

STRAWBERRIES AND SQUASH: LEARN MORE ABOUT CSA'S



Every year, right around Father's Day, we receive our first box of produce: a flat of Oregon strawberries! This has been going on for six years now. We receive our last box of produce sometime in October, mostly squash. Because our family has subscribed to a Community Supported Agriculture program we've been blessed with a weekly distribution of local produce, from blackberries to tomatillos, from chard to tomatoes.

If you're like me you can name two varieties of squash—acorn and butternut—and you wouldn't necessarily describe them as blessings. But because of the Community Supported Agriculture program (CSA), I honestly look forward to spaghetti squash and sweet dumpling squash.

Catholic bishops hold a special place for agriculture "because it touches all our lives, wherever we live or whatever we do. It is about how we feed our own families, and the whole human family. It is about how we treat those who put food on our table and those who do not have enough food. It is about what is happening to food and farming, rural communities and villages, in the face of increasing concentration, new technology, and growing globalization in agriculture."

Let me highlight one sentence: "Agriculture is not only how we grow food, but how we treat those who bring food to our tables."

"When we go to the supermarket, we rarely think about where our food comes from, who produces it, who harvests it, or what it takes to process, package, and distribute it [food systems]."
(USCCB: *Pastoral Reflections on Food, Farmers, and Farmworkers*)

Participating in a CSA, however, connects you the consumer to a local farmer. Then you know where some of your food comes from and the name of your farmer. You don't have to think about who processed and packaged it because it's not processed or packaged.

Farmers must be able to support themselves and their families through their work and to provide for important needs such as health care and retirement. Farmers and their employees receive less and less of every dollar spent on food. This is a matter of justice that should be addressed. Through CSA's (and Farmers' Markets), farmers keep approximately 80 cents of each dollar spent by the consumer. That's a lot more than what they receive by selling to the supermarket.

How does it work? CSA's directly connects participants and farmers where participants in a CSA pay their farmer—it's similar to a subscription—at the beginning of the season to receive a weekly box of fresh fruits and vegetables during the harvest season, usually 10 weeks from June to October.

The U.S. Bishops are clear that agricultural policies must take into consideration the risks associated with farming that are beyond a farmer's control, such as weather and changes in global markets. (USCCB, *Pastoral Reflections on Food, Farmers, and Farmworkers*) Yes, these agricultural policies are the responsibility of the Federal Government but individually we can share the risk with our CSA farmer: by buying a share, usually in February or March, consumers share in the risks with the farmers.

By selling shares (and raising capital) farmers avoid taking out a loan. Without the burden of a loan, and the interest payments, creates a more favorable economic climate for the farmer.

By purchasing shares we the consumer benefit if the harvest is especially bountiful; we share the risk if the harvest is smaller than expected (often due to adverse weather).

[Learn more about CSA 's and locate one in your area](#)



Office of Life, Justice, and Peace