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# Community Supported Agriculture

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**What is  
a CSA?**



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## Community Supported Agriculture is

- A direct relationship between a farmer and the people who eat the food the farmer produces
- A partnership between farmers and consumers where, at best, the responsibilities and rewards of farming are shared
- A unique arrangement, tailored by the circumstances they develop out of
- Usually farmer-driven but different models do exist e.g. community/consumer-driven and co-operative models





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## CSA's

- Is a relationship of mutual support
- Requires commitment
- Can be hard work for the organisers
- Is about bringing local culture back into agriculture





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# Farmers wanting to start a CSA

## Advantages:

- CSA can provide a secure, regular income
- shared responsibility (if there is a crop failure, the consumers share the loss)
- community engagement can be a real boost to morale
- having more people on the farm can make it more sociable and enjoyable (if this is part of the CSA)

## Disadvantages:

- more admin heavy
- requires constant communication with CSA members
- there is some loss of control when a community group starts to get involved in planning how the CSA will work (specific to community driven)





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## Reasons people join a CSA

- To source fresh, local, organic (chemical-free) food
- To support their local farmers
- To know who grows their food and how they produce it

And increasingly these days:

- Want to support a food system which is good for both the people and the planet





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## Communication is key

CSA members are not just buying produce, they are participating in their food supply and want to be connected to a farm.

Keeping people informed is the key to maintaining this relationship.

- Weekly/ monthly share notes
- Newsletters
- E-mail, websites and blogs
- Recipes
- Farm tours

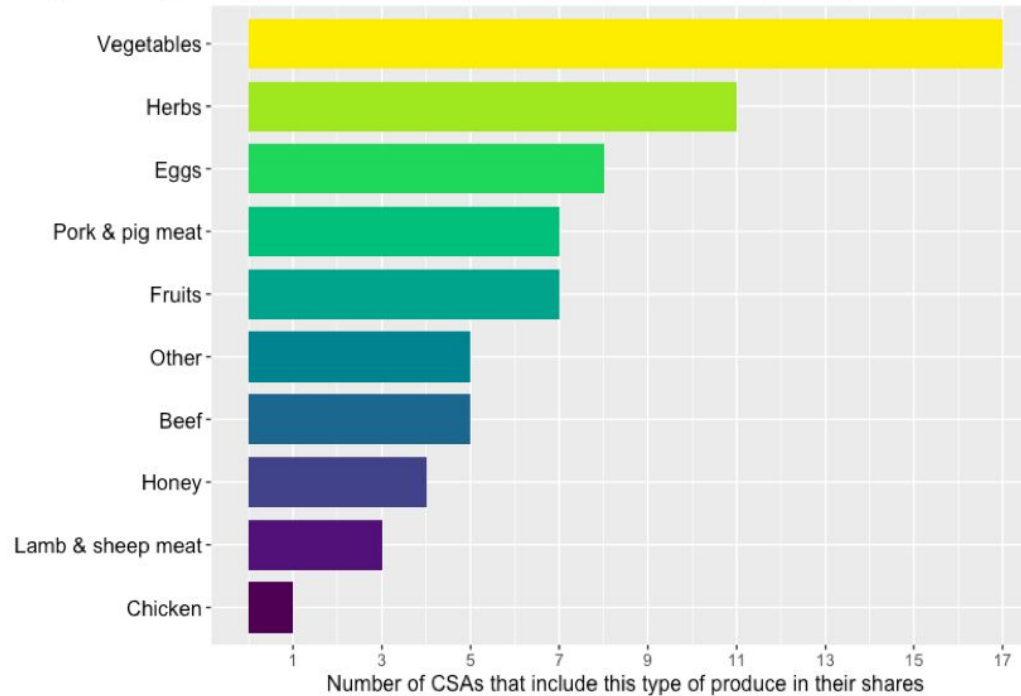




**Snapshot  
of CSAs in  
Australia**

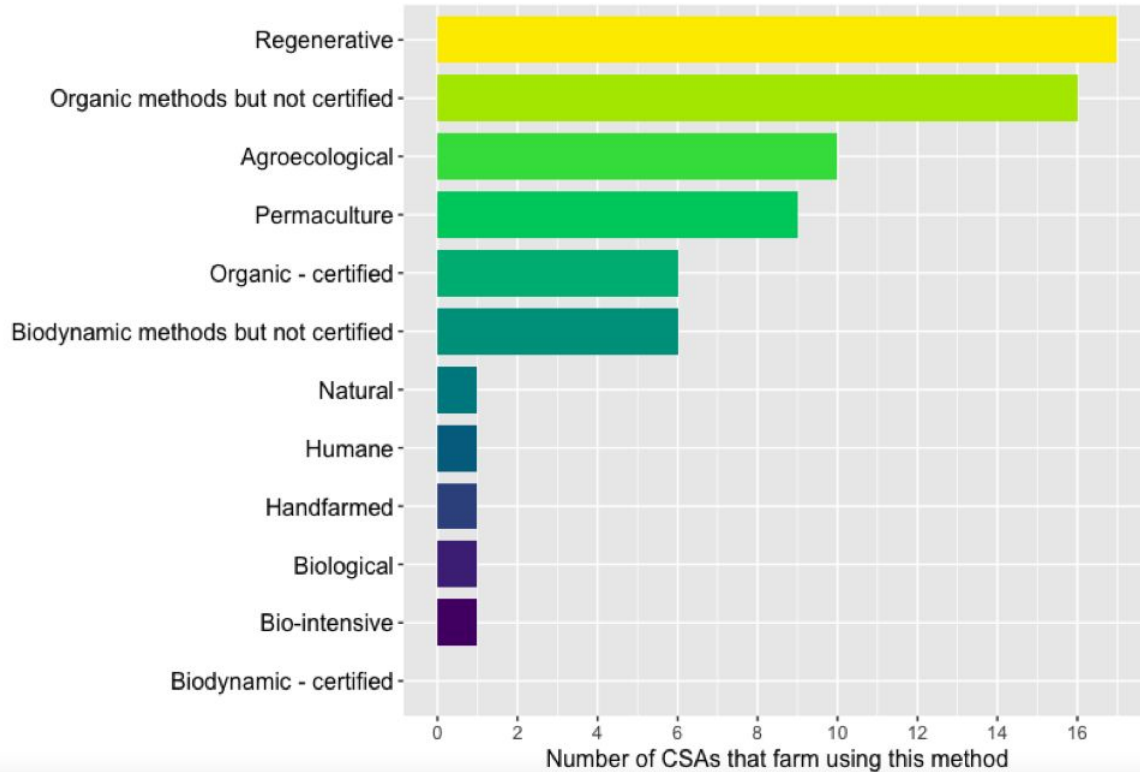


*Figure 1. Types of produce exchanged by respondents as part of CSA shares*



*Note: Participants who selected 'Other' category specified the following in their descriptions: wine, turkey, garlic, kim chi, flowers.*

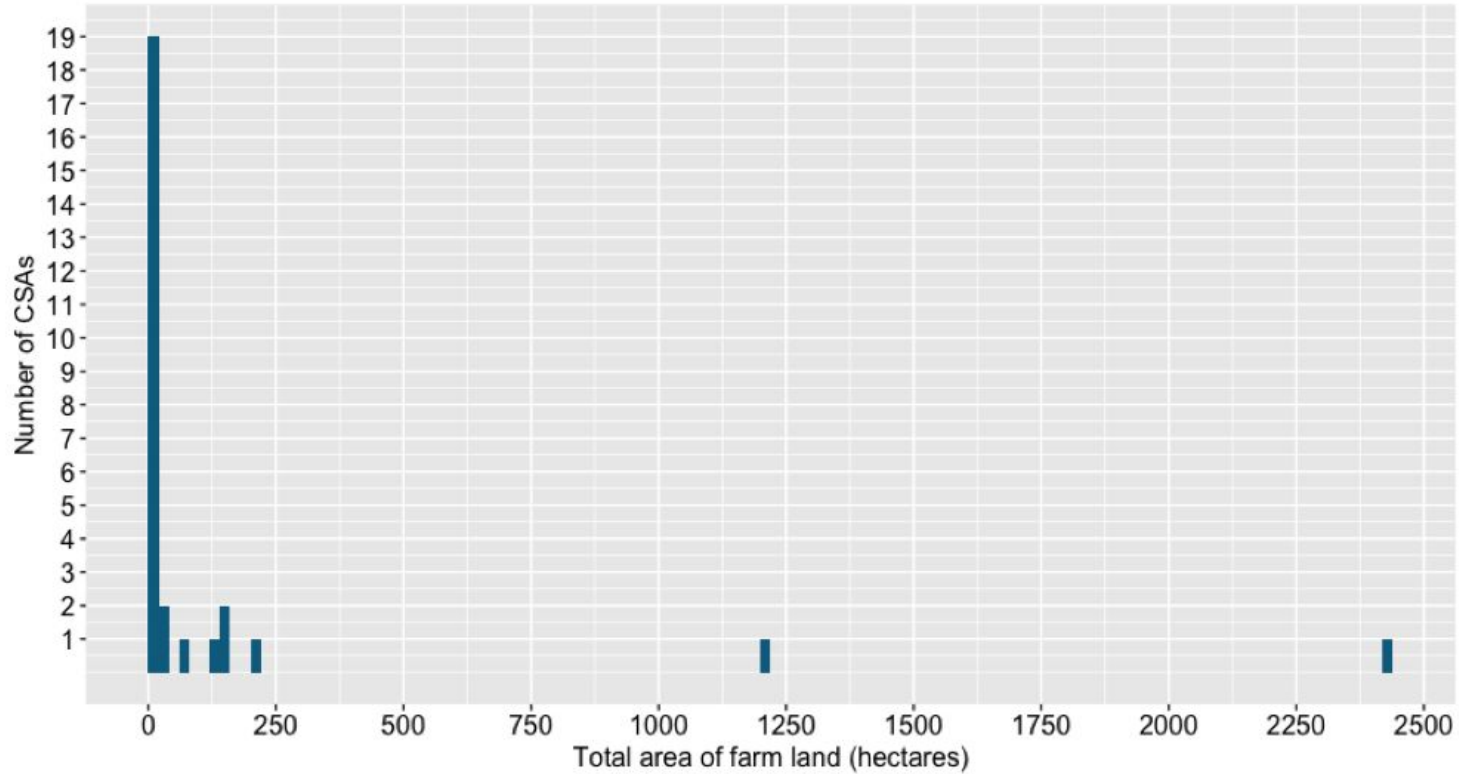
Figure 2. Farming methods used by respondent CSA farms



Wilkes, B.A., 2019, *A snapshot of Community Supported Agriculture in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand 2018*, Canberra, <http://hdl.handle.net/1885/164046>.



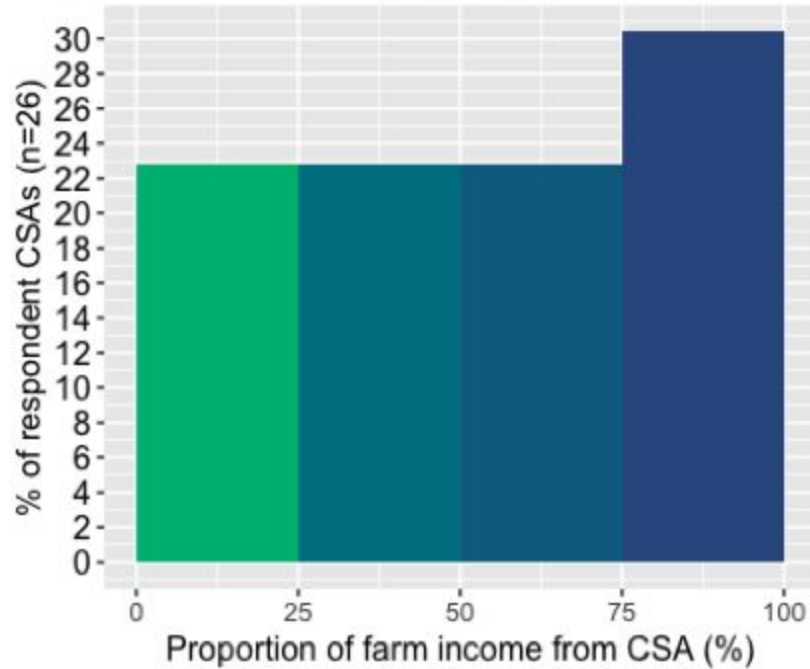
Figure 3. Distribution of CSAs by total land area of CSA farms (n = 28)



Wilkes, B.A., 2019, *A snapshot of Community Supported Agriculture in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand 2018*, Canberra, <http://hdl.handle.net/1885/164046>.



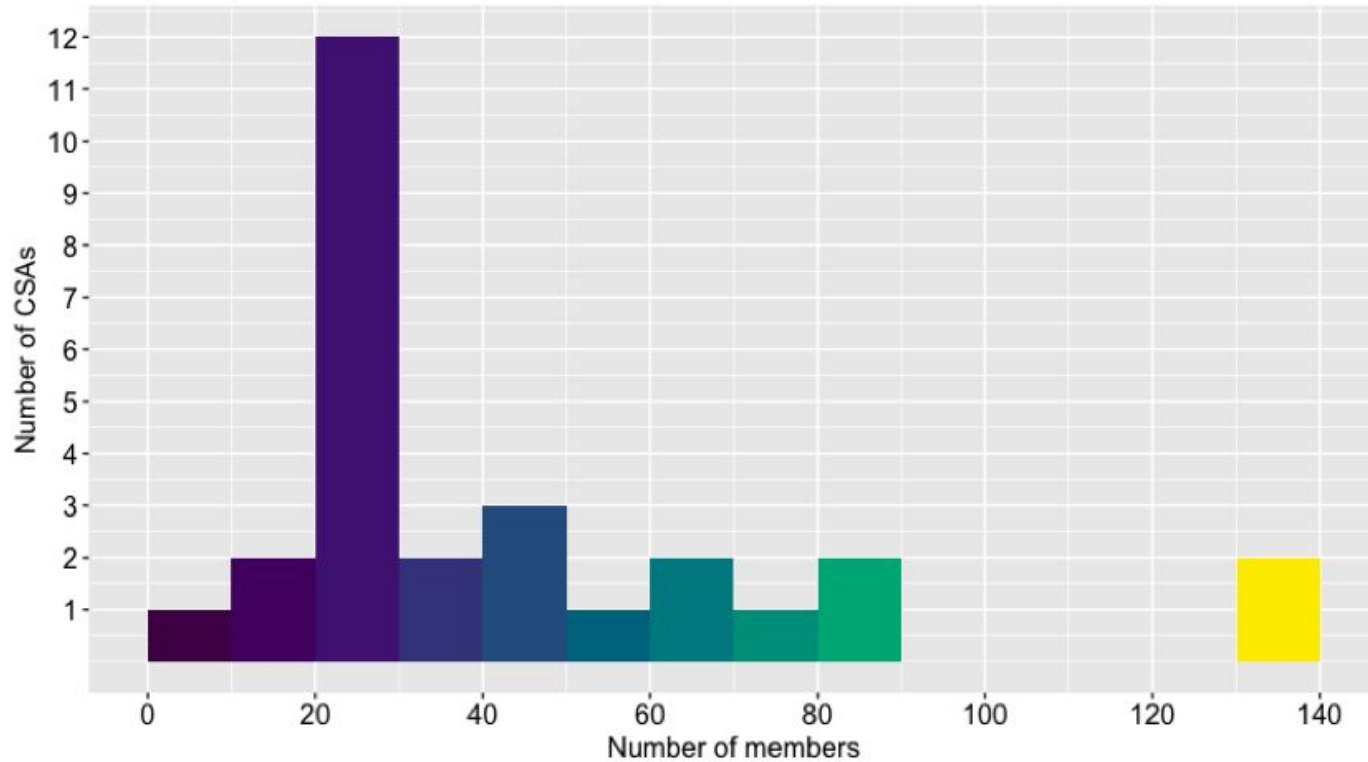
Figure 6. Distribution of CSA income as a proportion of total farm income (n=26)



Wilkes, B.A., 2019, *A snapshot of Community Supported Agriculture in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand 2018*, Canberra, <http://hdl.handle.net/1885/164046>.



Figure 9. Number of members per CSA (n = 28)



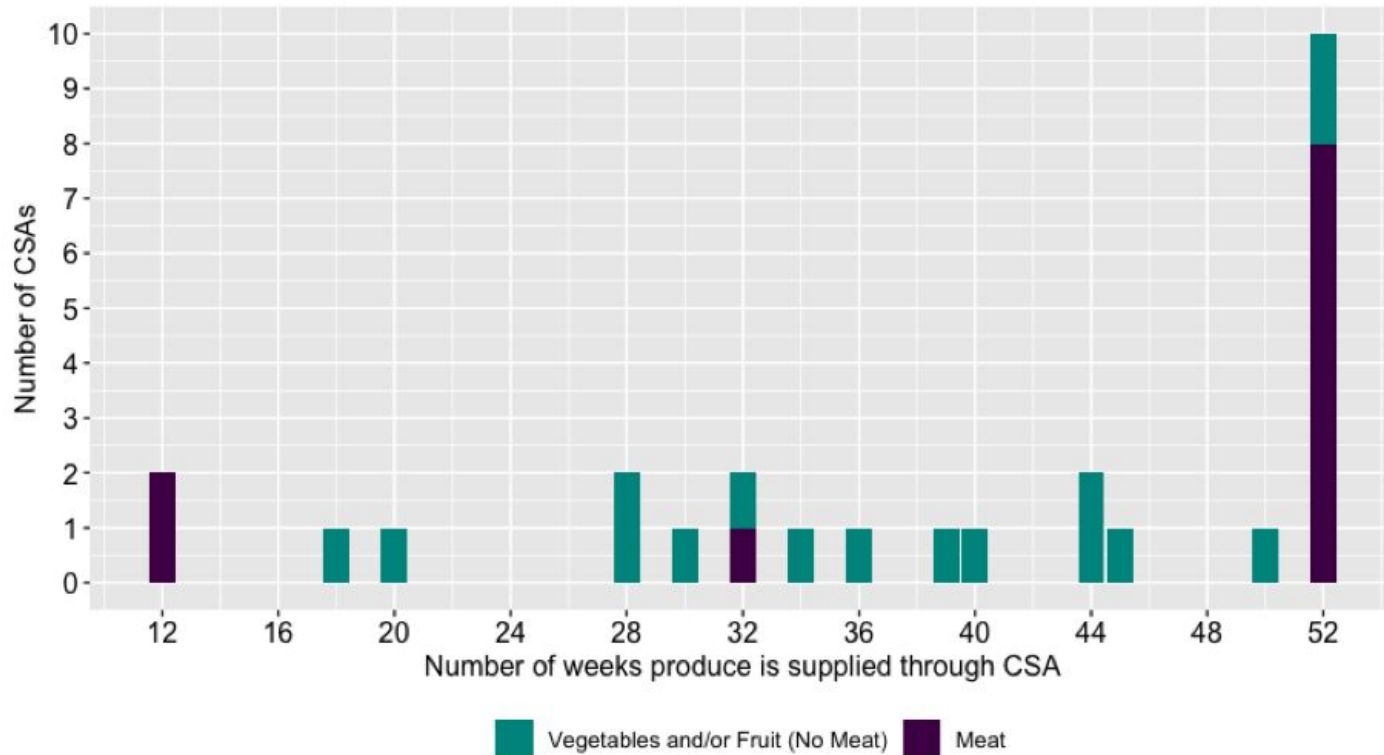
Wilkes, B.A., 2019, *A snapshot of Community Supported Agriculture in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand 2018*, Canberra, <http://hdl.handle.net/1885/164046>.



*Table 2. Numbers of CSAs with selected share characteristics*

CSA share characteristics	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Various delivery/pick-up frequencies are available (weekly, fortnightly, etc.)	9	32%
Share items can be customised (i.e. members can choose/swap items)	6	21%
Extra items can be purchased and included in the share from time to time	14	50%
Multiple box sizes are available (e.g. full share, half shares, etc.)	21	75%

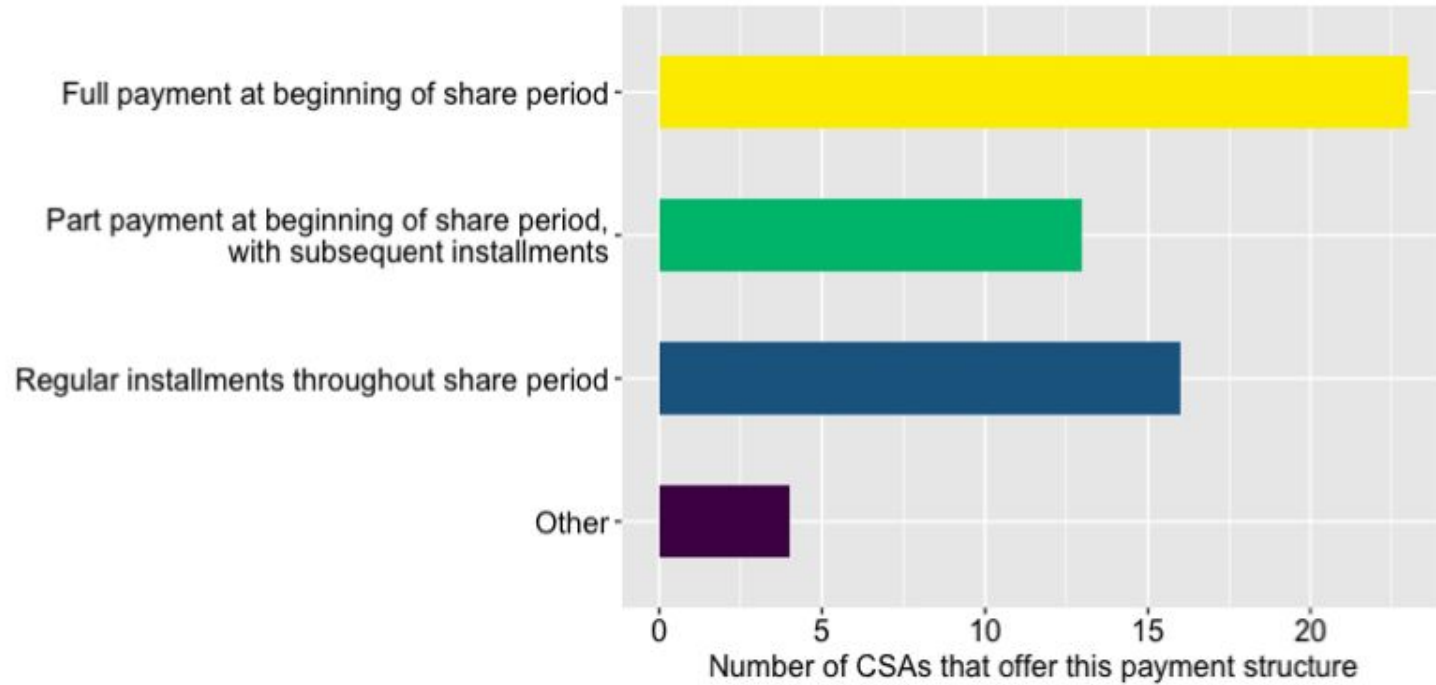
Figure 10. Number of weeks per year produce is supplied through CSA (n = 27)



Wilkes, B.A., 2019, *A snapshot of Community Supported Agriculture in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand 2018*, Canberra, <http://hdl.handle.net/1885/164046>.



Figure 11. Payment structures for CSA shares

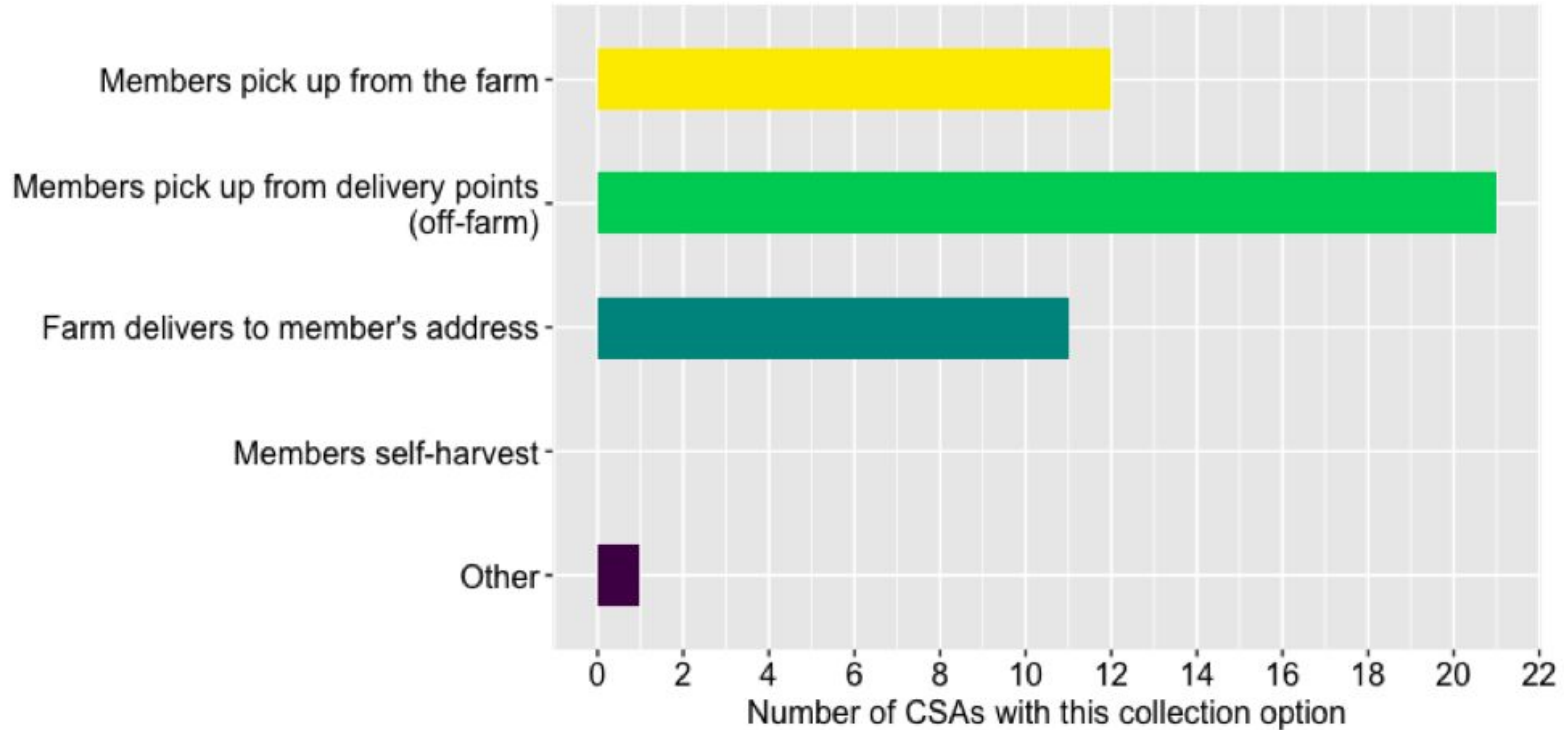


Wilkes, B.A., 2019, *A snapshot of Community Supported Agriculture in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand 2018*, Canberra, <http://hdl.handle.net/1885/164046>.





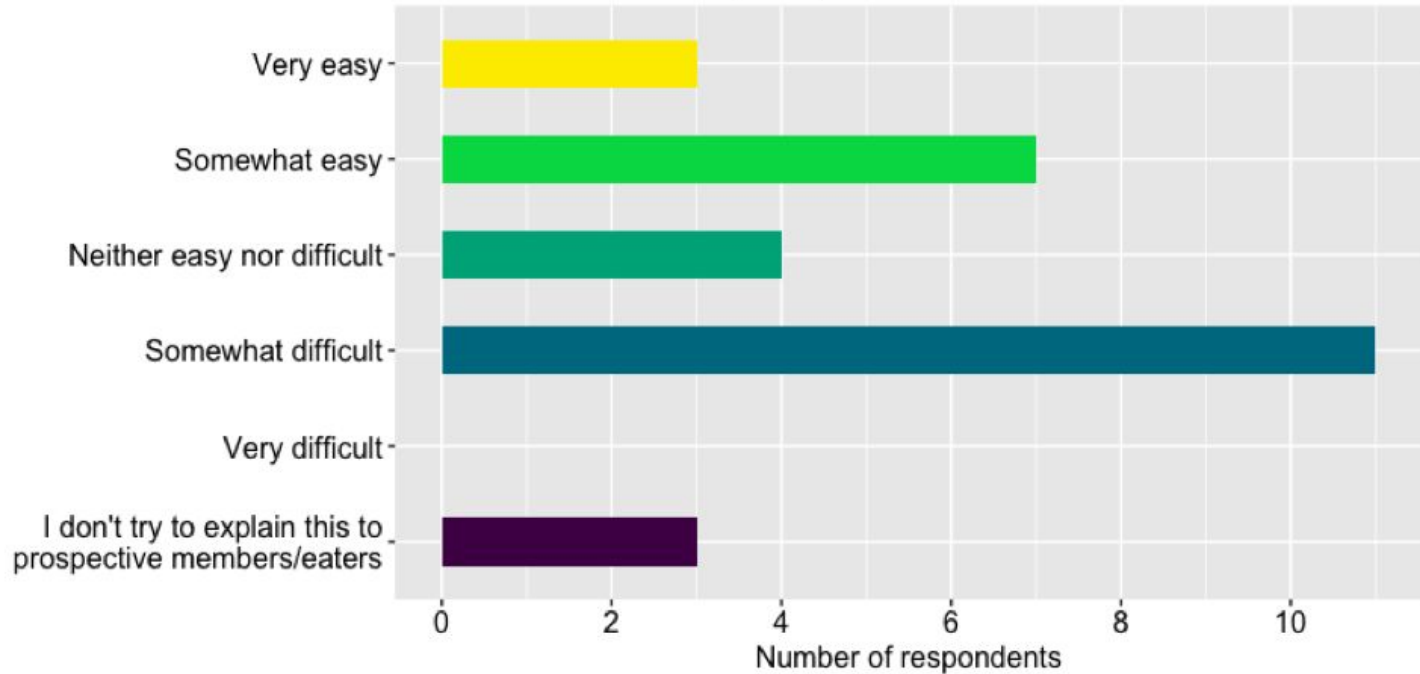
Figure 12. Collection options for CSA shares – numbers of CSAs offering each option



Wilkes, B.A., 2019, *A snapshot of Community Supported Agriculture in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand 2018*, Canberra, <http://hdl.handle.net/1885/164046>.



Figure 13. CSA farmers' perceptions of how easy it is to explain CSA principles to prospective members (n=28)



Wilkes, B.A., 2019, *A snapshot of Community Supported Agriculture in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand 2018*, Canberra, <http://hdl.handle.net/1885/164046>.



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*“With a CSA, you really do own a share of the farm. If there’s a bumper crop, well then you’re golden, but if there are floods or drought or a pest problem, you get that too. It is a risk. A CSA is not a supermarket. Consider this before joining.”*



*“That it's a connection to the farm, a membership, and as such the farm produce is susceptible to weather and external factors - therefore quantities may vary depending on the seasons. Also that it's an emotional, not just physical membership, so they share in the journey - both wins and challenges.”*

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*“I try to explain that they are part of the farm and they have that ownership and responsibility.”*

*“That it is like they are “farming alongside us”, “rain, hail or shine” and sharing the risks of the season as well.”*





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*“In sharing some of the farmers' risk, a CSA helps connect eaters more closely to the farm and knowledge of food production. We love working with a community of CSA members who truly know our farm and share our ethics. By deepening eaters' understanding of food production, especially animals raised for meat, we figure we can have a bigger impact as you share that knowledge with others.”*

*“Model of mutual benefit, respect and support. Keeps small farms viable and producing the kind of food many want to eat and protects diversity in food & farming practices, because of even playing field of sharing the abundance and the risk.”*





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*“Farming has risks. Box customers are champions of organic agriculture, food and local business. You're part of eating a different story. Your support over a long period gives me stability to get on with planting and growing knowing I've got tummies ready to feed from abundant ripe harvest...If we get a great yield on our urban farming, you receive some of that overflow but, an early cold snap day means our first succession of summer goodies are at risk, and instead of the farmer taking all this risk, we all share. The model means the farmers are not isolated by natural outlying variables we can't plan for. In my experience working and seeing several other CSA farms, the customer often scores and the farmer is happy to be supported by the community...”*



Figure 16. CSA farmer satisfaction with various aspects of their farm overall

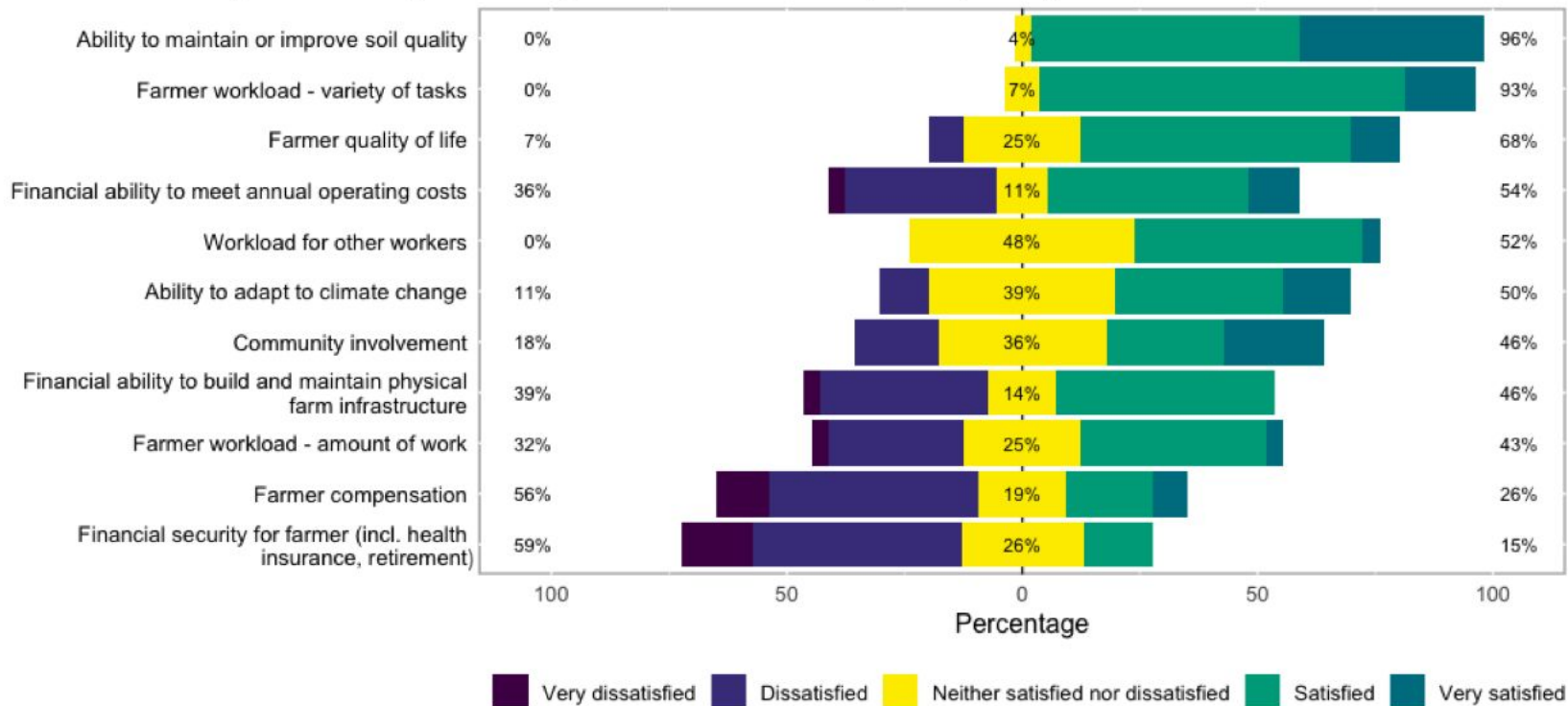
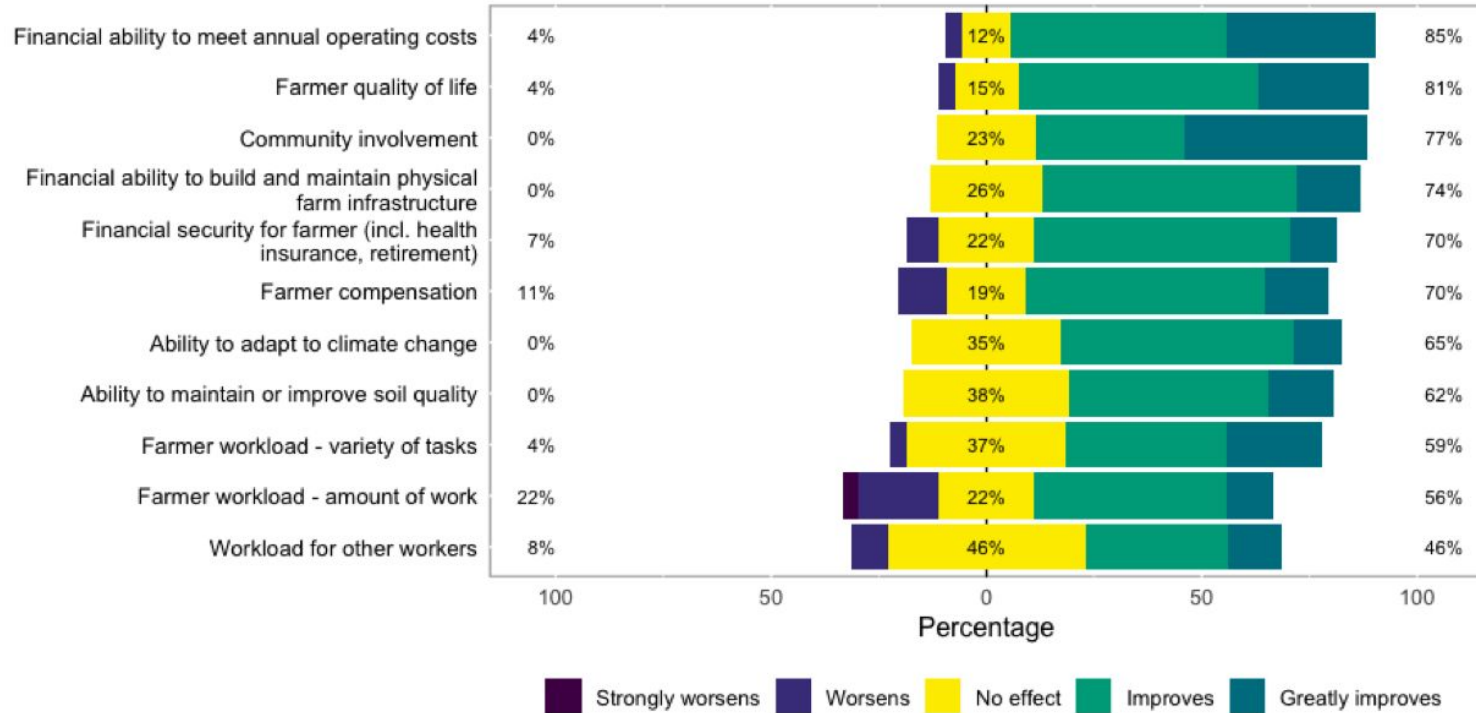





Figure 17. CSA farmer assessment of how their CSA affects aspects of their farm



Note: Not all rows in Figure 17 sum to exactly 100% due to rounding

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding three citrus fruits. Two bright orange oranges are positioned behind a single, pale yellow lemon. The person is wearing a blue and white patterned garment. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey. The text "Case Studies" is printed in a bold, black, sans-serif font over the lemon.

**Case  
Studies**



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## Echo Valley Farm

- Produce high quality ethical and sustainable beef, pork and eggs all year-round
- Farm is located in Goomburra, 2hrs west of Brisbane
- 300 acres
- Hens - 500-2000 hens (stocked at 500 hens to the hectare)
- Cattle - 36 breeders, 20 steers, 3 bulls and 6 heifers
- Pigs - 12 breeding sows, 2 boars, 29 piglets and 25 grower pigs



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## Echo Valley Farm

- Consumer base: 150 km radius from farm gate
- Income streams - CSA / Online / Restaurants & Wholesale -  $\frac{1}{3}$  each
  - CSA Members - 50
  - Regular online customers - 50-70
  - Cafes/ Restaurants/Distributors - 12
- CSA members receive monthly share
- Drop offs at 5 locations across Brisbane (and also the farm)



## Full Share

**Beef:** 5kg mix of cuts - mince, steak, sausages, roasts, silverside, ribs, stir-fry, diced beef, y-bone and osso-bucco.

**Pork:** 3kgs mix of cuts - mince, sausages, roasts, fillet, ribs, chops, lion, diced, and spare ribs.

**Cured Meat:** 2kg of Bacon, Ham, Bacon bones, Ham hock. Salami, Kabana etc.

**Eggs:** 1 x 30tray of eggs

**Price:** \$250.00 per month, or

**\$2900.00 per year.**



## Half Share

**Beef:** 2.5k mix of cuts - mince, steak, sausages, roasts, silverside, ribs, stir-fry, diced beef, y-bone and osso-bucco.

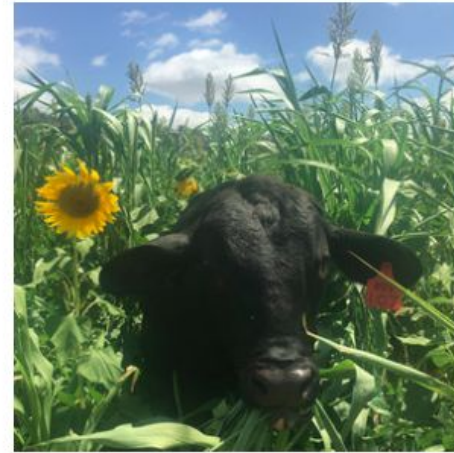
**Pork:** 1.5kg mix of cuts - mince, sausages, roasts, fillet, ribs, chops, lion, diced, and spare ribs.

**Cured Meat:** 1kg - bacon, ham, hocks or bones

**Eggs:** 2 dozen 700g eggs

**Price:** \$140.00 per month, or

**\$1630.00 per year**



## Tasty Share

**Beef:** 1.25kg - mix of premium and budget cuts.

**Pork:** 1kg - mince, chops, fillet, sausages

**Cured Pork:** 500g - bacon or ham

**Eggs:** 1 dozen 700g eggs

**Price:** \$80 per month, or

**\$950.00 per year.**





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# Echo Valley Farm: Key Learnings

## Benefits

- Having a connection with the people consuming your produce
- A community of individuals that buy in and believe in what you are trying to do and achieve
- Consistent income that you can rely on each month, so it assists with making decisions and aiding cash flow

## Challenges

- Management and admin, because we run multiple streams of income, and systems it means a heavy administrative workload
- (Obviously) the weather, but that comes with any agricultural system





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## Roly Poly Farm

- Produce high quality, seasonal vegetables, year-round 45mins from of Perth
- Farm on 30 acre in the hills of Gidgegannup - use 6 acres cultivated land for CSA
- Diversified sales distribution system which includes - Farmer Markets, Market Members program and Restaurants / Cafes
- Consumer base: 150km radius from farm gate
- Number of CSA members:
  - 50 past season
  - 100 current season





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## Roly Poly Farm

- Members receive box of produce each week
- Pay for a 10-week share - lump payment or in two equal payments
- Communication:
  - Newsletters
  - Member only weekly recipes
  - Invitations to visit the farm.
- \$30 (small share) or \$40 (large share) - typically 10-12 seasonal items are included in each share
- Generally have 4 seasons a year, each comprising of 10 weeks
- Pickup / collection options: Farmers Markets or On Farm







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## Roly Poly Farm

- Income and sales diversity
  - CSA
  - Farmer Markets + Market Members program
  - Restaurants/ Cafes
- Utilise a strong customer and community engagement strategy
- Utilise a number of digital mediums - news, stories, images, videos and updates from the farm
- Success linked to good communication, transparency, flexibility (choice is the big one) and variety
- The advance payments from their CSA *“allowed us to make infrastructure investments up front before the season began.”*



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## Five Serves Farm

- Alice leases 4 acres of farmland on the Hawkesbury River
- Growing vegetables on 1.5 acres (has capacity to expand)
- Consumer base : 60-70km from farm gate (Hawkesbury, Penrith, Hills and Blue Mountains)
- Members commit to buy 6-12 weeks of seasonal vegetables
- Number of members
  - 87 customers total
  - 55 boxes per week (about 3/4 are fortnightly customers)



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## Five Serves Farm

- CSA:
  - Members buy 6-12 week's worth of produce
  - Pick up their produce each week or fortnight at the farm or have it delivered
- Shares:
  - \$49 (small share) or \$69 (large share)
  - Weekly share contains between 8 and 15 different vegetables depending upon the season





## Five Serves Farm

- Weekly communication with members via email
  - What produce to expect each week - recipes & recommendations on how to cook certain veg
  - Updates on what's going on at the farm throughout the seasons and information on food and nutrition such as vegetable storage tips.
- Also includes:
  - Visits to the farm on vegetable pick up days
  - Seasonal on-farm events (x3-4/yr) - members invited to visit the farm and take part in a special seasonal planting or harvesting occasion
  - My be planting the yearly garlic crop, harvesting pumpkins or simply a farm picnic where CSA members and consumer meet other like-minded members and enjoy spending time on the farm.





## Five Serves Farm

- Alice employs herself full time (40 hours/week) plus:
  - A delivery driver (12 hours/week)
  - 1 harvester (10 hours/week) and
  - 1 harvester/farmhand (15 hours/week)
- Delivery:
  - Direct to homes/workplaces to customers who range from 10 minutes to 1 hour drive {up to 66km drive from the farm}
- < 10% members pick up from the farm at a set time during the week
- Sells excess produce wholesale to food co-ops/stores. - approx 10% of weekly income



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## What farmers like about a CSA

*“The connection with our members, the added variety and manageability it has brought to our farm/life and the best prospect of us viably remaining as farmers - financially, physically and emotionally.”*

*“I like the face to face time with members each week. Their ability to provide real time feedback on what they liked and didn’t like.”*

*“[G]reat feedback on the quality and freshness of the food”*





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## What farmers like about a CSA

*“Growing amazing organic produce for people who understand the importance of locally produced food. The support and feedback in my private facebook group, the sense of community with members sharing recipes and ways they have used their box contents is fun.”*

*“The connections that a farmer can build to their customers and the ability to greater inform customers about the realities of farming, and of supply and the challenges of farming during difficult seasons.”*





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## What farmers like about a CSA

*“That it is creating an alternative economy and building food sovereignty.”*

*“Involvement in the CSA movement, variety of tasks, knowing the people we are feeding - more connection. Opportunity to promote ways to change the food system.”*

*“Community - teaching, learning, sharing, support, encouragement, radically transforming the food system one member at a time.”*







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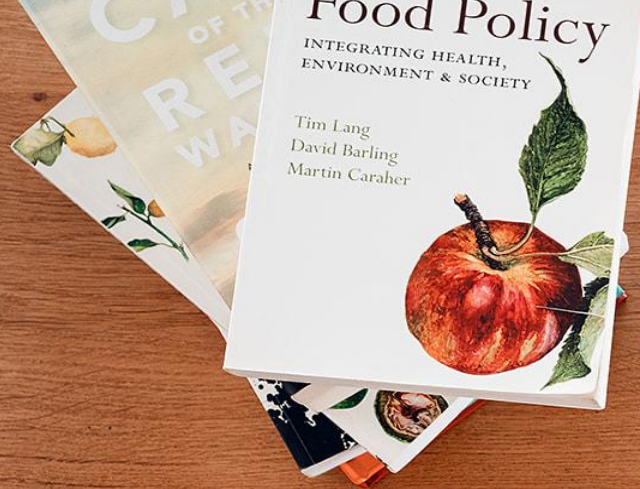
## Some challenges expressed

*“Having to produce food every month no matter what because people have paid. It's a bigger responsibility than going to farmers markets.”*

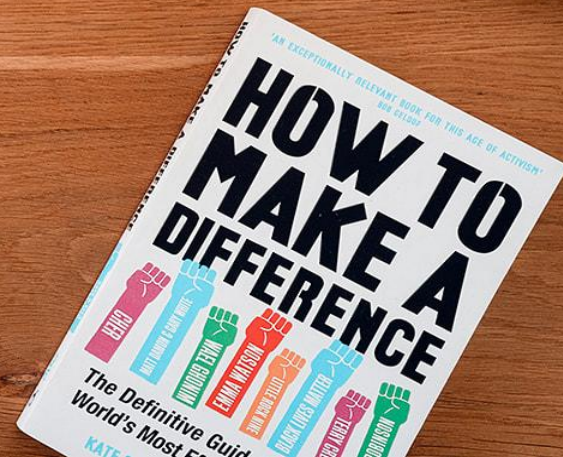
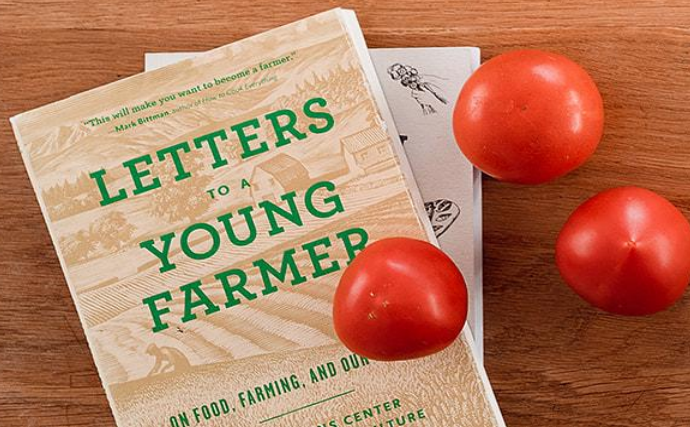
*“Expectation from self regarding quantity; variety; being personable; creating an experience that people enjoy.”*

*“The lack of flexibility - it's a big ongoing commitment for the farmer as well as the customer. I can skip a market if I'm sick or because of severe weather but I never feel like I can skip a week of veggie boxes because they're pre-paid and there's such strong expectations and relationships involved.”*





# Getting started with your CSA





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## Things to consider

- Produce to sell
- Size of shares
- Cost of shares
- Length of CSA season
- Number of members
- Distribution channels
- Communication methods
- Income diversity - % income from CSA



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## Questions to ask - share costs

What is the farm going to produce?

What are the production costs?

How much will it cost each member?

What are the different sized shares you offer?





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## Questions to ask - distribution

How are you going to get the produce to the members?

Will there be gaps in supply in different seasons?

Do you buy in for hungry gap? If so – where from? Is there a limit on how far you will transport bought in produce?

Will you support other local farms to broaden the range of produce you can offer your members?





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## Questions to ask - how do I recruit members?

- Write a CSA proposal (size of shares, cost, proposed collection points)
- What sort of members do you want?
- How will you find members?
- Where will you advertise your CSA? Eg. Fb page/ Fb groups/ share through networks



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## Questions to ask - how will I keep members informed?

Are you going to:

- Send emails/ newsletters about the farm/ shares?
- Use social media to keep in touch with members?
- Run regular farm tours for the members?
- Do other special events for CSA members?
- Anything else?





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## Questions to ask

Other things to consider:

- Who will do the administration work? E.g. emails, invoicing, liaising with members
- Who will do the delivery/ drop offs?
- Is additional marketing necessary?



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*“The long-term relationships with customers that really become friendships as people come back year after year. The very immediate and enthusiastic feedback. The social experience of pick-up day, which is 100% more enjoyable than a market because there's no pressure to sell anything. I can just wholeheartedly enjoy the interactions with my customers and feel really integrated into the community as a farmer.*

*It's hugely rewarding and creates really important financial stability, but it's also a lot of pressure. I think a CSA is something farms should evolve into rather than try to launch when they're just getting started.”*



MOST FOLKS BE LIKE...



WOKE FOLK BE LIKE...



@brenna-quinlan





Any questions?





**Thank you!**

For more information  
please check out the [CSA](#)  
[Network Aus&NZ](#)

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## IMAGE CREDITS

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