Appendix for further suggestions for farmers.

“Food is a community creator. Whereas the global food system cuts people out, the local food system keeps people in.”

- Bob Knight, fourth generation orchard owner, San Bernadino County, CA

Appendix I: Farmer Survey Answers

Farm Name, Contact, Contact Number, Location, Acres

Anderson Valley Community Farm

Tim and Renee Ward

707-391-9422

Boonville

28 total. A lot of pasture, 4 acres in vegetable, the rest grazing and pasture. We also make our own hay.

Covelo Organic

Tom Palley

www.coveloorganic.com

707-272-0623

Covelo

About 4 to 6 acres of vegetables, raspberries, plums and pears.

Emendal

Tam Adams

www.emandal.com

707-459-9252

16 miles NE of Willits

Just a few

Foxglove Farm

Kate Clark

707-937-4116

Comptche

3 acres in cultivation

Greenjeans Farm

Jeff & Toni Adams

707-489-4388

Potter Valley

1.5 acres

Happy Days Farm

Amber Cline and Casey O'Neill

707-354-4765 and 707-354-1546

Laytonville & Bells Springs Road

Have 20 acres, but farm 1 acre, very intensive on terraced steppes

Live Power Community Farm

Steven and Gloria Decater

www.livepower.org

707-983-8196

Covelo

Farm 40 of their own acres, lease another 40

Mendocino Organics

Adam and Paula Gaska

Redwood Valley, Potter Valley, Ukiah

www.Mendocinoorganics.com

707-272-2711

Farming 6 acres in vegetables. About 45 acres in pasture. About 30 acres in mixed alfalfa and grain. Have access to about 2,000 acres of rangeland, 200 acres fenced is what we'll use.

Mendocino Grains Project

Doug Mosel

707-621-0972

Hopland

Just over 50 acres in grain and lentils

Owen Family Farm

Deborah and Ed Owen

www.owenfamilyfarm.blogspot.com

707-744-1615

Hopland

15 acres and we use neighbor's pastures and a friend has a place in Petaluma and we have some sheep there as well.

Oz Farm

Jesse Sachs

510-847-0630

Mountain View Rd., Pt. Arena

7 acres

Petit Teton

Nicki Ausschnitt, Steve, and Cameron

www.petitteton.com

707-684-4146

Yorkville

Farming 5 but plenty more to work with for the pigs.

Roseman Creek Ranch

Katie Pence- Robbins and Dennis Robbins

www.rosemancreekranch.com

707-884-3048

Gualala

75 fruit trees, 30 olive trees, 1.5 in vegetables

Round Valley Raised

Amanda Britton

www.goodeggs.com/roundvalley

707-272-9917

Covelo

Multiple family-owned ranches in Round Valley (about 7 ranching families)

Out of business:

Noyo Hill Farm

John Richardson & Joanne Frazer

707-357-2295

Fort Bragg

We had three acres total: one acre at our place, one acre at a neighbor's and a place in Little River that's about an acre.

Omitted from the survey:

Lovin' Mama Farm

Corinne Hansch and Matthew Leon

707-743-1327

Potter Valley

Floodgate Farm

Bill Taylor and Jaye Allison

707-272-1688

Redwood Valley

Why did you start a CSA?

“We were attracted to the possibility of creating a new economic paradigm and creating a new economic interface between the farmer and the eater. We heard about CSAs through the Biodynamic grapevine. Friends had started the 2nd CSA in the county so we called them constantly. The co-producer concept was especially meaningful.” Steven and Gloria, **Live Power Community Farm** (Covelo)

“Part of it was the need to have access to operating capital for the year. We are not self funding yet. The social aspect is rewarding, being able to connect with the people who eat our food on a more intimate level.” Adam and Paula, **Mendocino Organics** (Potter Valley, Redwood Valley)

“We were growing food and weren’t selling it all through the Boonville Market and mainly that’s where we started. We have a house in San Francisco and realized our market is in SF. Our son goes back and forth anyway.” Nicki, **Petit Teton** (Yorkville)

“The vision for the farm and whole motivation was to start a CSA as a good economic model for pursuing farming as a way to make it a viable business.” Tim, **Anderson Valley Community Farm** (Boonville)

“We started with a modified box. We had extra vegetables left over from the market season so we talked to people and asked if they were interested. That’s when the dialog started and John saw a need for fresh vegetables in the winter so he started to plant for that. Then we became a real CSA because people paid in one lump sum ahead and all we had to do was pick the vegetables and pack them, put them on the table and people came to get them.” – Joanne, **Noyo Hill Farm** (Ft. Bragg)

“When we decided we were going to grow a substantial amount of grain we talked about how to distribute it outside the commodity market. So we decided to do a grain CSA.” – Doug, **Mendocino Grain Project** (Hopland)

“In winter our farmers market income drops and feed requirements are at a high. We had an off cycle and needed reliable income to fill in the gaps when the season is slow.” Deborah, **Owen Family Farm** (Hopland)

“When you’re just starting out it helps with building capital.” Tom, **Covelo Organics** (Covelo)

“To reach direct market customers without having to go to the farmers’ market.” - Amanda, **Round Valley Raised** (Covelo)

“I enjoy cooking and do a lot of it. There was a gap to keep the kitchen open in the winter ... seemed a natural fit for utilization of product and we had a space in Willits that wasn’t being used.” – Tam, **Emendal** (Willits)

“It made sense. It was very appealing to me that I would have some financial freedom at beginning of the season to buy seeds, etc. I thought this was a way for farmers to keep going. It turned me on.” Kate, **Foxglove Farm** (Comptche)

“A part of it was the disappointment of going to market and not selling all the product. Amber had seen CSA work because you harvest it and people buy it. CSAs take the guesswork out. We started to double or triple our sales just buy boxing it and selling it and it started to become hip in the community.” Amber, **Happy Days Farm** (Laytonville)

“Patrick Codrey was the Farm Manager for 9 years and he wanted to start one. He is very community minded.” Jesse, **Oz Farm** (Pt. Arena)

“We bought a home in Potter with lots a land, our gardening got huge and since my husband ran a farm, it was a good way to make money.” – Toni, **Greenjeans Farm** (Potter Valley)

“I’ve been gardening mostly ornamentals and fruit trees for 33 years at really huge gardens and felt like I had a purpose and wanted to do something that had some meaning. The food system seemed to get dysfunctional so I set my mind on that. I started thinking how to communicate food to people and the CSA is a great way to do that. People see there’s a difference in food when it comes fresh from the garden. It’s an interesting venue to expose people to good food and educate them slowly.” Katie, **Roseman Creek Ranch** (Gualala)

How long have you operated the CSA model?

Live Power Community Farm: Since 1988

Mendocino Organics: Since 2012 (As the current incarnation. They started with a chicken CSA in 2003)

Petit Teton: Since 2009

Anderson Valley Community Farm: Since 2012

Noyo Hill Farm: 5 years as a modified box, 2 years as a CSA

Mendocino Grains Project: 4 seasons

Owen Family Farm: Since 2011

Covelo Organics: Since 1989

Round Valley Raised: Since 2012

Emedal: Since 2012

Foxglove Farm: Since 2003

Happy Days Farm: 3 years as of June 2013

Oz Farm: 5 years, then Ullie ran a CSA for a while, then we took a rest, now here we go again

Greenjeans Farm: 7-9 years

Roseman Creek Ranch: 2 years

What food/product is in your share?

Live Power Community Farm: Large variety of vegetables

Mendocino Organics: Over 30 different varieties of mixed seasonal vegetables and melons.

Petit Teton: See their website

Anderson Valley Community Farm: Eggs, vegetables, chicken, turkey, lamb, goat and swine

Noyo Hill Farm: N/A though they used to produce a large variety of vegetables

Mendocino Grains Project: Whole grains, flours and lentils

Owen Family Farm: Beef, rabbit, pork, lamb and sometimes goat (special request) and wine (promotes Sip's Wine Club)

Covelo Organics: Mixed Produce and fruit (raspberries, asian pears, strawberries, peaches, plums, watermelons, carrots, beets)

Round Valley Raised: Beef and Pork

Emedal: Soup, vegetarian and not/generrally gluten free but not always

Foxglove Farm: Mixed produce. Greens, potatoes, early cucumbers, zucchini, fresh herbs, then, squash, tomatoes, peppers, carrots, turnips, beets

Happy Days Farm: Large variety of vegetables, including: greens, mustard greens, collards, carrots, broccoli

Oz Farm: Staples: all season greens, root veggies, brassicas, kale to collards, broccoli, cabbage, then seasonal items: tomatoes, cucumbers, eggplants, melons, peppers, potatoes, etc. Jesse's interest is in creating a complete pantry. In the future: herbal medicine, cooking herbs, flowers, teas, added value, pickles, kimchis (they have a certified kitchen)

Greenjeans Farm: A little of everything. Love to try new stuff, tomatoes, beans, peas, bok choy, edamame, berries, peaches, apples ... garlic ... best organic heirloom vegetables and herbs, flowers and fruits

Roseman Creek Ranch: Vegetables, eggs, bread, flower bouquets

Do you buy supplemental products?

Live Power Community Farm: Offers a fruit and blueberry share through Filligreen Farm to their Mendocino County members (in SF, they use Good Humus for fruit shares). They offer rice from Masa Organics. "We're not buying them to put in there, we work with them to offer the share."

Mendocino Organics: "No, but this year we're offering an apple and fruit share but we are not buying it. The Apple Farm takes care of it."

Petit Teton: " We have tried it, but it doesn't work. We are growing and canning and we have control and it's right here. Any relationship outside the farm is an unknown. We bought squash from a Boonville farmer once. But now that we have a kitchen we can can. We may glean in the Valley, but not buy."

Anderson Valley Community Farm: "No, but we do have some possible things in the works (maybe turkeys from Greenfield Ranch, goat cheese, etc)."

Noyo Hill Farm: They used to do eggs. And, started a fruit share by buying organic from Mendocino/Yolo/Chico/Orland area for peaches and apricots. Blueberries and apples, Asian pears and grapes they got from Mendocino county.

Mendocino Grains Project: None

Owen Family Farm: “Wine, sometimes. Sometimes veal and beef from our friend in Pt. Reyes.”

Covelo Organics: No, although the idea sounds good. They would like to do a whole CSA dedicated to that but worry that only half of their customers would be interested. They tried tomato sauce. But Tom is really looking to grow what’s in the vegetable CSA.

Round Valley Raised: “No, but a great idea for the future. It would be great if we could include honey, jam, etc.”

Emendal: No

Foxglove Farm: Plums, apples, pears, strawberries, blueberries. Kate produces them but charges extra because they are labor intensive. Also offers a dozen eggs for \$4.00.

Happy Days Farm: “Some from Irene’s Garden Produce and with Marbry Sibil for juice, apples and pears.”

Oz Farm: “No capacity this year. I can imagine one of our apprentices would bake bread on their downtime and potentially sell it; we are a small team right now.”

Greenjeans Farm: Yes. Fresh eggs from Toni’s boss. She adds \$2.50 more per week to the order.

Roseman Creek Ranch: “No, but did buy some eggs last year to cover bread making.”

What’s your CSA season?

Live Power Community Farm: 30-week season, starts in May, runs through Thanksgiving

Mendocino Organics: 6-week autumn share. Summer, 24 weeks

Petit Teton: May 1 to just before Thanksgiving. Winter the next month (\$25 per box)

Anderson Valley Community Farm: 30 weeks

Noyo Hill Farm: Year-round (18-weeks or 22-weeks), N/A

Mendocino Grains Project: “Grain delivery begins after that year’s harvest. In 2013 will be begin in October and run for 12 months, frequency depends on shareholders preferences. Some members prefer to get it all in bulk, some quarterly, and some monthly. Milled shares mostly monthly.”

Owen Family Farm: Monthly delivery year-round

Covelo Organics: 25 weeks. June 2-November 20.

Round Valley Raised: Grassfed beef seasonal; pork year round

Emendal: Just in-between our busy season: 4 weeks in December, 4-weeks in October, 4-weeks in early March

Foxglove Farm: 16 weeks

Happy Days Farm: Year round

Oz Farm: 30 weeks

Greenjeans Farm: May thru end of Oct, or Nov

Roseman Creek Ranch: Longer on the coast, usually a 6-month period along with the farmers market season

Number of shares? And, do you need more customers? Are you interested in scaling up production?

Live Power Community Farm: Shares: Approx 60 shares in San Francisco (which is approx. 100 people). In Mendocino County, 90-100 1/2 shares (100 households which last year was 55 in Ukiah, 22 in Willits, 10-15 in Covelo). Need more? “Yes, we always lose certain people then every year we need more.” Interested in scaling up? “Only in moving into other products. Last year our son did a bread share (made with Doug Mosel’s wheat). Or maybe grow to 120 shares.”

Mendocino Organics: Shares: 30. Need more? “Our goal is 100 total, which is what we do our crop plan for. We’d be happy if we got 50-75 this year.” Interested in scaling up? “With our meat definitely. Not sure about the vegetables. We’d have to look for more land if we wanted to ... so no for the next couple of years.”

Petit Teton: Shares: 12. Need more? “15-20 would be good next year.” Interested in scaling up? “We also do restaurants in the Valley. It’s about helping hands and the amount of work that it is.”

Anderson Valley Community Farm: Shares: 25. Need more? “Yes, we want to grow our vegetable share members.” Interested in scaling up? “Our crop plan now accommodates 30 shares.”

Noyo Hill Farm: Shares: At our peak we sold 70 boxes per week, in off-season, in summer it went down to 20, because people ordered warm weather vegetables [that can’t be grown well in Fort Bragg] from Covelo Organics or shop at the farmers market. Need more? “No, we’re done with farming. We wanted 100, that would have been the max.” Interested in scaling up? “No.”

Mendocino Grains Project: Shares: 70. Need more? “It’s a function of the harvest. The more we harvest the more we can sell. We also have bakers wanting to buy direct as well and their scale requires we set aside a fair amount of our harvest for that purpose. We’ll eventually have to balance the two.” Interested in scaling up? “We are planting with the intention and hope that we’ll be able to provide 100 shares and have flour or grain available for several local bakers, on a scale that would exceed share members. If bakers decide that they don’t want to do it, or can’t work out pricing then we could take on lots more members. At some point when we reach the point where they could exclusively meet the needs of a single baker, then we would expand the network of growers, and would contract with growers to provide more grains. It’s also going to help that we form a network in five counties. This means that there is a lot more potential for increasing production within counties and across.”

Owen Family Farm: Shares: 12. Need more? “That’s 120-140 pounds per month, we are open to more but not tons more.” Interested in scaling up? “We are baby-stepping it. But needs to be sustainable.”

Covelo Organics: Shares: 30 or so. Need more? “Yes. We could definitely sell more vegetables.” Interested in scaling up? “Maybe though we seem to have plenty.”

Round Valley Raised: Shares: 13. Need more? “Yes, we want more in Mendocino County.” Interested in scaling up? “Yes. We’d like to have more local customers. Currently all are in SF. We’d like to have more consistent business.”

Emedal: Shares: Started at 24, high 40, at 35 now. Need more? “Happy with 30-35.” Interested in scaling up? “No, unless decide to do it with staff which is April through October.”

Foxglove Farm: Shares: 25. Need more? “No, happy at 25.” Interested in scaling up? “We are planning an intentional community and would like to eventually support a 75 member CSA but need more help and need to lease land.”

Happy Days Farm: Shares: 10 full shares and 1 half share. In the summer, 25 full and a few half. Need more? “We are at capacity for the amount of land we have.” Interested in scaling up? “No, we’re at capacity for our land.”

Oz Farm: Shares: Shares: Between 25 and 50. Need more? “Yes.” Interested in scaling up? “Yes.”

Greenjeans Farm: Shares: 5 return year after year. Need more? “We are looking to become a real community farm and have people have input in what we grow and are looking for members who want to weed and participate.” Interested in scaling up? “No.”

Roseman Creek Ranch: Shares: 10 people. Need more? “No. I can do only 10 by myself without help.” Interested in scaling up? “It’s a tough balance. No and yes. Maybe, if we can do it without going into debt. Rural America is gone, it’s been eradicated. We went from 88% of the population to 20% living rural; so we are trying to rebuild rural America with no financing no incentives and in an expensive state where the odds are against you.”

What's the minimum payment period?

"We try not to do weekly, the minimum is monthly. Some people pay quarterly, some pay all up front."

"One half in the spring, one half at harvest."

"We ask for a deposit of at least \$150 with enrollment and member agreement. Then, people have until May 15 to sign up. No new members after season has started. There's a suggested payment plan. April 1, June 1 and August 1."

"They pay the full boat in advance."

"25% down or more to start then monthly payments are okay."

"If they could do a month, at least a month ahead. When we pushed for it we asked for 50/50. Then it morphed to monthly. We tried getting people to pay all up front, but it didn't work."

"Most everyone pays in advance with credit card, Flagship (like Square) on our phone."

"One half make pre-payments, the other half we need to chase down."

"Minimum order is \$75 for bacon and sausage individually. The beef 25lb box is \$175. Paid in advance upon ordering (online)."

"We ask that they pay a \$25 paperwork fee to join then a lot of people pay \$100 a month until paid. Very few can pay up front."

"We ask for it up front but not many pay so we're just on a weekly basis."

"The idea is that we get support at the beginning of the season when costs are high and business is slow. We need those commitments; their support allows us to deliver to their communities. So the least they can pay in advance is \$250."

"Weekly. It's so much communication. Requires people be on email which means you have satellite which limits this to about 50% of the population."

Do you feel confident about your pricing?

"We think it's fair. We compare prices to Mariposa and the Ukiah Co-op, average them and apply their price to ours and we came up more or less \$50 less. It's not 100% accurate."

"Yes. We commit to it and our budgeting and figuring out what we need to get going is always a dance. We base it on knowing what we know about demand and what we can feasibly expect from people."

"We figured that if we paid ourselves \$10 per hour, which we don't, and for the feed and everything else, to break even a dozen eggs would have to be \$15 per dozen. The boxes don't make a profit either."

"Yes. They were getting incredible boxes for that price, especially in the winter (it was 6-7 things, a mixture of roots and greens in each box)."

"Yes. I've had more than one person tell me we are underpriced. We researched around the country and in Canada and we are in the ballpark more or less with some exceptions."

"We're in the average."

"It probably should be more."

"No, always there are people who can't afford it. I want to charge a decent market value but I want the organic produce to be available to the non-elite but I also understand why it costs more."

"Pretty good since its just farmers market value."

How do you deliver? Where do you deliver/distribute? What days? Times?

Live Power Community Farm: “Tuesdays for everywhere in Mendocino County, Covelo at noon, Willits at 3:30, Ukiah at 4:30 or 5. Live Power has a system where they drop off at one location and ask shareholders to sort into their own baskets.”

Mendocino Organics: “We drop off at Westside Renaissance Market and Ukiah Valley Medical Center. We also have a pick up at the farm and a drop off in Willits behind the WAG/NCO office. We don’t have a spot in Mendocino. We’re not sure if it’s going to continue as an option (we’d tack on a trucking fee because we use Mendocino Coast Produce and need at least 10 shareholders in Mendocino to make it worthwhile. Ukiah: Tuesday afternoons, both locations. Same for Redwood Valley home ranch pick up. Willits is Thursday afternoon.”

Petit Teton: “We self deliver to homes in SF’s Outer Richmond on Tuesdays. We have an open sign and sell from the farm too.”

Anderson Valley Community Farm: “Right now shareholders pick up at the farm in downtown Boonville. We would do a Ukiah drop off if there’s interest. On Wednesdays and Sundays members come and bring their own bags and use a sign in sheet. Meat & chicken are here when available.”

Noyo Hill Farm: “We tried to deliver at about three drop points and had maybe 5 boxes in each place. We tried the hospital, had 10 there, 5 or 6 at Little River, 5 or 6 in Mendocino ... but that didn’t pan out. No clue why the people at the hospital stopped. I think people just aren’t used to eating current/seasonal vegetables, eating what’s available. They aren’t used to cooking things like kale, chard, fennel, potatoes, beets, turnips, leeks, lettuce, etc.”

Mendocino Grains Project: Doug delivers to places for pick up by shareholders in Boonville, Fort Bragg and some in Sonoma County and beyond. Bulk purchasers pick up in Ukiah. No regular schedule, yet. Doug announces and delivery spots are flexible, so at customer convenience to pick up

Owen Family Farm: Pick up at farmers markets in Ukiah and Sonoma County. Also do free home delivery. Only weekends.

Covelo Organics: Some pick up at the farm. Some home deliveries for an extra charge. Most members are in Covelo so they wait to see what happens for delivery points. They also deliver to Fort Bragg and Mendocino on Wednesdays.

Round Valley Raised: They deliver to Good Eggs in San Francisco’s Dogpatch neighborhood in a refrigerated truck that they own. Good Eggs is their on-line marketplace service provider. People pick up orders there. No regular schedule, yet.

Emedal: Tam takes her soup and bread to one spot in both Ukiah and Willits and people pick it up there. Wednesdays, between 4-5:30.

Foxglove Farm: “We used to deliver, it was a nightmare. Now people just pick up. We bought a small organic restaurant, Lou’s Kitchen, in Mendocino. And some come by to pick here at the farm. Thursdays.”

Happy Days Farm: They deliver to the feed store in Laytonville that has refrigeration or ask shareholders to pick up at the Wednesday market on Bell Springs Road.

Oz Farm: “We have two drops now, one in Pt. Arena (Jim Koogler’s shed) and in Gualala at the Arts Center. Pt. Arena: Tuesday, Gualala: Friday. Our schedule is subject to change.”

Greenjeans Farm: Self delivery. Ukiah pick-ups or at farm; Thursdays in Ukiah. Weekends in Potter.

Roseman Creek Ranch: Delivery to businesses/drop-offs Wednesdays in Pt. Arena and Gualala.

Are you interested in bartering for services?

Live Power Community Farm: Yes.

Mendocino Organics: Possibly. “I need to think about what kind of services.”

Petit Teton: N/A

Anderson Valley Community Farm: Yes

Noyo Hill Farm: Yes.

Mendocino Grains Project: “Too general, possibly depending on the nature of the barter.”

Owen Family Farm: No

Covelo Organics: Yes

Round Valley Raised: Yes

Emedal: “I do, yes. I’m bartering with a vet right now.”

Foxglove Farm: “Yes, but limited.

Happy Days Farm: Yes

Oz Farm: “Totally, we’ve always done it. Now there’s a couple who volunteers to drive down to Gualala for us for a share. But it would have to be clearly advantageous for us.”

Greenjeans Farm: Never bartered before

Roseman Creek Ranch: Yes

Do you know your customer demographics?

“Mostly acquaintances and friends. Similar age to me and my kids (50s with kids). We met through the school. Primarily white. Middle class income or upper middle class.”

“Mostly higher middle income, hippies that came to Mendo to die.”

“Age probably a broad spectrum, made contact with a lot of 30-45 year-old mothers who are really into it. No people of color yet, but we are into diversity of all kinds. I think there are a lot of older couples in their 60s or so who are excited about it.”

“We are severely local, ultra local. Just Laytonville and Bells Springs Road neighbors. Some have money, some don’t we give away some shares. We try to make it accessible to all.”

“Small percentage of wealthy people, more working class where the mom and dad both work followed by new families, grown kids are living with mom or dad. One single dad with two kids. Caucasian.”

“Generally working people. Some in their 30s, some retired.”

“No. But maybe a lot of Asians, Indians ... based on the names of people who order.”

“Families, young families, we service the Tribe (subsidized), at least a middle class income. We like to keep it local and near Covelo is best.”

“Mostly families. 30s, 40s with kids. A couple of older people.”

“Suspect that for the most part they are probably people who can afford to be choosy about what they eat. All ethnically European, as far as I know. Some are probably of low enough income that they are sharing a share.”

“Young to old. It seemed like there were some who wanted to loose weight and eat healthy, so all of a sudden we had a lot of Weight Watchers people. There were about eight households that stuck with it for the full five years, never wavered. Not all elite rich people, people families, single people, all white.”

“Demographics are geographically specific to Anderson Valley, most everyone is Caucasian, some lower income

members.”

“Richmond District, couples with young children and some older couples. 30s to 40s, those that understand the connections and have money and jobs.”

“Yes. I think they are primarily well-educated, Caucasian. A mix of retired folks and a lot of people who are working. A 1/4 of them have children.”

“Mostly white. In Willits a few Mexican families. Teachers, people working for the county, vineyard people.”

Do you have a schedule for promoting your CSA?

Here are some of the “yes” answers:

“We start recruiting in February and March through an e-mail list of past members.”

“Late January.”

“About a month or a month and a half before we promote it. We keep the customers we have.”

“We’d promote it at certain times of the year so we could figure out how much to plant. So we promote the winter one in July/August and the summer one in March/April.”

“We do it every week.”

“Start in April with calls to former members.”

What sort of supplemental information to share with your shareholders? Farm info, budgets, crop plans, recipes? Communication and educational tools.

“Recipes but we need to do a better job. Members in the City will update our website and will get members to share recipes. They also want to know putting out what’s in the basket ahead of time.” – **Live Power Community Farm**

“Weekly newsletters, recipes and field notes and story telling about what we’re do. We also blog.” – **Mendocino Organics**

“Every week we send an email on the day the box goes out, it includes: what goes out, a letter, a recipe and a list of VAPs.” – **Petit Teton**

“We have a blog that’s inactive. Would like to offer recipes this year. We share our budget with members because we want to market it as a member owned cooperative. Our goal is to become a legal entity as a member owned farm.” – **Anderson Valley Community Farm**

“We posted recipes on the website. We’d tell people how to cook it. We didn’t put in sheets of paper, to me that was an extra cost, but we did share in newsletter. At the height, people would send us recipes and I’d post them on Facebook.” – **Noyo Hill Farm**

“We do recipes and encourage people to go to Facebook to see photos. Women are funny about lambs and bunnies and goats, they don’t want to see them. At our booth we have a picture of the pasture with the animals in the distance.” – **Owen Family Farm**

“The website tells about the community, the farms, how the animals are raised and where they are processed. In the box we put in suggestions for cooking grassfed beef. Would consider recipes in the future. We answer a lot of questions from customers.” – **Round Valley Raised**

“Used to many years ago. Newsletter with recipes and more once a month, but now no.” – **Foxglove Farm**

“Casey puts together a weekly newsletter with suggestions and at least one recipe. A small blurb of what’s happening and coming up.” – **Happy Days Farm**

“We have a lot of awesome, rare antique varieties and are excited to share their stories, so members can benefit from

that. We write about the agricultural inheritance that we can celebrate together. Recipes too. Maybe more.” – **Oz Farm**

“Yes, always try to help out especially with strange vegetables and share what they are what used for. We always include recipes in baskets.” – **Greenjeans Farm**

“Try to through the blog but have no time.” – **Roseman Creek Ranch**

Appendix II: Resources for CSA Farmers

Marketing Websites and Resources

- Mendocino On-Line CSA Directory (Post your CSA here)
www.mendocinolocalfood.org
- Local Harvest (Post your CSA here)
www.localharvest.org
- Green Towns (Post your CSA here)
www.greentowns.com
- Good Eggs (CSA outreach to the Bay Area)
www.goodeggs.com
- Farmigo (CSA outreach to the Bay Area)
www.farmigo.com
- Small Farm Central (Websites and CSA management)
www.smallfarmcentral.com
- Marketing Advice for CSA Farmers: A Farmer's Guide to Marketing through Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs) [PDF] from the University of Tennessee.
<https://utextension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/PB1797.pdf>
- Finding and Keeping CSA Members, from Penn State Extension College of Agricultural Sciences
<http://extension.psu.edu/business/start-farming/news/2013/finding-and-keeping-your-csa-members>

Technical and Business Assistance

- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov>
- University of California Cooperative Extension, Mendocino County
890 N. Bush Street
Ukiah, CA 95482
(707) 463-4495
- West Company (Business consulting and technical assistance in Mendocino County)
www.westcompany.org
631 S Orchard Ave OR 760 B Stewart Street
Ukiah, CA 95482 Fort Bragg, CA 95437
(707) 467-5931 (707) 964-7571

Other Resources

- ATTRA NCAT (National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service)
www.attra.ncat.org
- USDA Farm Service Agency
www.fsa.usda.gov
- National Agricultural Library CSA Resource List
www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/csa/csa.shtml
- Local Harvest: A Multifarm CSA Handbook
http://agmarketing.extension.psu.edu/ComFarmMkt/PDFs/local_harvest_csa.pdf

Appendix III: Further Suggestions for CSA Farmers

Given our research findings, CSAs appeal to a smaller customer demographic than a farmers market or on-farm stand (just 0.4% of the population). Because of this smaller potential customer base, the impact of disgruntled customers creating negative word-of-mouth referrals for your CSA operation may be greater than for other direct market channels. So you must be vigilant to provide excellent customer service and identify concerns of disgruntled customers before damage can be done to the farm's reputation.

This is related to member retention, an issue which several farmers indicated was important to them. Ideally, CSA farmers do not have to do a big marketing push to recruit more members each year because only a small percentage won't return year after year. However, if you are in a growth phase, or have experienced a different scenario, these suggestions may be helpful.

Here are some ways to boost your positive word-of-mouth referrals:

- Have a website or other on-line presence like Facebook
- Develop relationships with customers and keep them engaged by using electronic newsletters, e-mail correspondence, blogs and social networking to provide updates and stories about what is happening on the farm, suggestions on how to prepare or preserve products in the current share and what to expect in the near future. Farms need to be willing to create and maintain such communication consistently throughout the CSA season. One of our key recommendations is that CSA shareholders or the community at large take a greater role in co-production, in the success of the CSA, so ask a CSA member to help with this. It's very common for CSA members to create and manage weekly newsletters.
- Include a newsletter (printed or emailed) with information, suggestions and recipes about how to prepare all of the weekly produce in one week.
- Label the box contents and/or sorting boxes (Explore the website of Helsing Junction Farm in Washington state. They do a wonderful job of this.)
- Know your products inside and out, nutrition, health value, price compared to retail, etc. The more you can share with your shareholders, the more valuable the relationship.
- Ask current shareholders to recommend your CSA to their friends. Provide them with materials to share and offer incentives for new recruits.
- Check out Small Farms Central (webinars, website and CSA management tools) and Just Food NY(www.justfood.org) for ideas and recipes.
- Create a marketing and education group specifically for farmers and value-added products of Mendocino County.
- Reach out to untapped communities like churches, businesses, and the health and wellness community. It takes more than a flier, consider speaking at brown bag lunches or other community events.

Appendix IV: Pending Legislation

According to Mendocino County Agricultural Commissioner, Chuck Morse, there are two pieces of newly introduced legislation that are just starting the two year legislative cycle that may affect CSAs: AB 224 (Gordon) is specifically aimed at CSAs and AB 996 (Dickenson), is a much broader direct marketing piece of legislation.

Learn more at the California Alliance for Family Farmers website or go to www.leginfo.ca.gov to view them in detail.

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