

LOCAL, COMMUNITY BASED, FOOD DEVELOPMENT

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ORGANIZING COMMUNITY SUPPORTED

Many people have experience with the notion and practice of Community Supported Agriculture or CSA. CSAs have most often been organized utilizing the "box system" developed by small farmers in European communities. Another version of CSA organization came to the USA from Japan and focused on shared labor offered by food consumers as they gave of their time and energy in trade for part of the food they received from a farm. Merging these two versions of CSA we have seen a kind of organizational hybrid which looks something like this:

CONSUMER AS VOLUNTEER > HOURS > CAPITAL >

FOOD INVESTMENT > FOOD RETURN

PRODUCER RESPONDING TO FOOD NEEDS OF

CONSUMER / VOLUNTEER > HOURS > CAPITAL >

DURABLE FOOD PRODUCTION SYSTEM

This model is much more than a "direct marketing" scheme. CSA is an intentional organizing principle which involves all parties in a shared risk process resulting in fulfilling predetermined food needs. It is a social contract pattern which functions outside the industrial paradigm of the dominant social norm.

Box system organizing by small farms has traditionally provided a range of produce available from a member farm during a week of the growing year. In the last few years there are box systems supplied by several farms. But the offerings are still dependent upon farm decisions and very importantly are not in most cases, based on a household food budget laid out for a year.

The CSA system has been a great tool for supporting small farms with upfront capital, especially as it is needed for crop and infrastructure investment at the beginning of a season. It was never devised as an organizational tool for feeding an entire community or region. Nor did the CSA model take into account the coming stresses on our total food system as the result of very expensive fuel inputs and global warming.

USING THE NOTION OF CSA TO ORGANIZE A LOCALLY BASED, REGIONAL, FOOD SYSTEM

The basis of current food availability throughout the world is the industrial paradigm. In this paradigm we see the following practices:

- FARMS OR GARDENS ARE INGREDIENTS SOURCES
- INGREDIENTS ARE SHIPPED TO:
 - (A) STORAGE, REFRIGERATION, WAREHOUSES
 - (B) PROCESSING PLANTS (WASHING, PACKAGING, COOKING, MAKING CONVENIENCE PRODUCTS
 - (C) PRODUCTS ARE LABELED AND ADVERTISED
 - (D) PRODUCTS ARE MARKETED TO CONSUMERS THROUGH CENTRALIZED DISTRIBUTION

When farms are expected to provide ingredients, the average person regards production practices and products the way they do a factory. They rarely consider all that went into the product which they are consuming. In fact, as we are three generations away from the soil in most human experience, most people don't have a conscious need to know about the farming systems that produced their food. When that awareness breaks through, as it has done with at least some people in the Organic movement, health and nutritional concerns gradually raise demands as to what a farm/garden growing system should practice. Standards that outlaw synthetic chemicals and trans genetically engineered inputs, support alignment with biologically interactive communities, enhance air, water, and soil environments, provide well-being including fair wages for all involved in farm-food production are some of what we've come to expect. These demands can and should be met in all industrial food productions. As we know, they are not. But the point here is, AS WE ORGANIZE A LOCALLY BASED, REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM, ALL OF THESE DEMANDS MUST BE THE BASIS OF HOW WE CONSIDER FOOD PRODUCTION WHEN WE CONTRACT WITH FARMS AND GARDENS.

The notion of CSA can be used in organizing local people to get involved in local farm/garden production. There are several elements of the CSA notion that could be useful organizing tools:

1. Willing people using some of their hours on farms or participating gardens as a labor base in trade for some portion of their food gleaned from a community of various growers producing a variety of crops crops to feed a community.
2. \$ from those in the community who might not have hours available, but might be willing to invest in the community food risk, capital to help drive the food system, in return for some or even all of their food.
3. Community organizers, doing the basic work of helping in household , institutional and restaurant food assessments, contributing hours in trade for some or all of their food.
4. Community distribution people trading hours , space, vehicles for part or all of their food needs.

In other words we know how to organize a dynamic local food community if we have the desire to design such a process at the local food production level.

The CSA participation model can also be used in organizing a local food processing web. Community Supported Processing is not a notion that has been widely practiced in an intentional, designed, organized manner. What follows are what I see as some of the elements of that kind of organizational pattern.

1. Foods, grown to acceptable standards, by contracted grower/ producers are moved into predetermined, contracted channels. Categories are FRESH, STORED (dry, refrigeration, CN etc.) PROCESSED (made ready for convenient consumption)
2. Food communities are organized, utilizing a data base, product by product system. The elements of these communities are households, institutions, restaurants, in a given local. Each entity is given a yearly food needs assessment form. The categories of the form are collected in the data base, showing a community need for product. Contracts are set with participating grower/producers based on requested need.
3. Food processing facilities and storage facilities are built, staffed, and maintained as part of the CSP process.
4. Participants can trade hours and or money as part or all of their particular food need.
5. Processed foods prices are set to give incentive to grower/ producers, needed processing costs, organizational costs etc.

An example follows on which I have done some preliminary work. The category is BLACK BEANS.

Let's say that in our community we have the following use patterns upon which contracts could be set:

Institutions- collectively 1000 lbs per month

Restaurants 100 lbs of black beans per month (dry)

X 12 months

X 24 restaurants

= 28,000 lbs of beans

X 12 months

X 10 institutions (hospitals, schools, nursing homes, university living units, etc.)

= 12,000 lbs of beans

households 300 households at 1 lb per month

X 12 months

= 3,600 lbs

In this scenario we would be seeking a grower or growers to produce 43,600 lbs of beans or 22 tons. At my yield of this product last summer we would in this scenario be looking for 10 to 12 acres of black beans. (I purposely do not include retail stores in this example.)

If our organizing over a three county area is servicing all the black bean needs of something over 300,000 people we would be looking for much more acreage. Once we service this immediate area, every year, on contract, then we could begin entertaining contracts from other local food areas organized in a similar fashion but unable to grow black beans in their locality. Most larger metropolitan areas within a hundred mile regional radius would be in our sphere of community organization.

The organizing tools of CSP are key to this process. The main reason that the industrial food growing and processing system in Linn, Benton and Lincoln counties has all but disappeared has to do with the cost of labor and facility maintenance in a competitive world marketplace. To really organize a locally based, regional food system we must do it from a Community Supported basis. This is a human involvement model which requires consciousness. We have a lot of good work to do.

Identifying Survival Foods When Assessing A Community-Based Food Shed Need.

One of the problems faced when organizing a Local Production base for a community which shares in the risks and benefits of food production involving human commitment rather than mere consumption is that so much of our food need perception is based on industrial convenience. This one factor is a huge hurdle for organizers attempting to provide leadership to change food habits.

Ten Rivers has spent almost three years discussing how to build a locally based food system. One of the elements that keeps coming up in that discussion, then fades into the background, has to do with what one person in an early meeting identified as "the Benton County Diet". What is a survival diet for Linn, Benton, and Lincoln counties? What can be grown and otherwise produced here? We know that well over 200 crops have been grown on the Willamette Valley floor. We know that there is a long history of beef, lamb, pork, chicken, turkey etc. production. So how might we characterize a survival diet when developing a household, institutional, or restaurant tool?

Briefly here is a format which would give us needed information for developing a data base upon which to set production contracts. It is category specific and would require some work to generate a complete human diet.

| | CRO P | SEASO N | IRRIGATIO N | HARVES T | CLEAN/STOR E | PROCES S | NUTRITIO N |
|---------------|----------|------------|----------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|---------------|
| GRAINS | | | | | | | |
| hard wheat | | | | | | | |
| soft wheat | | | | | | | |
| oats | | | | | | | |
| barley | | | | | | | |
| buckwhea t | | | | | | | |
| rye | | | | | | | |
| kamut | | | | | | | |
| corn | | | | | | | |
| millet | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| quinoa | | | | | | | |
| amaranth | | | | | | | |
| BEANS | | | | | | | |
| fava | | | | | | | |
| pinto | | | | | | | |
| black | | | | | | | |
| soy | | | | | | | |
| adzuki | | | | | | | |
| lima | | | | | | | |
| red | | | | | | | |
| garbanzo | | | | | | | |
| ROOTS | | | | | | | |
| Potatoes | | | | | | | |
| onions | | | | | | | |
| carrots | | | | | | | |
| beets | | | | | | | |
| parsnips | | | | | | | |
| turnips | | | | | | | |
| celery root | | | | | | | |
| gobo | | | | | | | |
| yakon | | | | | | | |
| radish | | | | | | | |

The graph matrix starts with planting times. Water requirements are next . Than all important harvest times. Kinds of rough cleaning and storage show us needed infrastructure, as does processing. And last, and most important, what nutritional needs are typically met by a given crop grown in a particular micro climate and particular soils. This matrix is several pages long. It does not take into account what are now called prepared or convenience foods. This data is for living, institutional and restaurant assessment of need.

A final column would allow the participant to fill in projected requirement for a crop year. I would prioritize survival foods in importance of development over the next two years in the following way:

1. Grains, Beans, Roots, Winter Squashes where very little infrastructure is required for cleaning before storage, and where dry storage is fairly easy to do.
2. Fresh vegetables and fruits, requiring cleaning and refrigeration. Eggs fit into this category also.

3. Fresh vegetables and fruits requiring processing that involves water, heat, canning or freezing or drying.
4. Meats that require certified USDA slaughter, refrigeration.
5. Dairy requiring inspected dairy facilities, refrigeration.
6. Prepared convenience foods, not really a survival necessity.