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Learn How to Nourish Yourself and Your Community

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Each minute two acres of farmland is lost to development in the United States. Between 1982 and 1997 an area the size of Maine and New Hampshire was converted from agricultural use. CSA allows local community members to embrace and nourish farming while having a say in what is farmed where they live.

Community supported agriculture (CSA) is part of a growing social movement that encourages urban and rural citizens to share responsibility for the land where their food is grown and how their food is produced. In simplest terms, CSA is a partnership between agricultural producers and consumers. Members or "shareholders" pay a fee at the beginning of the growing season to meet a farm's operating expenses for the upcoming season. In return, members receive a portion of the farm's produce each week throughout the growing season.

Such cooperation lets farmers and consumers share in the risks and benefits of farming. Unlike conventional agriculture, in which farmers bear the risks of weather, pests, and the marketplace alone, in community supported agriculture, the entire farm community shares both bounty and scarcity. This cooperation can provide farmers with a more equitable return for their labor and investment while relieving some of the burdens and uncertainties of conventional marketing.

But CSA is perhaps best known for how it fosters connections between urban dwellers and the land and encourages cooperation among rural and urban communities. Many farms host field days, produce newsletters, and hold workshops that educate members about sustainable farming and healthy food choices.

Shareholders find they experience a more healthful and varied diet that allows them to nourish themselves and their community. By directly supporting farmers and producers within their local eco-region, consumers can reduce the size of their carbon footprint due to significantly lower use of transportation resources. Consumers can nourish local farmers and their local environment by purchasing directly from growers that incorporate practices who provide the kind of benefits they want, including decreased use of harmful chemicals, decreased erosion and increased water quality. CSA is also a helpful tool to keep dollars within the community instead of exporting spending power out of the area. Shareholders get an opportunity to provide input to the people that are growing their food and learn how and where food they purchase is grown; this creates a sense of responsibility and stewardship of local farmlands. CSAs are typically more diverse and serve as an effective means of preserving farming in local communities.

On Wednesday, February 27, 2008, at the Salt Lake City Main Library at 210 East 400 South on the Lower Urban Level at 6:00 there will be a presentation about CSAs. Those interested in locally grown farm products are encouraged to attend and learn about the benefits and challenges involved in forming a CSA along the Wasatch Front. Please join us this year to hear from new farmers and local producers. Come early and stay late for your chance for prizes and incentives. These events are sponsored by the Great Salt Lake RC&D Council, an equal opportunity provider and employer. Contact Jeff Williams at (801) 557-0521 or www.greatsaltlakercd.org for additional information.

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