SOLID BASE

SUPPORTING BOOKLET FOR TRAINING ON FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY FOR SOLIDARITY-BASED FOOD SYSTEMS

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Supporting booklet for training on the financial sustainability of Solidarity-based Food Systems.

Solidarity-based Food Systems (SFSs), most notably Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), are a form of short food supply chains based on direct relationships between farmers and consumers, mutual trust, and democratic decision-making. Moreover, SFSs often produce organically, maintaining a climate-friendly approach to agriculture. According to the last census in 2014, conducted in 16 different European countries, there were at least 4,000 CSA groups involving nearly 465,000 consumers and 6,300 farms. The interest from both farmers and consumers in founding or joining SFS initiatives has been continually growing.

Despite the noticeable benefits that these solidarity economies bring to communities, poor planning or management can result in stressful situations such as: overworking of farmers, financial strains, and even the collapse of initiatives. This acknowledgment was the starting point of the "Solid Base" project, which aims to provide SFSs with skills that could contribute to a real chance for breaking out of the continuous financial instability they are facing, and from constantly living close to the margins.

Solid Base brings together organisations from Hungary (TVE), Czech Republic (AMPI), Germany (Agronauten and Solawi) and the network URGENCI, already long-term partners in their efforts to increase the sustainability of SFSs. Together, these partners have developed an innovative European non-formal training program. The topics they explore are based on research and an analysis of common needs amongst farmers and consumers involved in SFSs in Europe.

This booklet you have in your hands is the main support for the training program; it summarises the basic learning points accompanied by case studies and links to other useful resources. The Solid Base training program is composed of four modules:

» *Training module 1: Management*
» *Training module 2: Financial planning*
» *Training module 3: Digital tools*
» *Training module 4: Participatory inclusion techniques*

More methodological and background information about each module is provided by the "Solid Base: Training Guide", which is the other project output. We hope you will find it useful and practical.

And do not forget to check our website for more information:
http://urgenci.net/solid-base

Content

Foreword

Welcome to this publication, written and published by a wide and solid consortium of people interested in creating a food system that is just and solidarity-based, and that builds upon the agroecological practices of farmers and eaters together. It has been an important journey to address the issue that far too often, those interested in building these new food systems do not look at the financial and economic side of the work, often ending up exploiting themselves with a huge amount of unpaid work and a failure to meet sustainability in financial terms. Solidarity-based food systems should by definition focus on all sides of sustainability - not only social and environmental but also economical with the inclusion of solidarity principles in the financing as well.

And now in your hands is the result of two years of investigations, searching for practices and applications of solidarity principles in the financing of various initiatives in the agroecological food and farming system, two years of passionate debates on what solidarity-based financing might mean and how it could be framed, two years of putting these findings together in words that are understandable and concise, but complex enough to provide genuine support might have been mission impossible!

Nonetheless here we go, SolidBasers are bringing an overview of solidarity-based financing principles in alternative food systems such as Community Supported Agriculture, Food Coops or community purchase groups all over Europe. Illustrated by living examples and taken to the root of the topic, the collective of authors has tried to synthesize their knowledge of the issue and put an extensive and relatively under-investigated issue into publication, bringing to light the principles, practices, recommendations, and illustrations that we hope might make our food system not only more just, environmentally respectful and socially responsible but also achieve a financial viability that is rooted in solidarity.

In no way does this publication claim to be an exhaustive overview or description, it is quite a subjective view on the issue that might be assessed from various different angles. Thus, we welcome you to find what fits you and your needs the most, and to provide feedback on your experience and knowledge.

The journey towards a solidbase food system begins now. Enjoy it!

Solidarity-Based Food Systems

This publication is not only useful for those who are familiar with solidarity-based food systems (SFS) and community-supported agriculture (CSA), but also for those who are new to or inexperienced with this topic. Therefore, we consider it important to begin by providing basic information about these systems and their principles.

I. Principles

Solidarity-based Food Systems (SFS)

are forms of short food supply chains which are based on solidarity economies, democratic decision-making and participatory management. SFS often produce organically, or at least in a climate-friendly way, aiming to provide nutritious food with less ecological impact and higher social benefits. SFS was chosen as the umbrella term to take into account various forms of organisations, distinct from CSAs but nonetheless sharing a similar approach to sustainability, fairness and solidarity. This refers to: buyer groups, food coops and enterprises that foster direct farmer-consumer relations; social cooperatives; and others.[31]

Two main models that are blossoming nowadays are Local Solidarity-based Partnerships for Agroecology (LSPA) and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). The concepts of CSA and LSPA relate to each other. To understand both concepts it is important to know what agroecology means. Agroecology is a set of resilient agricultural practices rooted in spe-

cific social movements. At the same time, it is a technical and philosophical concept which provides us with healthy food systems built on values of environmental protection and human rights.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

is a direct partnership between a group of consumers and producer(s) whereby the risks, responsibilities and rewards of farming activities are shared through long-term, binding agreements. Generally operating on a small and local scale, CSA aims at providing quality food produced in an agroecological way (URGENCI - International CSA Network).[32]

Fundamental pillars and principles of CSA[32]

» *Partnership: CSA is based on a partnership, usually formalized as an individual contract between each consumer and the producer. It is characterized by a mutual commitment to supply one another (with resources – usually money and food) over an extended period of time. The contracts last for several months, a season, or a year.*

» *Localization: CSA is based on localization – local producers should be well-integrated into their surrounding areas and their work should benefit the communities which support them.*

» *Solidarity: CSAs are based on solidarity between producers and consumers, who become members (shareholders). The whole functioning of the groups is designed on*

a human scale – paying a sufficient, fair price up-front in advance to enable farmers and their families to maintain their farms and live in a dignified manner, and at the same time, the price respects the needs and abilities of consumers. A key element is sharing both the risks and the rewards of healthy production.

*» **Trust:** The producer/consumer tandem is based on direct person-to-person contact and trust, with no intermediaries or hierarchy.*

The growing efforts in society on the whole, to re-establish Food Sovereignty, Solidarity Economies and Organic Small-scale Farming are reflected in the rise of CSAs. These are the main foundations of CSAs, embracing the issue of food production through respecting people's needs and the boundaries of the environment.[32]

Learn more about CSA and LSPA principles in URGENCI´s Hub: https://hub.urgenci.net

II. Financial sustainability of Solidarity-Based Food Systems

Research on the financial sustainability of CSA and other solidarity-based food systems in Europe was an important part of the Solid Base project conducted in 2018. In the final sample, 116 participants from 18 different countries had answered the 50 questions posed. Generally, respondents were very positive about their experiences of CSAs. For example, 59% had seen a financial improvement in their CSA farm(s) over the last 5 years, while 13% had not. The majority (77%) feel positive about the future of their CSA, with only 2% declaring themselves "pessimistic". Despite this positive picture, initiatives and farmers face difficulties. Only 42% of respondents declared that their farm is not as sustainable as they would like it to be. It is clear from the results, that whilst the SFS mode of organising can help a farmer achieve sustainability, it is certainly not without its challenges.[31]

Find more results from Solid Base research among European SFS at http://urgenci.net/solid-base

In the Solid Base project, a financially sustainable CSA project was defined as follows:[31] "the ability of the farmer (or farmers) and the CSA community to maintain both the farm(s) and the CSA initiative in the long-term. In order to achieve this long-term resilience, the farm should not depend on specific external grants or donations, and should not transfer debts either to the next generation of farmers, or to the community."

The sustainable livelihoods of farmers are at the core of SFS, as they contribute to a food sovereignty in which consumers and producers are empowered to code-sign and co-determine the shape of their food system in an on-going democratic process. However, long term sustainability depends on the needs of all parts of the system: producers (farmers), consumers and their mutual relationships.

Key elements of sustainability in SFS/CSA identified in Solid Base project [31]

» *Income covers the costs of sustainable production;*
» *Income covers decent wages for the farmer and employees without overtime and allows for fair working conditions for all;*
» *Economic model allows for the application of farming methods that ensure environmental sustainability and respect nature;*
» *Income allows farmers to pay of all due social contributions (eg. taxes);*
» *Income allows farmers to have savings;*
» *The ability of the farmer(s) to make provisions for his/her retirement;*
» *The initiative can cover costs for insurances and is able to handle unforeseeable events (eg. natural disasters etc.) and to preventatively assess and manage risks;*
» *The initiative is able to cover the costs or have access to funds (eg. loans) for necessary investments (e.g. machinery, property etc.);*
» *Income allows investment into organisational development (learning, knowledge sharing etc.)*
» *The ability to develop, manage and maintain a community of members on a long-term period and to build a strong relationship between the members;*
» *The ability to record and analyze costs and returns in an effective way and to gain the ability to set a fair price for the share;*
» *The ability for the farm manager to improve his/her production skills, crop knowledge and his/her ability to receive and share knowledge and experiences;*
» *The knowledge of fundamental business skills to be able to have financial transparency towards the members;*

» *The ability to financially plan a CSA/ SFS, to anticipate investments as well as to articulate practitioners' needs and to plan for the future (up to 5 years);*
» *The ability to keep the rolling budget in control;*
» *The ability to maintain connections with experienced persons / networking as an external "reality check" (for example an adviser, a regional group);*
» *Clearness of decision-making rules.*
» *Creating a common vision and spirit of the SFS/CSA.*
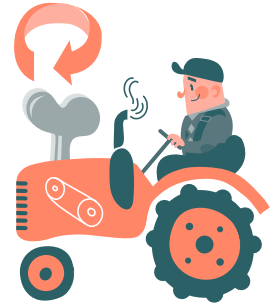
III. Networks

According to a census[43] by CSA Research Group in 2015 there were about 2,783 CSAs operating in Europe and half a million (474,455) consumers/members (taken as an estimation using a rather narrow definition of CSA). In some countries, farmers, initiatives, consumers and other supporters of local food systems come together in formal or informal networks. Being part of the network may bring to its members a range of benefits and help them increase their sustainability. For example, a network might provide advice, education and assistance to new and existing CSAs and support the exchange of experiences amongst members. It can create local food supply chains or reunite the public with local food and support organic farmers. CSA Networks often also handle directories, maps to help consumers easily find the nearest farmer or CSA. Moreover, networks play an important role in raising the awareness of the general public and policy makers about

ADVOCACY

NETWORKING

PERSONAL SUPPORT

EDUCATION

ACTION PROGRAMS

the benefits of local food systems based on agroecological principles.

Functions of CSA Networks

» **Advocacy:** *Represent the voice of members and influence public authorities and the general public.*

» **Networking and facilitation:** *Support cooperation, moderate and facilitate sharing experience*

» **Personalised support:** *Support the field stakeholders (farmers, initiative coordinators) who face difficult issues as well as every-day needs.*

» **Education:** *Support education through*

the collective provision of training programs, resources and materials.

» **Steering of joint projects:** *Development of action programs.*

You can find examples of European CSA networks and umbrella organisations in the part Best practices
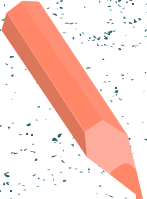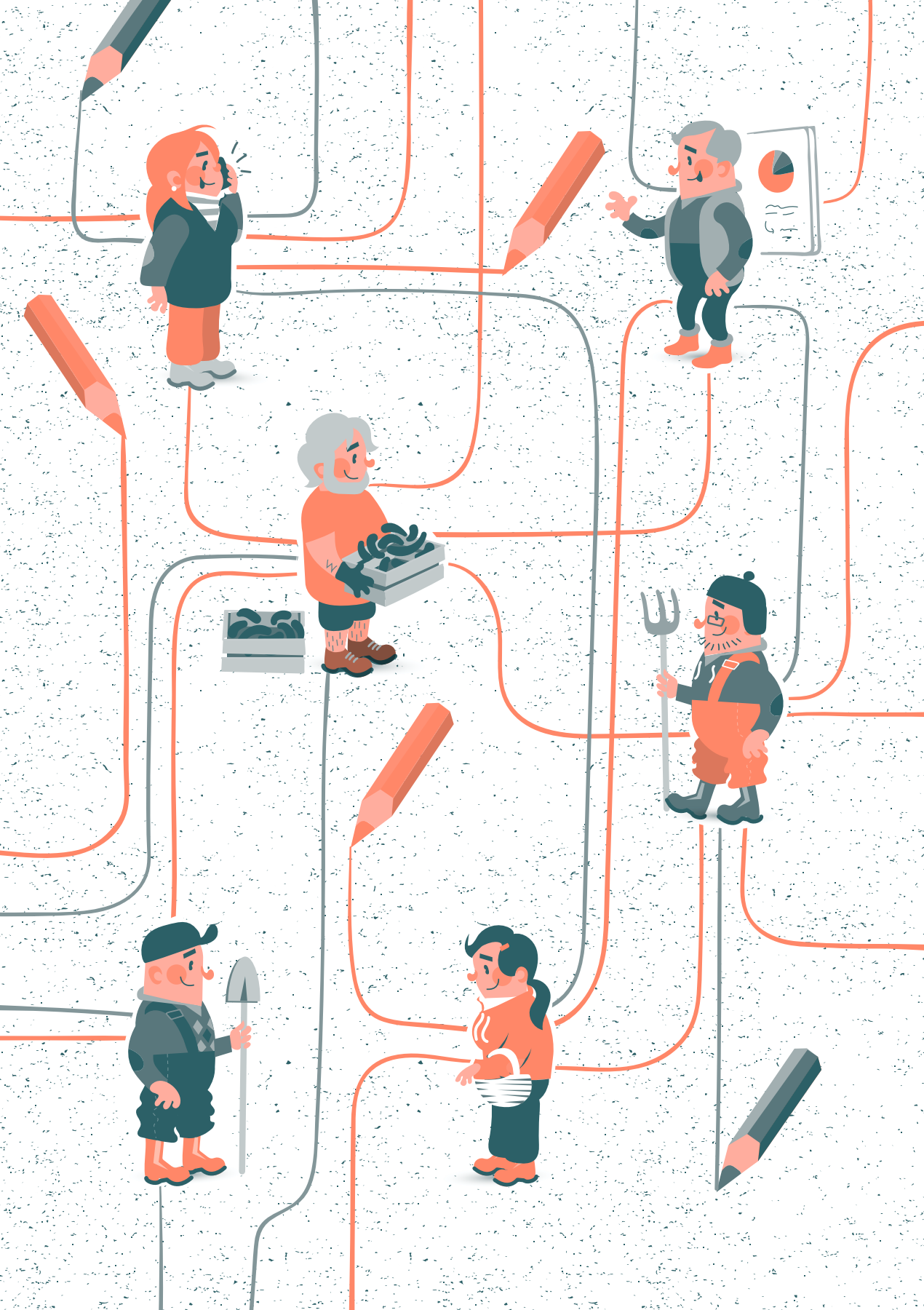
MANAGEMENT

MANAGEMENT

Solidarity-based Food Systems do not describe an end-product, but rather guidelines for the development of a new local food system which reflects the character and needs of a locality, it's members and farmers. There are no two identical SFSs, each one has its own vision, motivation, structure, and dynamic in time and space. Despite the fact that people can organise themselves as informal groups or, later, can opt for a legal status, they have to agree on common rules of decision making and management to create a safe environment for their own development.

1.1. Legal structure

Legal structure is a very important aspect that is sometimes neglected, despite the fact that it strongly influences the financial system, decision making and ability to share responsibility within an SFS initiative. There are a variety of obligations and consequences (including opportunities) that adhere to the different types of formal and informal arrangements and legal forms. For example, it is crucial to understand the tax system to which a specific operation is subject.[5]

Some smaller projects, which do not intend to employ staff or have any assets, such as producer-consumer partnerships, can be based on an informal arrangement. A simple contract drawn up between members and the producers may be all that is required. As an initiative increases in size and complexity, it is wise to have clearly defined rights and responsibilities which are recognised in law.[5]

Issues to consider when choosing your legal structure

This module will not provide detailed information on legal forms in different countries, it merely aims to highlight that the topic is worthy of consideration. In beginning to form an informal group or set up an organisation with a legal identity, you should consider the following questions: [25]

» **Who are the stakeholders?** *Typically an initiative will involve a landowner, farmers or growers, volunteers and the consumer members. What do each of these groups want out of the arrangement? What level of commitment is required from each stakeholder? Does it require a written contract? How do people join and leave the organisation?*

» **Who ultimately has control over the decisions?** *In other words, how will the initiative be managed? Is it the farmer? Or is it the consumer members? The landlord? Workers? An elected board? A combination?*

» **How are we going to run this organisation?** *If consumers are to share the risks of farming they should also have the opportunity to understand and influence the way that their food is produced. But do you want members to be able to vote on day-to-day issues such as when and where to plant carrots, or only when money has to be spent on a new planting machine, for example? Are everybody's interests protected?*

» **Will your structure protect the organisation against disruptive individuals who wish to take control?** *Consider not only who has power in theory but also who actually has power in practice. For example, a landowner may have a single vote but the power to evict from their land.*

» **Does the community own the land?** *If a landowner allows a community group to work their land will the community group gain rights to it? Should the community group rent the land or buy it?*

» **How will the initiative get start-up or other essential capital?** *Start-up capital will always be required but, in addition, money will be needed if you have to buy land or machinery, which could amount to a large sum. Who will own the assets? Are you planning to apply for grants or do a community share offer?*

» *What are we going to do with any profit?*
» *Will your structure accommodate change in the future?* *Will the CSA continue beyond the life of one or all of its actors? What if your main founder(s) should leave? What happens if the farm/initiative terminates? What if you want to double the number of employees or buy more land? Or take on more charitable objectives, such as providing cheap produce to people on a low income?*
» *What happens to assets if you should end the scheme?*

What is the most appropriate legal structure for you?

» *Avoid getting bogged down in the legal structure rather than what you want to achieve. Don't forget, the structure is just the tool to allow you to achieve your vision and aims.*
» *Keep it as simple as possible. Avoid creating something more complicated than it needs to be, which people then ignore.*

TIP

Take professional advice. Many groups defer decisions on legal structures for a season or two, since choosing the right legal structure is complicated. There's little point in becoming an expert on legal forms when you are only doing this once, so take professional advice. This advice is may be subsidised or even free for community enterprises.

TIP

Download the "Legal structure" leaflet produced by CSA UK network at link http://bit.ly/34WlHHm[25]. Learn more about legal forms and organisational types for co-operatives and community owned enterprises in guide "Simply Legal"[38] (download at link http://bit.ly/2PbWh1S) or "Cultivating cooperatives"[13] (download at link https://bit.ly/2S6owCk). Explore "Farmers Guide to Business Structures"[2] (download at link https://bit.ly/2Z1LuMr)

1.2. Who makes decisions and governs in SFS

Building an alternative food system is a collective adventure, where various actors have their own role to play. The simple initiative consists of producers (farmers / growers) and members (consumers / eaters / shareholders). However, mostly SFS are broader groups of involved actors. Usually there is also coordinator (core group) - a person or group of people (producers or members) who are responsible for the overall management of an initiative. Finally, there are other supporters, who may support an initiative in various ways, such as providing a distribution point or financing a solidarity fund. All of these actors influence the running of an initiative.

Principles for decision making and governance

For SFS to be more than just another direct marketing scheme, the farmers and

the consumers need to work together to build an institution they can share. It is vital to balance the needs and aspirations of all, however it does not mean everyone is involved in every decision – you'd never get any work done! It's better to devolve decision-making to sub-groups or individuals, who are then accountable to the members. Those sub-groups and individuals should be aware of the limits of their decision-making authority and how they will be held accountable, and should then be left to get on with it. Some decisions will need the agreement of everyone – decisions which affect most members, for example, or those involving large sums of money.

For the long term sustainability of an initiative it is important to consider: operational structure, clear and fair distribution of responsibilities, decision-making delegations.

Example — Decision making process in Gemuse Koop Cologne (Germany)

The Gemüse Koop members are organised into different teams, including the group of Co-Owners. An owners' meeting is held every year. In between, a team makes the decisions, while some more teams are set up for special tasks, like growing vegetables. All teams make their decisions based on consensus. A consensus is easy to reach, when these facts are kept in mind: Good information should be shared about the decision before the meeting. During the meeting, it is good to start with questions about the decision and then a round of talking about the decision. A moderator and someone to graphically record on a flip chart is very helpful. Of course, sometimes, a consensus is difficult to reach, but overall it is always very positive for the teambuilding between all members of the group.

It is key to share responsibilities clearly and decide within community in a participatory way. Make sure there is no vacuum of responsibility. For support in organisational development it is helpful to ask the following questions: [5]

» *Do we need to make a decision?*
» *Who is involved in the decision-making process, when and how?*
» *Do the affected actors want to be involved in making the decision?*
» *Which organs (working groups, forums, plenaries, boards of directors, etc.) do the organisation consist of? How are the roles assigned and defined?*
» *What are the domains of these bodies?*
» *Which special areas do they deal with?*
» *When can they decide autonomously and when do they need the approval of other bodies? Do they need money, if so, where does it come from?*
» *Who carries out the actions after the decision is taken, and when?*

Only when these questions are well answered can an organisation successfully establish flat hierarchies. It is important that everyone in an organisation knows which organs exist and what is under their control. Transparency within the organisation is important. People want to know what their job is and that of others. Then satisfaction and productivity are more likely to arise naturally and leadership becomes easier.

1.3. Roles and organisational structure

An initiative should not be centred on one or two people only, otherwise it will easily become paralysed if the leaders drop out or are unable to cooperate with each other. Capacity-building efforts can be highly beneficial in many activities and a wide range of roles and skills exist in SFS. Do not forget, you do not have to do

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Example — CONSUMERS TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR DISTRIBUTION
In situations where the farm is located more than an hour's drive from the members, CSAs really depend on their city core groups to handle distribution. This is the case of Svobodný statek (*www.svobodny-statek.cz*), which is a biodynamic farm in the Czech Republic. In 2019 the farm grew food for 350 families and had a separate core group for each of its almost 30 target areas. Each core group had one free share from the farm as a reward for organising the distribution point, overseeing the weekly work shifts, recruiting new members, and assisting farm meetings for shareholders. Initially, they also handled the member database, collected fees, and kept the books. Twice a year, the cores meet together with the farm crew to discuss the annual budget and the overall direction of the farm.

everything by yourself. Share the responsibility within your community.

Create a core group and working groups

There is a lot of work to do in creating a community. It is important that work is distributed effectively and equitably amongst those with the ability, experience and time to do it in a way that allows the separate work to be coordinated and mutually supportive. As it is challenging to decide about everything in large meetings, it can be effective to create a core group and smaller working groups. While working groups focus on a particular area such as finance, membership or logistics, a core group oversees the whole process and takes responsibility for its evaluation and planning, coordinates and monitors the activity of the various working groups and organises meetings of the overall community. In order to avoid misunderstandings and difficulties in the community, principles, roles and responsibilities should be clarified from the beginning. It is important that everyone knows what his/her role and responsibility in the community is. Being precise and specific about the role and responsibility division helps to release the work burden from some community members but also helps the less active members to see the whole scheme operation and how demanding it can be.

However, it is also important to keep in mind that a community is dynamic and situations change. New members come, others can leave. The community should be sensitive to the different possibilities and capabilities of its members. It is really important for a common understanding to discuss roles, responsibilities and processes from time to time at personal meetings and take regularly time for reflection. There are many important phases in the life cycle of an initiative, such as the start of the partnership, every year at the general assembly or when the contracts are renewed, after a few years of running

the initiative, when there are recurring difficulties, or when considering making important changes.

TIPS FOR A FLOURISHING CORE GROUP

» ***Look at overall responsibilities.*** *What skills, knowledge and experiences are needed? Identify the gaps – what is missing? Is there possibility to learn missing skills? Is there a person among other members, who has appropriate skills and who wants to join the core team? Are there tools that can help fill the gap (for example IT tools)? Is it possible to get an advisor for a specific topic (ie. legal structure)?*

» ***Clarify key responsibilities and describe the roles.*** *What is the role and responsibility of each core group member? Who can take which decisions?*

» ***Refresh blood.*** *Are members of a core group elected? Is the length of time people can be members of a core group limited or not? Set up rules for how members can join a core group.*

» ***Meet regularly.*** *How often does the core group meet? Draw up an annual cycle of regular meetings.*

» ***Review of core group performance.*** *Carry out regular reviews of group performance and use the review to decide on issues which could be addressed.*

» ***Try to build a culture in which critical debate is possible.*** *Develop an atmosphere of openness and trust, in which you can be open about difficulties and in which critical debate is possible, you will find it easier to avoid conflicts.*

» ***Set up additional working groups.*** *Think about setting up additional working groups to deal with specific issues and report back to the core group. For better collaboration it is useful, if one person from each working group is also part of a core group.*

Example — SHARING RESPONSIBILITIES AND ROLES WITHIN COMMUNITY
An example of CSA Pikovice (Czech Republic) shows how responsibility may be distributed within a community. CSA Pikovice is a community-led initiative, which grows organic food for its members. Decision making and responsibility is distributed among all members, who decide together about important things such as the budget, share's price, wages and rules at annual and regular meetings. However, the overall organisation and the everyday tasks are managed by a core group composed of a coordinator, a gardener, a harvester and a treasurer. Coordination group members are financially rewarded for their work or receive a share.

COORDINATOR	HARVESTER
» leads the membership administration » communication with members » distribute newsletter » manage documents on share drive » vegetable share logistics and distribution » public relations, publicity, links with other CSAs » negotiate supplies of other products » register the share content » annual reports » organise group activities » organise and lead annual meeting	» garden work (planting, cultivation, harvesting) » prepare and distribute shares to distribution points

	TREASURER
	» collect fees » pay gardener and other workers » keep books » maintain bank account

GARDENER	SHARERERS
» together with coordinator develop a budget to present to members » prepare field plans » seed selection	» decide on legal structure and budget » agree on group values (e.g., organic, local etc.) » elects/agree on members of the core group » "All inclusive sharer" - pay on time, pick up and enjoy food share, participate at annual meetings » "Classic sharer"* - pay on time, help with work for CSA, help recruit members, pick up and enjoy food share, participate at annual meetings

1. 4. Task and time management

In the case of SFS where several different kinds of tasks arise at the same time (farming, communication, delivery, community building), well-planned and conscious coordination, task-sharing and cooperation are crucial success factors.

How to plan and manage tasks

» *Map the activities and processes* (1)
First identify main activities needed to ensure your initiative or farm running. It is for example production, distribution, membership, finance, delivery point, volunteers etc.

» *Break activities down into tasks* (2)
Go deeper in every activity. What steps and tasks have to be done to finish an activity?

» *Plan tasks in time* (3) *How much time does it take for the task to be done? What is the deadline? Does work depend on completing another task?*

» *Assign tasks to responsible members from your community* (4) *Who takes responsibility for the task? Responsibility should be down to one person, despite the fact that there may be others who collaborate.*

» *Create system of task sharing and tracking* (5) *How do you know that the task is in progress or finished? How do you share tasks within your community? Who is responsible for what? What has to be done next week? What has the priority? You need to develop a system that enables you to share and track tasks in real time. Create clear and simple communication rules.*

Tools for task management

The need for management and communication tools are directly linked to the level of complexity of an initiative. The less direct the exchanges are, the bigger the initiative is, the greater the need for various tools to solve everyday tasks effectively. Today there are plenty of online tools that can help you to organise and track tasks from simple to-do lists to systems that offer task creation, visualization, and notification capabilities such as: *http://www.asana.com, http://www.basecamp.com, http://www.notion.so, http://www.trello.com* and others commercial softwares. In the chapter "Digital tools" we offer a list of Free Libre Open Source tools that can help you better manage your initiative, communicate with your members and share responsibility.
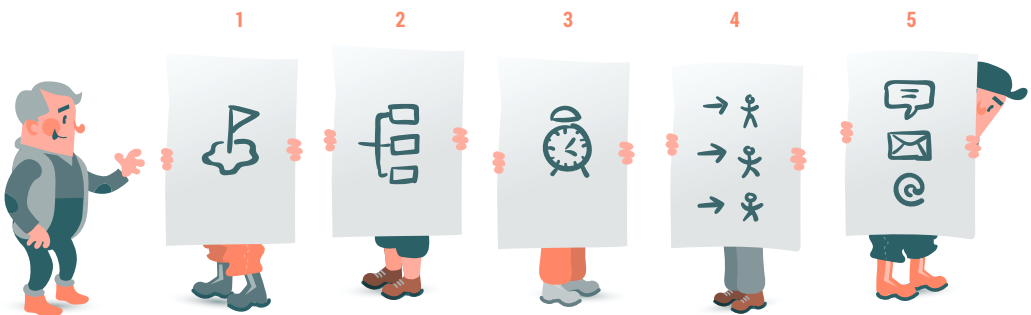
A Gantt chart *(https://www.gantt.com)*, commonly used in project management, is one of the most popular and useful ways of showing activities (tasks or events) displayed against time. On the left of the chart is a list of the activities and along the top is a suitable time scale. Each activity is represented by a bar; the position and length of the bar reflects the start date, duration and end date of the activity. You can create a time plan with special software or you can create a simple chart in Spreadsheets too.

Time recording

It is useful to record how much time specific tasks and activities take. It provides crucial insight into your activities and helps estimate the time and cost of growing or managing the community for the next season. For time recording, create as simple system as possible. You can use old methods such as paper notebook or your mobile phone, finding a mobile work hour tracker app suitable for you. For example, you can try BeetClock *http://www.beetclock.com* which was conceived by a small-scale, diversified vegetable farmer to help manage time and labor on the farm. It helps to track the labor and equipment hours that go into every crop.

1.5. Volunteers

Most CSAs rely to some extent on voluntary help. This can be very beneficial for all, the farm, the community and the volunteers, who may learn new skills, meet new friends, learn more about food and farming, get fit and improve their mental health. However, maintaining volunteer motivation is usually challenging. Each volunteer is an individual and what is seen as motivation for one individual may not be for another.

Tips to help you involve volunteers in your community and delegate tasks: [42, 47]

» ***Show respect.*** *Volunteers are giving up their own time to help and showing respect is an important part of building trust and empathy with them.*

» ***Define and describe the tasks.*** *Identify specific tasks that are suitable to be delegated. It is essential to explain what the task contains, why it is important and what is the time frame to fulfill the task. There is a difference between a regular activity that requires 5 hours a week for the whole season, or if it is a one time task that needs to be performed on a particular day and time. The more detailed you describe the task, the more*

probable it is that you will find a person to take care of the task.

» Offer a diversity of tasks. *Offer a diverse range of activities and let people choose the ones they want. Keep in mind that the task has to fit a person, so make sure they are happy and motivated in the long-term. Some people will love weeding while others will prefer working on the computer. Do not forget a volunteer has chosen to contribute for a number of reasons. Work out what role is going to provide the most value for them, as well as what is going to be beneficial for your community.*

» Find a suitable person in your community. *What kind of person do you need? Everybody is different in terms of motivation, experience, personality, skills, energy and time. A person, who does not like to communicate with other people is not the right one to be a volunteer coordinator. If you find a person who is interested in a job, take time to talk with them about motivation, expectations, skills and experiences.*

» Explain every step and clarify understanding. *If you find a suitable person who wants to take responsibility for a task, take enough time to explain what the task entails. Do not forget any details. Imagine that the person is doing this job for the first time.*

Do they really understand what needs to be done, where, when and how? Ask questions that help you find whether the person is capable of doing the task. Discuss and agree what is required to get the job done. Consider people, location, premises, equipment, money, materials, other related activities and services. Agree a timeline and discuss a reward. Is it voluntary work or is there any financial or other reward? Clarify understanding by getting feedback from the other person.

» Guide and communicate. *Give your volunteers enough information, support and supervision, especially at the beginning. Make sure you give volunteers a chance to have their say. Try to be approachable, volunteers should feel comfortable coming to you for advice and if they have any questions or concerns. In addition, you should attempt to "check-in" with them from time to time.*

» Set the rules together. *What happens if someone takes over a task and then forgets it or discovers that he or she cannot do it? Whom should the person contact if he or she needs help or advice? Establish communication and feedback rules together.*

» Give feedback. *It is essential to let the person know how they are doing. Be honest and do not be afraid to express negative feedback if it is needed, making sure to do it in*

a respectful way. Find out regularly if the person feels happy in their role, because their situation may change.

» Make volunteers comfortable and safe. *The more comfortable volunteers feel, the more likely they are to feel relaxed and, in turn, be more productive. Make sure safety and volunteering instructions are clear and up-to-date. If there are children, offer jobs they might enjoy such as pulling carrots and beets, picking cherry tomatoes, digging potatoes. Plan breaks to offer rest, food and fun. Offer guided nature walks. Arrange a common dinner and or a celebration to show gratitude to the work of the volunteer. You can also offer vegetables or produce for free as a reward for volunteer work.*

» Do not forget to praise. *The effect of recognition and praise plays a huge part in keeping volunteers motivated.*

» Offer workshares. *Some CSAs offer workshares, which means that members who volunteer for a specific amount of time get their veg share partly or completely free. It is a good way to get reliable and experienced volunteers who can possibly help manage other volunteers.*

» Find a "woofer". *Find a volunteer via WorldWide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF), an international network which coordinates voluntary placements on organic farms, known simply as "woofing". More on https://wwoof.net*

TIP

Learn more about volunteer management. Download leaflet produced by CSA UK Network (http://bit.ly/2sOFtGG)[42] or the publication "Positive Practice in Farm Labour Management: Keeping Your Employees Happy and Your Production Profitable" (https://bit.ly/38jAqOG)[35]. Inspire how to involve volunteers in your initiative at Volunteer Centre Sheffield http://www.sheffieldvolunteercentre.org.uk

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Example — HOW MUCH TIME IT TAKES TO GROW VEGETABLES FOR 100 FAMILIES

Organic farmer Karel Tachecí feeds with vegetables 100 families a week. The farm distributes shares among 5 community-led CSAs in Prague (Czech Republic). Because the farmer did not know how much time it takes to grow vegetables for the community, the CSA coordination group recommended him to track the time spent on cultivation throughout one year. The system was very simple, the farmer just recorded to a paper diary at the end of every day: type of activities, who worked and number of working hours. The CSA coordinator then helped analyze data. In 2018 the farmer together with 5 part time workers spent 2.500 hours in the field growing vegetables for 100 families.
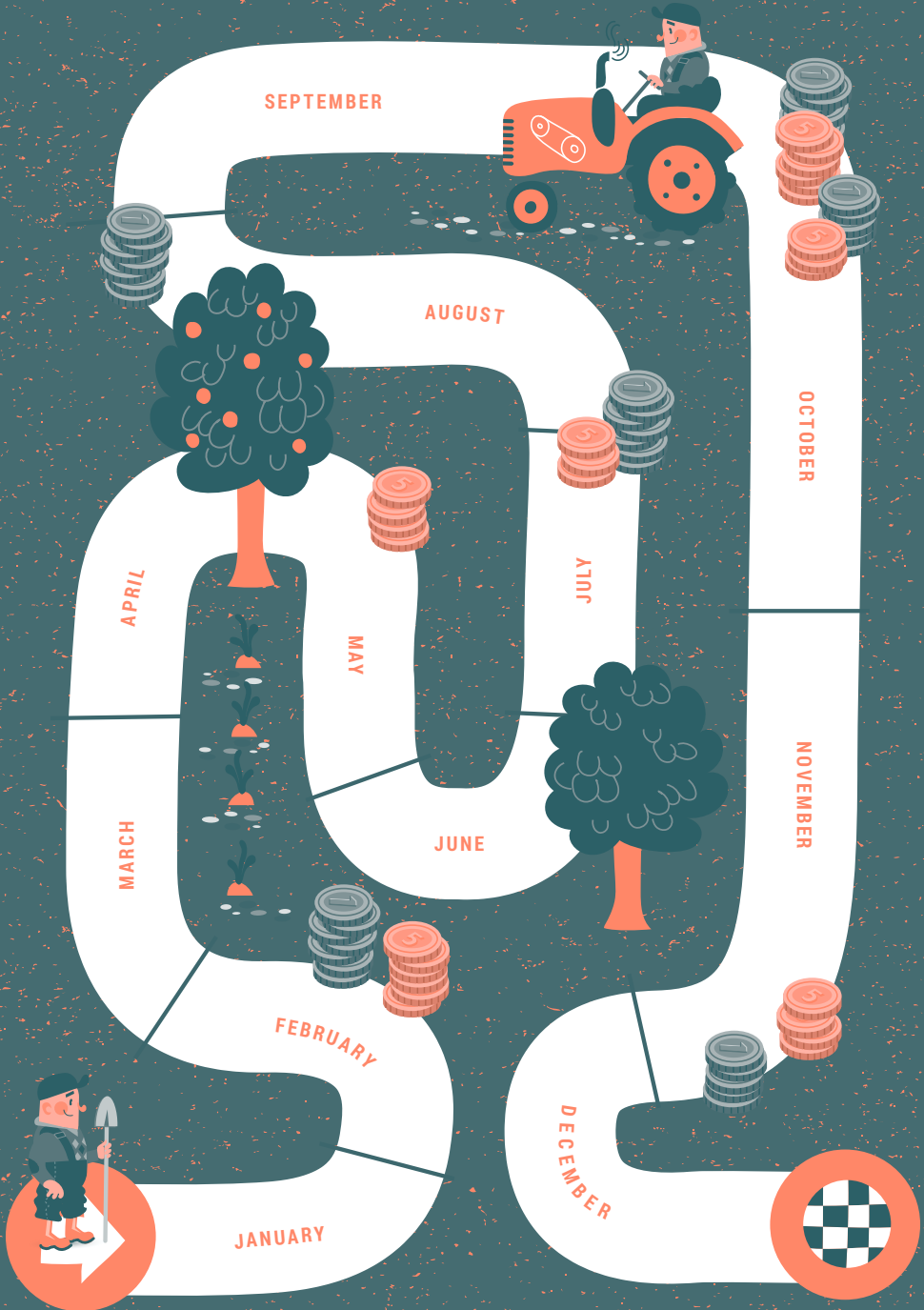
FINANCIAL PLANNING

FINANCIAL PLANNING

If you believe in the work you are doing, you will want to find a way to keep it going when the grant lapses, the political winds change, or when someone important (even you!) must leave the organisation. In this section, we'll look at the basics of planning for the financial sustainability of your initiative or farm.

2.1. Financial Systems of SFS

All the financial systems of Solidarity Based Food Systems are influenced by the fact that they **are based on solidarity between producers and consumers**. The whole functioning of initiatives are designed on a human scale – paying a sufficient, fair price up-front in advance to enable farmers and their families to maintain their farms and live in a dignified manner, and at the same time the price respects the needs and abilities of consumers, who become shareholder-members.

Key elements that influence the financial systems of Community Supported Agriculture initiatives

» **Shares:** *The production costs are covered by members in exchange for part of the production, usually called a "share". Shareholders do not pay for single products (eg. kilogram of carrots, one cucumber, etc), but rather for a share of the farm's produce.*

» **Pricing:** *Price-building should be a transparent process based on negotiations between farmers and community members which results in a fair price for all.*

» **Low marketing costs:** *Shareholders receive and accept what farmers produce.*

» **Risk sharing:** *A key element is sharing both the risks and the rewards of production. For example, if the season is bad, shareholders should accept that there is less produce, be in solidarity with the farmer and not ask for money back.*

» **Long term commitment:** *The contracts last for several months, a season, a year, or more. It gives a farm more financial stability and ensures a secure income and decent living for farmers.*

SHARES

PRICING
25.-

LOW MARKETING COSTS

RISK SHARING

LONG TERM COMMITMENT

MEMBERS PARTICIPATION

EARLY PAYMENTS

» *Members' participation: Members participate to a certain extent in running an initiative. For example, they take responsibility for recruiting and communicating with members etc.It saves the farmer's own capacity, time and financial resources.*

» *Early payments: It may differ between CSAs, however members very often pay before or in the beginning of a season, which influences cash flow.*

» *CSA farms are usually small scale businesses in* **strong connection with family life.**

Besides all the wonderful qualities SFSs have, they must also function as viable small businesses. There are three perspectives of financial viability:

1. *SOLVENCY - How much do you own if all debts are paid?*
2. *PROFITABILITY - How much income do you generate?*
3. *LIQUIDITY - Are you able to pay bills when due?*

Financial systems are best kept simple and appropriate to the group size and concept. A good financial system should contain:

» *plan & register of production*
» *plan & register of incomes*
» *plan & register of expenses*
» *register of debts (buyer) / liabilities*
» *register of claims (suppliers) / receivables*
» *cash & bank account balances*
» *cash-flow plan (when, how much, how, to who and from who cash flows)*
» *calculate profit & loss, calculate break event point*
» *controlling system (1. recording – 2. monitoring – 3. analyses - 4. intervention)*

2.2. Planning for financial sustainability

Although your primary goal is improving your community and the farm, you need resources to sustain your activities. Every SFS, every CSA and every farm is unique, and each will have its own way of reaching for financial sustainability - but all need a **business plan,** which is fundamental to ensure your project viability. Let's look at the main steps of the planning process.[14]

Think about what motivates you to develop a business plan

Consider where you are in the farm/initiative life cycle and why you want to develop a business plan. What drives you? Are you just starting? Are you growing or transforming your initiative/farm?

Decide who will be involved in the planning process

Planning will take the effort of people who need to have the capacity and belief in the work. Who will lead the process? Who will participate? How will members of your community (or family in the case of a farm) be involved in planning? They might have some excellent suggestions.

Make an inventory and assessment of your current situation

You cannot decide where you are going if you don't know where you are now. This step includes inventorying and assessing your resources including natural resources, human resources, financial and capital assets, land etc.

» *How much financial and other resources do you currently have?*
» *Where do they come from? What do you do with them?*
» *Do you have any debt?*
» *What is your legal structure?*
» *What is your organisational and management structure?*
» *How well has your initiative/farm performed in the past and how strong is its current financial situation?*
» *What type of risk are you currently exposed to?*
» *What is the current business and social environment and how it is changing?*

If you are the farmer, you should think not only about the farm business but also about your family living needs and expenses. Despite the fact that they are strongly interconnected, we recommend that you should separate them.

Identify your mission, objectives and goals

What do you really want to achieve? Goals help establish where you're going, how you're going to get there and when you'll arrive. Objectives and goals look at the specific things that need to be achieved to reach your vision. They should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and associated with specific Timeframe (SMART).

Set out how you will measure success, for example by number of members.

TIP

Do you run a farm? Learn an easy process for setting goals at link http://.bit.ly/34OklhI [24]

Determine how much financial sources you need and want

What it will take (in terms of resources) to accomplish your goals? Will you need more staff, a new building or land? Write down a list of what you would need over what period to make your vision happen. Then, next to each item, write down an estimate of what that would cost. Break the list down into annual costs. On an annual basis, how much money will you need in the next five years to reach all of the goals you have set out to achieve?

It's a good idea to analyze business performance under a range of uncertainties. One way to do this is to project your income and cash flow under the best and the worst case scenarios.

SWOT analysis is a simple but powerful tool that can help you understand the key factors that you need to deal with. Set out a one-page analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Learn more about SWOT analysis at link *http://bit.ly/36MZYmQ [6]*

Consider the available funding possibilities

Currently only a minority of small farms are able to cover their costs solely through the income from their CSA. Therefore, they seek for other ways to diversify their income channels that ensure for CSA farms and communities better stability and security. What are the available funding possibilities? Consider which of them make the most sense for your initiative or farm. Ask yourself:

» *What is most in keeping with our mission and values?*
» *What will be the easiest for us to do?*
» *What possibilities hold the highest likelihood of success?*
» *What would we enjoy doing?*
» *How would any of these funding strategies change what we do?*

Keep in mind that planning for sustainability is not just about getting money. You might obtain other types of resources such as in-kind support, non-cash contributions, volunteer staff, or shared resources from other organisations. It may even include convincing another organisation to take on a project you started.

In the CSA model it is common for volunteers or farmers take on other work related to community building and management. For example, they arrange meetings and help to recruit members. Even if they are not paid for, they represent an important part of the group's viability, so we need to value them and make them visible in planning. Do you know how much volunteer hours people give to your community/farm?

Develop a timeline

A goal without a timeline is just a dream. The timeline should indicate what activities have to be taken, when and by whom. Is that timeline realistic? It is helpful to use a Gantt chart for scheduling your activities. A lot of software exists, that can be used, however you can create a simple chart in a spreadsheet too. More about Gantt chart: *https://www.gantt.com*

Develop a business plan

An important step in planning is to discuss the draft within and outside your community. Getting feedback at this point can be very helpful for at least two reasons. First, suggestions may be made that will make your plan stronger than it would have been otherwise. Also, by allowing those who will be involved in implementing the plan the chance to modify it, it becomes theirs. They will be more willing to work on something that they created or at least believe in.

Implement, monitor, evaluate progress, take an action and intervention

After the business plan is in place a crucial aspect of the ongoing success of your venture is the ability to compare the actual situation at any time to the plan and take action to make changes when necessary. To maintain high quality record keeping and monitoring, a system is needed.

» Make and implement a plan

Who is responsible for what in relation to implementation? It is important to distribute responsibility for specific tasks and create a realistic timeline.

» Monitor what's happening

How will you measure and evaluate development in your activities? Think about indicators. It could be for example amount of produce grown and sold; number of shareholders; number of people engaged in events; number of volunteers that help you in the farm etc.

» Record data

Keep records and check your progress toward the goals you set so you can see how your plan is working. Good records do not ensure an organisation will be successful; however, success is unlikely without them.

» Analyze and evaluate the situation

Evaluate how the plan is working and make corrections and refinements as time goes by. If the work you're doing isn't helping reach your goals, or if something just isn't working out the way you expected, it's time to revisit the plan. Goals themselves may need revision with time.

» Take an action and intervention

Do not be afraid of changes, however, keep in mind that the decision has to be based on valid data and a clear understanding of current situations. Improve processes, reduce costs or increase prices. Be creative, seek for innovative solutions. Do not forget to educate yourself. Network with other farmers and initiatives, share ideas and experiences with them.

Record keeping is usually challenge in the farming. Here you can find some sources that can help you establish your own system: Tips for tracking cost of production (leaflet):[28] *https://bit.ly/2Mqh819.* Crop planning for vegetable farmers (webinar):[12] *https://bit.ly/32u7uiQ.* Capturing and organising farm data (webinar): [44] *https://bit.ly/36RAcxy.*

PLANNING

MONITORING

TAKING INTERVENTIONS

RECORDING

ANALYSING

2.3. Elements of business plan

If you have already collected all the information, you can develop your business plan. It will describe your history and current financial situation including the annual budget. It will also present your mission, goals, strategies and how to reach them, with whom and when. It should be a living document, which always aims to look ahead to at least the medium term (5 years) and even the long term (10 years). [15]

There is no single format that should be used. As an inspiration, we present basic business plan ingredients adapted to the specificity of food initiatives. Keep in mind that the plan should be organised in a way that is most useful for you, so adapt it to your own situation. [7, 26]

Executive summary

An executive summary is a brief summary of your initiative/farm, the principles and planning objectives, goals, and strategy for reaching them. It is, perhaps, the most important section since many readers will not look beyond if it does not communicate well. It should be simple (no longer than two pages) and concise.

Description

Give some background and history. Answer questions of when, where, why and by whom was your initiative/farm set up? Present your vision, mission, objectives and goals. Explain why the project is needed, who the key stakeholders are - i.e. farmers, landowners, shareholders? What is the legal structure of your initiative/farm? What is the ownership structure?

TIP

Setting up your vision, aim, objectives and actions is a group process which is part of strategic planning. Learn methods how to identify common ground within your community at link http://bit.ly/346RBAg [22]. Get inspired from one page business plan as an example of vision, objectives and goals https://bit.ly/2NSNdhS [33]

Management and organisation

Explain who will govern and manage your initiative/farm, and how they will do it. Who is in the core group or committee? How many members of staff do you have and what is their role? How much voluntary input will you have? Will most of your volunteers be members or will you recruit elsewhere?

Products and services

Give an overview of what type of food you will produce. What production methods do you use? Are you currently or planning to become organically certified?

Market description and marketing plan

Describe a potential market for your produce and your members/customers. Are you going to share the risk of the harvest with your members and how will this work in practice? Are you only selling your produce directly to your CSA members? Do you have other marketing channels? How do you want to reach the market? What is your situation in comparison to other CSAs in your territory? Do you compete with them or collaborate? What are the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities of your initiative/farm?

Describe ways you want to advertise your initiative or farm. Do you want to use the internet (email, social media, podcasts, web, etc.), print media, radio, arrange special events or a combination of the above? How can potential members find you and join your initiative? What type of shares do you offer, where, when, how often? What is the price?

Operational plan

The operational plan includes the inventory of your resources and describes how you will produce the food. Where is your initiative/farm located? How much land do you have? What facilities, buildings, tools and equipment do you have, or need? What is the production process? How will shares get to eaters? Think through all the activities of your initiative/farm and figure out who is going to be doing what tasks.

Financial plan

You need to have a detailed budget, cash flow and long-term financial forecasts showing the true costs of production. Financial statements such as balance sheets, cash flow and profit-loss will be included.

Risk management

Define the risks your initiative/farm might face and how you want to deal with them if they happen.

TIP

EXPLORE SOME RESOURCES FOR BUSINESS PLANNING

Download for free "A Guide to Developing a Business Plan for Farms and Rural Businesses" [15] *which helps you step by step to transform your farm into profitable enterprises https://bit.ly/35B2wmU*

Download leaflets summarizing key elements of business plan for agricultural producers from Agrilifebookstore.org (link: https://bit.ly/2CvuiEt) [26]*, or specifically adapted to CSA from Communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk (link: http://bit.ly/2NWdAn8)* [7]

Explore resources from Beginningfarmers.org, which help you understanding what a business plan is and how to start planning for your farm business [18] *https://bit.ly/2p3FLbg*

Get inspired by an example of real Business Plan Biodynamic Land Trust [8] *https://bit.ly/2M8AK9R*

A wealth of knowledge! Peruse ATTRA's database of publications, webinars and other sources covering organic production. More at https://attra.ncat.org/publications/

2.4. Annual budget

A budget is an estimate of income and expenditure for a set period of time. In a viable business, income needs to cover expenditure. The budget sets the amount that is expected to be spent and received on any particular item over a certain period.[34]

TIP

Explore SolidBaseApp at https://app.solidbase.info - It is an online application for budget planning, which allows to collect the annual expenses of a business and to visualize these to the community.

Develop ways of estimating your expenses

Estimate your expenses for the coming fiscal year. Try to be as accurate as possible. Use last year's figures, if you have them, as a baseline. If you don't have them, estimate conservatively, rather than being overly optimistic. Be prepared for unexpected situations.

LIST THE ESTIMATED YEARLY EXPENSE TOTALS

Projected expenses are the amount of money you expect to spend in the coming fiscal year, broken down into the categories you expect to spend it in.

ESTIMATE YOUR INCOME

List and estimate the amounts from any sources that are expected to bring in some income in the coming fiscal year. This includes sources that have already promised you money for the coming year, or that have regularly funded you in the past. For most CSAs, the main income is from sales of shares, which should cover all the budget, however this situation is rather unique and a CSA farm usually has income from other marketing channels.

CREATE AND WORK WITH BUDGET DOCUMENT

If your budget is going to be useful, it has to be organised in such a way that it can tell you exactly how much you have available to spend in each expense category. The easiest way to do this is by using a grid, usually called a spreadsheet. In its simplest terms, a spreadsheet is a grid format for setting out a budget in order to see expenses, income, and the ways they interact all in one place.

TIP

Watch the video from webinar "How to make your CSA farm financially sustainable" at URGENCI´s Hub and learn how to use budget spreadsheets based on an example from a real farm: [23]
http://bit.ly/32A9Z3s

COMPARE YOUR TOTAL EXPENSES TO YOUR TOTAL INCOME

If you compare your projected expenses and income, you can reach: balanced budget, surplus, or deficit. In the case of a budget deficit you either have to find more money or cut expenses in order to run your initiative or farm in the coming year:

MONITOR YOUR BUDGET REGULARLY AND CONTINUOUSLY

Monitor income and expenses continuously, compare estimated and real budgets regularly, and modify plans if it is necessary. A question that needs to be considered is how deep we should analyze the budget of a CSA? Also, we should question whether we count profitability for the whole CSA, product types or each product. This is an important topic because in CSAs we do not calculate with prices and product items, however it can be helpful to know if a particular product or service is loss making.

2.5. How to set a fair price?

Setting a fair price for shares is one of the most puzzling questions for CSA farmers. The availability of cheap food in general exerts a sharp downward pressure on any attempt to sell food at a price that will sustain farms. It is important to include in the price all the costs of production and running the community, including a reasonable wage for the farmers. [36]

Price-building should be a transparent process. Who decides the price?

» *Farmers and members negotiate the price.*
» *The farmer decides the price, based on the cost of production. If relevant, the costs for a co-operative way of functioning (distribution etc.) can be added on top.*
» *The farmer/coordinator proposes the price and the community agrees on it.*

TIP

Explore URGENCI´ s Hub. Learn from tutorial on price building in CSA and watch the video at link http://bit.ly/2DyFnFl [8]. *Explore Module 5 on the financial sustainability of a CSA farm, developed within CSAct at link* http://bit.ly/384TiBc [19]

Price building techniques in CSA

100% CSA farm model
This option is the simplest method and will ensure the costs of the CSA farm are covered, provided that adequate costs are included in the initial calculation of the budget.

» *Set out total budget. Include all the costs: Cost of production (e.g. seeds, seedlings, tools), employees costs, machinery maintenance, investments, overheads.*
» *Divide the total amount by the number of current or potential members and get the price of the share.*

If the number of members is not yet fixed, here is the way to calculate how many shares you would need to get following the 100% CSA price building model.

» *Estimate your annual cost for a season of production (income you want to get for a season)*
» *Estimate how much people usually spend on vegetables per season (price of the share).*
» *Divide the estimated cost by the price of the share and get the number of members to meet your budget.*

Bidding round model
The members themselves decide what amount they would like to contribute, in order to cover the total farm budget costs. This method supports creativity, solidarity and inclusion of low-income members. However, it is demanding in terms of community cohesion and trust.

Separate your family budget from farm budget! Budgeting for family income and expenses is often a lower priority for farm families than budgeting for the farm business. Without budgeting, however, family living expenses may exceed the available income and jeopardize the overall financial goals of the farm and family. The management of family expenses within a set of mutual family goals can help to keep money from slipping needlessly away. It can also allow you to discover ways to put your money to better use. Look at more information at "Managing Family Budget" leaflet[27] *https://bit.ly/33y9Cro*

Example — Bidding round in Solawi Network

In Germany, Solawi network use a concept of distributing the annual production costs among the group in solidarity - bidding round. The total budget is presented in detail and distributed to all members so that a guiding value is obtained. Each member offers a freely chosen amount - the goal is to cover the total budget at the end. Then it is calculated what percentage of the total net income of the members is made up by the annual production costs of the enterprise. This percentage is given as a guided value - everyone can offer this percentage of his/her income. *https://www.solidarische-landwirtschaft.org*

» *Present the total budget to the community. Show what is the target amount for the bidding.*
» *Let the members (usually secretly) write their bids.*
» *If all bids meet the budget = you are done. If not, add a next round of bids, until the budget is met.*

Market prices

This way, perhaps the most common, of building the price for a CSA, is to refer to the market prices. You need to find out the price people are ready to pay for a veggie box scheme as your target price. Then, build the share based on the price of individual items, in the local farmers' market, in similar direct selling systems, or locally supplied shares until you reach the target price.

These models sound easy, however in the field things usually get a bit more complicated. That is why you should take advice from your local CSA network. Visit *http://urgenci.net*, section "CSA" to find a contact to the network in your country.
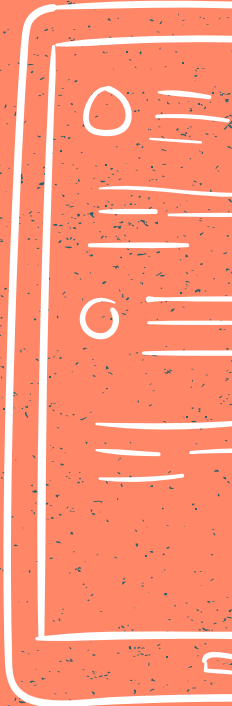
DIGITAL TOOLS

DIGITAL TOOLS

Soliarity-based Food Systems (SFS) are complex entities for which, when they grow to a certain size, digital tools become necessary for communication and collaboration. Despite the fact that the standard commercial apps seem to be the only solution, there is an emerging software culture which offers IT solution based on freedom, openness and solidarity.

All European apps for SFS are freely licensed and it seems that the European SFS app developers have found a link between the free software movement and SFS movement. Both movements experiment with solidarity-based economic concepts, therefore positive synergies from their cooperation can be expected. That is why we advise to use Free and Libre Open Source technology in your community and get your online presence hosted by independent IT-collectives or cooperatives. On the pages below you will find some suggestions and hints at how to do that.

3.1. Free and Libre Open Source Software (FLOSS)

SFS initiatives aim to transform the food system towards an economy that not only gives access to healthy food but also nurtures the ecological and social environment. This aim is equally important when looking at technology and digitalization. Can digitalization be sustainable? Hardware that uses conflict metals such as gold, throwaway culture for electrical devices and monopolies that own a huge amount of data might not be the future. There is a socially responsible and sustainable way to act even in the IT world. It is called FLOSS, which stands for Free and Libre Open Source Software.

In the research among European CSA initiatives, only one-fifth of the respondents (21%) answered yes to the question: "Has your CSA made a conscious choice to use free/libre open source software (FLOSS) as part of their data sovereignty?". This clearly shows a lack of awareness about this part of citizen sovereignty. [31]

What is FLOSS and where does it come from?

The Free Software Movement was initiated in the 1980's and further pursued by the Free Software Foundation. It was born out of a reaction to the growing importance of computer technology and software. The "free" in the name does not refer to price, but rather freedom. "Free software" means software that respects users' freedom and community.

Four freedoms were defined which a Free Software needed to fulfil in order to be classed as free (*https://www.gnu.org*):

FEEL FREE TO JOIN!
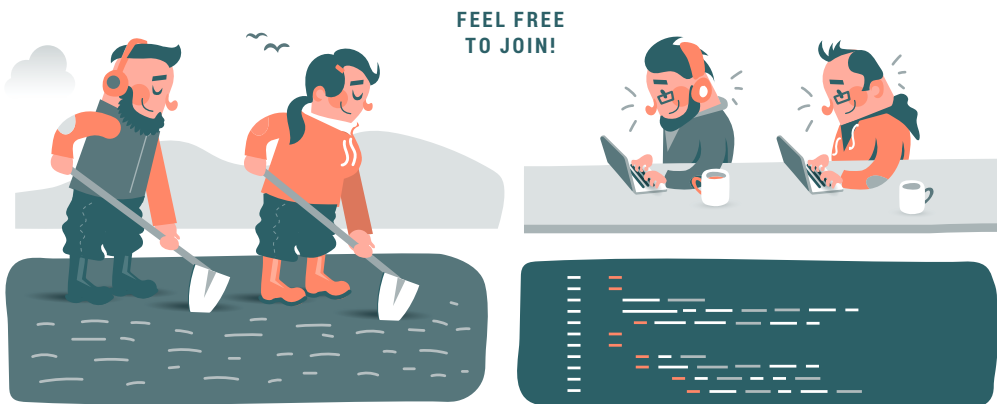
» *Freedom 0 is the freedom to run the program as you wish.*

» *Freedom 1 is the freedom to study the source code and change it to make the program function as you wish.*

» *Freedom 2 is the freedom to help your neighbor – to make and distribute exact copies of the program to others, when you wish.*

» *Freedom 3 is the freedom to contribute to your community: to distribute copies of your modified versions, when you wish.*

There exists other similar concepts such as Open Source or Freeware, however only FLOSS includes all four above mentioned freedoms that give the user total control over the program. As SFS and FLOSS want to build a world based on trust, sharing and solidarity, we believe that food initiatives should think more about using information technologies whose creative process was decidedly driven by these same values. Therefore, we present in this booklet digital tools that are developed on FLOSS principles. Despite the fact that it is almost impossible to achieve perfection in open source technology usage, we hope to contribute to your freedom to make a conscious choice for your tech usage.

3.2. Recommended digital tools for your community

In this booklet we present freely licensed digital tools that can help you to communicate, collaborate and better organise activities in your community. The selection process came from two sources. Firstly, we asked SFS representatives about

the software they use. Secondly, information was combined with prior research into the Free and Libre Open Source Software (FLOSS) milieu.

Find more digital tools suitable for SFS at https://solidbase. info/recommendations

General purpose office tools

If one starts a CSA or other SFS there is no need for any special software. It is enough just to install a general purpose office suite like LibreOffice (*https://www.libreoffice.org*) and the offline email client Thunderbird (*www.thunderbird.net*). Maybe arrange a mailing list with your preferred Librehoster (see list in the following part), and you are ready to go! If you do not want any third party to spy through your windows, you can use Linux, e.g. Linux Mint (*https:// linuxmint.com*).

TIP

You can get support for free software installations from the local Linux User Group, (https://en.wikipedia. org/wiki/Linux_user_group) or from your local hackerspace (https://hackerspaces.org)

CSA administration

Here we present tools that have been developed specifically for CSAs to help them in linking producers and consumers and simplify everyday operation. They reflect the great variability of CSA models.

SELECTED TOOLS FOR CSA OPERATIONS

TOOL	COUNTRY	DESCRIPTION
AMAPJ *https://amapj.fr*	**FRANCE**	**AMAPJ** was originally developed for the French AMAP network, but currently it is freely available to other users. Well produced documentation is available.
CAGETTE *https://www.cagette.net*	**FRANCE**	**CAGETTE** was developed by the agency for training producers in digital skills and communication, specifically for the food short circuit project, Alilo *(https://www.alilo.fr)*. On the website you can find a tour through the application.
AMAPRESS *https://amapress.fr*	**FRANCE**	A plug-in for the most common web management system, WordPress, enabling the easy organisation of **AMAPS.**
REPANIER *https://repanier.be/fr*	**BELGIUM**	**REPANIER** is a multilingual tool originally created for food coop administration that was then adapted for CSA use. It enables functionality such as ordering, real time inventory management, task management, retail sale, book-keeping etc.
ACPADMIN *https://acp-admin.ch*	**SWITZERLAND**	A very complete solution which covers needs of **AGRICULTURE CONTRACTUELLE DE PROXIMITÉ (ACP)** initiatives from the **FRACP** network *(https://www.fracp.ch)*.
OPEN OLITOR *http://openolitor.org*	**SWITZERLAND**	Web-based multilingual platform facilitating the set-up of CSAs, linking producers and consumers.
JUNTAGRICO *https://juntagrico.org*	**SWITZERLAND**	This product from the swiss pioneer CSA Ortoloco has elaborate features for co-worker management, distributed members administration and delivery planning, amongst other things.

OpenOlitor

OpenOlitor is a web-based, multilingual platform for setting up CSAs and offering functionalities such as membership management, delivery planning, payment tracking and reports. In addition, a member portal allows members to access information on their membership and register for working days on the farm. (*http://openolitor.org*) OpenOlitor was initiated in 2015 in Bern, Switzerland and was co-funded by the federal ministry of agriculture. The association OpenOlitor was formed and oversees the maintenance of the code and documentation. There is a growing international community, with Sunu (*http://sunu.eu*) in Germany adding other functionalities to further internationalize the software.

TIP

Learn and test Open Olitor via step by step training materials prepared within Solid Base project:
learn.solidbase.info/de/openolitor

Food co-op tools

Food co-op tools support ethical supply chains which require a shopfront offering and pre-ordering functionality that enables food producers to sell online directly. The most remarkable tool from a global perspective is the OpenFoodNetwork (OFN) (*https://www.openfoodnetwork.org*) with Australian roots. Another interesting option is Foodsoft (*https://github.com/foodcoops/foodsoft*) from Amsterdam which has great features for managing large product lists of wholesalers across multiple foodcoops. Another notable tool is also Foodcoopshop (*www.foodcoopshop.com*) from Austria where it powers several foodcoops that almost exclusively buy from local producers.

In the following table the common functionalities of selected tools are presented. Of course, all the functionalities can also be accomplished by smaller tools with a more general applicability.

Open Olitor functionality *www.openolitor.org*

» **Organise all stakeholders** - Management of members, producers and individuals; Register absences and holidays; Create and manage subscriptions and working shifts; Edit the project master data; Subscription types offered, products and prices.

» **Plan and execute deliveries** - Delivery planning and distribution of the harvest; Organise the baskets; Generate orders and delivery accounting.

» **Create invoices and book payments** - Invoices to the members; Book incoming payments.

» **Great flexibility** - Member portal stating deliveries, absences, invoices and work shifts; Customizable reports; Repository to store all PDF documents.

Overview of tools for CSA administration

FUNCTIONALITY	JUNTAGRICO	SUNU	CAGETTE	OPENFOODNETWORK	ACP-ADMIN	AMAPJ
MEMBERS ADMINISTRATION	X	X	X	X	X	X
EMAIL MEMBERS	X	X	X	X	X	X
DELIVERY PLANNING	X	X	X	X	X	X
SHARE MANAGEMENT	X	X	X			X
VARIABLE ORDERS			X	X		X
CONTROL OF PAYMENTS	X	X	X	X	X	X
SEPA (SINGLE EURO PAYMENTS AREA) TRANSFER GENERATION		X				
VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT	X	X			X	

Garden/farm planners

The biggest players in agrotechnology united to create 365FarmNet *https://www.365farmnet.com*. It is a complete solution for managing all aspects of farming, free for small farms. If you don't care about data sovereignty this is the way to go. For organic farmers, a tool called Tend (*https://www.tend.com*) which originated in the US seems to fulfill the needs of the farmers very well, however this has not yet been made available for the metric system. Two offline Windows based tools for the management of the first wave of box delivery services starting in the 1980's, are still worth noting. The PC Gärtner (*https://www.pcgaertner.de*) is an all in one solution, from crop planning to door delivery of box schemes. The AboBote (*http://www.abobote.de*) only has a delivery planning functionality but is very well and elaborately made.

The only FLOSS tool that seems to be active in the field of farm management is Farm OS (*https://farmos.org*). It is a web-based application for farm management, planning, and record keeping. It is being developed with the aim of providing a standard platform for agricultural data collection and management.

Members administration

In the Solid Base survey there were no FLOSS web tools identified that are used in production. However, Galette (*http://www.galette.eu*) has good prospects to become a membership administrative tool of broader applicability. Another similar tool, called Garradin (*https://garradin.eu*), could also be of interest for French SFS. One tool that is used in Germany by some Solawis is JVerein (*http://www.jverein.de*), and in Finland Flo members (*https://flomembers.fi*) became common as a member administration tool. Finally, a very detailed and free, but not libre, tool for German speaking areas is Campai (*https://campai.com*).

Book-keeping

Hundreds of commercial book-keeping and enterprise resource planning solutions are competing at the market, however only very few FLOSS tools have emerged. One very powerful tool is GNUCash (*https://www.gnucash.org*). In Germany Hibiscus (*https://www.willuhn.de/products/hibiscus*) is popular. Although this is also an offline tool, it is quite simple to share information across its platform. Other notable free online tools are Bokio (*https://www.bokio.co.uk*) from the UK and Szamlazz (*https://www.szamlazz.hu*) from Hungary.

For more complete business organisation you might want to use an enterprise resource planning (ERP) tool. There are FLOSS tools available such as Dolibarr (*https://www.dolibarr.org*), Odoo (*https://www.odoo.com*) or Erpnext (*https://erpnext.com*), already equipped with basic agricultural functionalities. In Belgium there is also an organisation that helps cooperative supermarkets to organise themselves with Odoo (*www.coopiteasy.be*).

GnuCash (*https://www.gnucash.org*)
GnuCash is a personal and small-business financial-accounting software. It is a desktop program that is freely licensed under the GNU GPL. On its website it is described as follows: "Designed to be easy to use, yet powerful and flexible, GnuCash allows you to track bank accounts, stocks, income and expenses. As quick and intuitive to use as a checkbook register, it is based on professional accounting principles to ensure balanced books and accurate reports." GnuCash is the only fully-fledged FLOSS accounting software that's suitable for an international community identified during the Solid Base project. It is widely used, and has an evolving and longstanding community of supporters, users and engineers. Extensive documentation exists.

WORK TIME PLANNING AND RECORDING

For planning and recording labor hours, some SFS are experimenting with using the proprietary web application Toggl (*https://www.toggl.com*). In Norway some CSAs had a good experience using the volunteer coordinating tool Rubic (*https://rubic.no*). The successful free (but not libre) tool Volunteer Sign Up (*https://www.volunteersignup.org*) comes from the US. A nice small smartphone app for tracking the length of time crops spend in the beds is Beetclock (*http://www.beetclock.com*). This section also lists apps that enable the creation of polls and scheduling times for an event, such as Framadate (*https://framadate.org*) or Dudle (*https://dudle.inf.tu-dresden.de*).

COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Providers of online communication

Almost all available digital communication functions through establishing online connections. This is achieved using servers that are run by organisations, called hosters. Thus, these tools are even more closely related to the social environment that keeps it running than in standalone software. If we want to keep data sovereignty we need to cooperate with hosters that stick to the key concepts of networking - decentralization, federationand and transparency. Transparency is expressed by the strict use of FLOSS and the possibility to have access to the operations of the servers, to collaborate with the hosters.

Librehosters - providers based on libre software

LIST OF LIBREHOSTERS https://github.com/libresh/ awesome-librehosters	DESCRIPTION
RISEUP https://riseup.net/de/ security/resources/radi- cal-servers	**RISEUP** provides online communication tools for people and groups working on liberatory social change. You can find here servers that offer services to movements for free or on a mutual basis.
CHATONS https://chatons.org	**CHATONS** is a collective of independent, transparent, open, neutral and ethical hosters providing FLOSS-based online services.
DISROOT https://disroot.org/en	**DISROOT** is a platform providing online services based on principles of freedom, privacy, federation and decentralization.
FRAMASOFT https://framasoft.org	**FRAMASOFT** is an educational organisation convinced that an emancipatory digital world is possible. Framasoft only provides its services as examples to show the possibilities of free software.
SYSTEMAUSFALL https://systemausfall.org	**SYSTEMAUSFALL** is a free platform that aims to promote a self-confident and critical use of digital tools among all movements of an emancipatory nature. Non-profit, community-supported and -oriented IT collective with hosting and services for activists, researchers, artists, individuals and the solidarity economy.
ECOBYTES https://ecobytes.net	Non-profit, community-supported and -oriented IT collective with hosting and services for activists, researchers, artists, individuals and the solidarity economy.
JUNTAGRICO https://juntagrico.org	This product from the swiss pioneer CSA Ortoloco has elaborate features for co-worker management, distributed members administration and delivery planning, amongst other things.

You can find more recommended hosters at http://urgenci.net/shared-tools. You can also ask your local IT collective for hosting possibilities.

Communication is of the utmost importance in communities. The tools we use for digital communication have a strong influence on how and what we are able to communicate.

Email

You can keep your email communications within a self-controlled space if you cooperate with a librehoster to choose your inbox. According to the survey, the only offline client in use seems to be the libre software tool Thunderbird (*https://www.thunderbird.net*) from The Mozilla Foundation (*https://foundation.mozilla.org*). The only named online mail client is Roundcube (*https://roundcube.net*). It is recommended to use Thunderbird as it is much faster and has some additional features online clients cannot offer, e.g. archiving functionality.

Email lists

Next to the most common yet corporate-owned Google Groups, there are Mailman (*http://www.list.org*) and Sympa (*https://www.sympa.org*), solutions used for a mailing list functionality. Sending emails to all or parts of the membership is a core functionality of all dedicated SFS tools mentioned above.

Messaging

Keep your message communication safe and use safe and decentralized tools. Matrix (*https://matrix.org*) offers the most sophisticated protocols. Team and personal chatting, with bridges to almost all other platforms is available. Rocket.Chat (*https://rocket.chat*) is free, unlimited and open source and the most user-friendly solution. Signal (*https://signal.org*) is a free open source project which offers a secure and usable app for the mobile phone.

Forums

If you are looking for alternatives to Facebook or Google, you can try FLOSS solution Discourse or phpBB. Discourse (*https://www.discourse.org*) is the open source discussion platform, which can be used as a mailing list, discussion forum, long-form chat room, and more phpBB (*https://www.phpbb.com*) is a free flat-forum bulletin board software solution that can be used to stay in touch with a group of people or can power your entire website. You can create a very unique forum in minutes with these tools.

Social media

Social media is a great way of reaching people and keeping them up to date with news and stories from your community. At present the frequently used methods are through Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Closed Facebook groups that allow more in-depth, private discussions among members is probably the most frequently used solution. There does even exist a successful buying group concept in Finland called REKO that relies entirely on Facebook. [39]
If you dare to resist to join the mainstream,

you may find yourself with a small problem. Your audience is much smaller when you use alternative communication channels. To consciously choose something other than the norms requires the energy and time of a lot of people, which is not always possible. This hurdle can only be tackled if you are really convinced that data should belong to the people, rather than monopolies. If you are one of those steadfasts you can try using Fediverse (*https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fediverse*).
This notion describes a network of freely licensed apps with different functionalities made interoperable by freely licensed protocols. By this a decentralized, federated digital communication landscape that is devised, built and controlled by its members, becomes a reality.

TIP

You can find someone to look after your social media or website. Let your community know that you need a volunteer for specific job! Don't be afraid to ask for help. People like to be asked and feel useful, so help them help you.

Content Management Systems (CMS)
Unless you are a very small community you will need a website to provide basic information about how you run, prices, location, ethics code and other operational rules. There are various content management systems that enable you to build your own website for free. For instance, it is easy to use WordPress to set up a simple website with a static home page. Use a web hosting service to ensure you have your own domain name (web address). Recommended Content Management Systems are: Word Press *https://wordpress.org*, Concrete5 *https://www.concrete5.org*, Hexo *https://hexo.io*, Gohugo *https://gohugo.io*, Grav *https://getgrav.org*

Cloud services
Collaboration based on sharing information is central to SFS. That is why communities usually use clouds to store data, share information and collaborate online. Working with a cloud can definitely bring benefits to your community. You can access your data anywhere you have an internet connection. Such accessibility can help you work with remote volunteers, collaborate and share information within your community and beyond. It may save you financial resources and time. On the other hand, if your internet service goes down, that information will be unavailable to you until you can access the Internet again. There could also be difficulties if your cloud provider experiences issues of their own. Importantly, You should also keep in mind the question of data security. Next to the conventional Google Drive or Dropbox there are FLOSS solutions, such as Nextcloud (*https://nextcloud.com*). It not only enables file sharing but also the sharing of contacts, calendars and tasks. Even online collaborative document editing and video calls works on well built servers. This is a core offer of most libre hosters.

Surveys
Surveys are a great way to invite feedback from SFS members or for recruiting new members. Commercial internet tools like GoogleForm, SurveyMonkey or

KwikSurveys offer an easy and free way to create online surveys. However, with these proprietary apps, you don't have any control over the data gathered from the questionnaires. Various alternatives are available. KoBo Toolbox (*https://www.kobotoolbox.org*) offers free registration on their homepage and some more interesting FLOSS solutions that require hosting are also possible to use. These are Drupal webforms (*https://www.drupal.org/project/webform*), Limesurvey (*https://www.limesurvey.org*) and OhMyForm (*http://ohmyform.com*). URGENCI, the International CSA Network, has in the past deployed Limsurvey for questionnaires of several European projects. You can find the poll of current surveys at: *https://questionnaires.urgenci.net.*

3.3. Plan your budget with the SolidBase Application

The analysis conducted within the Solid Base project showed a need for a tool in helping SFS coordinators to include all necessary costs into a budget and to foster self-confidence in communicating the necessary height of the costs to the (potential) members. Therefore, the SolidBase application was developed as an educational tool to build up accounting skills within initiatives of solidarity economies, especially in the area of food production.

SolidBaseApp (*https://solidbase.info*) is a budget planning and presentation tool for making the financial dimension of SFS more visible and palpable. It allows the user to enter the annual costs of a members-based business. By dividing the total annual costs by the amount of members, a guiding value for the individual contribution is computed. Cost categories can be linked to explanatory texts, so that the membership can gain insight into the necessity of the height of the costs for the share of the produce. Provided example texts, that can be adapted by each registered user, help communicating complex societal matters that SFS are trying to solve. The most pressing matters include low wages in agriculture, land costs and seed sovereignty. Provided example budgets simplify the individual preparation of the budget, especially in the start-up phase.

The application is released as free software (published under The GNU Affero General Public License *https://www.gnu.org/licenses*. It uses the concepts of SoLiD (Socially linked Data) which allows users the best control over their own data. SoLiD is a relatively new decentralised concept for countering the ongoing monopolisation of the internet and allows you to store your (budget) data on any solid server you like. Finally, grained access rights make your data accessible by yourself or specified individuals.

SOLIDBASEAPP OFFERS THE FOLLOWING FUNCTIONALITIES:
- » Create an annual budget
- » Visualize budget
- » Add descriptive text for all the cost categories
- » Learn from example budgets

PARTICIPATORY INCLUSION TECHNIQUES

CSAs belong to organisations that are consciously working to flatten hierarchies and develop group processes in terms of leadership and responsibility-sharing. High levels of participation improve not only decision-making, team working and information sharing, but also increase motivation and a sense of belonging to a wider community. Participation is a key factor in preventing burn-out amongst people working in CSAs, as there are many different kinds of tasks that could arise, which cannot be completed by the coordinator or farmer alone. Participation does not necessarily mean everyone is involved in every decision, since it would be difficult to get any work done, but participation should happen at various levels.

In this chapter we showcase some helpful participatory techniques which can strengthen your CSA, through understanding the specific needs of community-based operations.

4.1. Consensus decision-making

Consensus decision making is a creative and dynamic way of reaching an agreement between all members of a group. Instead of simply voting for an item and having the majority of the group getting their way, a group using consensus is committed to finding solutions that everyone actively supports, or at least can live with. This ensures that all opinions, ideas and concerns are taken into account. Through listening closely to each other, the group look for 'win-win' solutions that are acceptable to all. It is not easy, but in the long run, people are also more likely to stay involved in a group that is committed to hearing their views and meeting their needs. [1, 11]

How to reach consensus [11]

» **Introduce and clarify the issues to be decided.** *Share the relevant information.*

» *Explore the issue and look for ideas. Collect issues, concerns and ideas to solve the problem from within the group. Have a broad ranging discussion and debate ideas. Start thinking about solutions to people's concerns. Eliminate some ideas.*

» **Look for emerging proposals.** *Look for a proposal that weaves together the best elements of the ideas discussed. Look for a solution that addresses people's key concerns.*

» **Discuss, clarify and amend your proposal.** *Ensure that any remaining concerns are heard and that everyone has a chance to contribute. Look for amendments that make the proposal even more acceptable to the group.*

» **Test for agreement.** *If there is not an agreement, you should check-in with group members who have stood aside or hold reservations.*

» **Implement the decision.** *If there are no blocks, not too many stand asides or reservations and there is an active agreement, the decision should be implemented. The group* should decide when and how it will be carried out, and who by.

Sociocracy: the power of small groups

A unique way of organisation and decision-making which is applied by CSAs is sociocracy, which is a new, socially responsible system of governance, first founded in The Netherlands. Originally envisioned in 1945 by Kees Boeke, sociocracy allows people to give and receive effective leadership while remaining peers. It is a methodology of self-governance that consists of three main elements (*https://www.sociocracyforall.org/en*):

1. Small, semi-autonomous, nested circles with double-linking

Small teams of people who work together form circles. They have authority over their area of responsibility and interest, i.e. they make decisions about their own work. Circles are nested, and circles are

always double-linked with their parent circle, with a leader and a delegate being full members of both circles. This leads to a good flow of information between the circles of an organisation. Everyone is aware of how they should relate to the whole. An organisation of interlinked circles leads to more transparency and effective collaboration. If a new work group is needed, a new circle is added. This enables great flexibility.

2. Consent decision-making

All decisions are made by consent. A group has consent when no one has an objection. The group has the right to object to a proposal, when carrying out this proposal would interfere with the circle´s work. Objections trigger a process of improving the proposal, guided by the question: how can we make the proposal better so the objection is addressed? People are elected into leadership and other roles by consent.

3. Continuous improvement through feedback

Sociocracy is a continuous learning process based on evaluation of every meeting, giving feedback to other people, evaluation of policies after a set period of time to enable improvement and evolution. Decision-making bodies are kept small and nimble.

TIP

INTERACTIVE SELF-STUDY TOOL "MOOSE"

Learn what sociocracy is in 45 mins, with free, open-access, interactive videos. Each video will introduce you to the foundational ideas in animated videos and quizzes. Click to start and experience sociocracy! https://www.sociocracyforall.org/en/moose
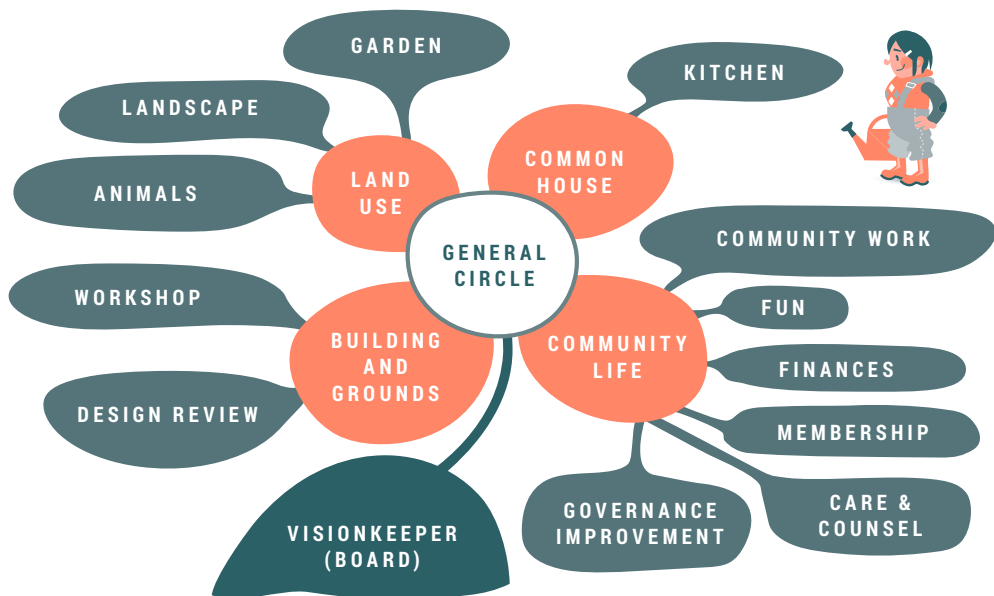
Bidding round - participatory decision-making for CSA budgeting

Deciding on a budget is one of the key decision-making moments in a CSAs life. A distinguished but well-tried method known as bidding round is a procedure that CSAs can use to cover its expenses. Instead of each harvest shareholder making the same monetary contribution to a CSA, the bidding round allows shareholders to contribute based on their individual situation and willingness. For example, a higher earner can contribute more than a single mother with two children who is financially unable to contribute. This makes it possible to open up the CSA for lower-income groups and puts the principle of solidarity into practice. Read more about bidding round process in chapter "Financial planning".

4.2. Facilitated meeting

Meetings are essential in both everyday and strategic community decision-making processes. Community members should get information, express their opinion, take on responsibilities and decide on common questions. However, without the help of a professional facilitator it is not easy to stay with an agenda, deal with members of the group who tend to dominate conversation, listen to everyone or finish meetings on time. For a group to sustain itself over the long-term, it's vital to develop the skills to both participate in and facilitate effective meetings. In essence, facilitation is about helping the group move forward with their task in an inclusive and participatory way. [16]

FIG A.

FIG B.

PREPARING A SUCCESSFUL MEETING[16]

Find a time and a venue
Find a time that most people are able to make, holding in mind patterns of daily activity. Find a venue that is big enough to accommodate everyone comfortably, ensuring the venue is accessible and welcoming. Ask about and plan for any specific requirements for people attending the meeting.

Think about facilitation techniques
Even small changes in the way the meeting is lead may positively influence how people are able to participate fully and actively in meetings. Think about effective facilitation techniques, especially for complex or controversial topics.

Explore and learn more facilitation techniques that help you support participation and creativity. Find more at website https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/tools [17] or https://bit.ly/2EHxeih [4]

Prepare an effective agenda
A well structured agenda is vital for a good meeting. It's important that everyone gets a chance to have an input and that the agenda is agreed by everyone.

» *Agree the aims for the meeting preferably in advance.*
» *Estimate the time needed for each item.*
» *Think about priorities. What could be tackled another time or in separate working groups?*
» *Work out what order to tackle agenda items in. Often it is best to deal with difficult items after the group has warmed up but before people get tired.*
» *How should the meeting start? Will you have introductions, a check-in or warm-up activity?*
» *How will the meeting end? Can you think of a closing activity? Could you plan in an evaluation of the meeting towards the end so you can learn for next time?*
» *Plan in breaks, especially for meetings longer than 1½ hours.*
» *Have a back up plan: ask yourself what you can cut from the agenda, or trim down if anything runs over your proposed time.*

If the meeting is only an hour long, there should only be an hour's worth of items on the agenda!

Think of the technical arrangements
Consider physical arrangements such as temperature, air quality, ability to hear and see. Arrange the seating in an inclusive way. For example, sitting in a circle allows everyone to see each other. Gather

materials needed for the meeting, e.g. a watch, pens, marker pens, flipcharts, written presentations and proposals.

Split the roles
Making a meeting work involves a lot of different tasks, and these can be split up between different people, especially in a large or challenging meeting. This could involve splitting the main facilitation role between two or more co-facilitators, but also creating a host of additional roles to ease the pressure. You can create roles such as: co-facilitator (useful for checking the understanding), taking hands (keeping track of whose turn it is to speak next, giving time limits to speakers) vibes-watching (paying more attention to the emotional atmosphere, in situations of conflict and distress the vibes-watcher will intervene), timekeeper (drawing attention to the agreed time frame for the meeting and keeps the group to it), minute taker (keep track of decisions, take minutes or notes, collect reports, and also draw attention to incomplete decisions, or provide a summary of the discussion if needed), doorkeeper (welcomes newcomers or latecomers and brings them up to speed on the meeting – aims, what's been covered so far in the agenda, how decisions are being made, as well as the practical 'housekeeping' information such as tea and toilets), practical coordinator (useful especially in large meetings, responsible for the venue, equipment, refreshments etc.)

Invite people
Inform everyone about the time, place and content of the meeting. Send out pre-meeting materials if necessary.

Prepare yourself and pay attention to your feelings
Remind yourself of key information about the group and the agenda. What is the aim of the meeting? Why are people participating? What decision making process does the group use (e.g. consensus or voting)? What's on the agenda and why? What access requirements will you need to bear in mind throughout? Are you aware of particular dynamics or issues that will impact on how people participate?

TIP
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For more tips on organising successful meetings look at webpage https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/meeting [30] or https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/access [41]

Facilitate an effective meeting from the beginning to the end [30]

Welcome and introduction
Make sure everyone is welcomed as they arrive. Introduce yourself and explain the role of the facilitator(s). Get everyone to introduce themselves if people do not know each other or there are newcomers.

Explain rules and ensure roles
Explain the time frame, subject, aims of meeting, the process for making decisions, the responsibilities. Agree with the group what behavior is acceptable/not acceptable in the meeting. Explain the proposed agenda, then ask for comments and make necessary changes. Allocate time for each item and set a realistic finishing time.

Keep to this. If using consensus decision making allow for extra time to go deeper into the issue if necessary.

Go through agenda

Make sure everyone can see the agenda – display it on a large sheet of paper or screen and have printed copies for those who want them. You can cross off points from the agenda once they are dealt with as a visual reminder that the meeting is moving forward.

Go through the agenda item by item. Keep the group focused on one item at a time until you've reached a decision (or made a conscious choice to deal with the matter another time). If new items come up in the discussion make sure they get noted down to be dealt with later.

Make sure that decisions on action points include what, how, who, when and where. Ensure any action points are noted down along with who will do them and any deadline. Encourage everyone to feel able to volunteer for tasks and roles. If the same people take on all the work it can lead to tension and informal hierarchies within the group.

TIP

Create Parking space: when something comes up that's not relevant to the discussion at hand 'park' it in the parking space (a large sheet of paper on the wall) and deal with it at an appropriate time later. This allows you to stay focused but reassures participants they will be heard.

Support discussion and participation

Regulate the flow of discussion by calling on speakers in an appropriate order. Often this will be as they indicate they want to speak. Sometimes you may ask more vocal people to hold back from speaking in order to open up space for others to have their say. Invite and move forward discussion. Be positive, be appreciative of everyone's contributions and draw out points of agreement and common ground. Clarify proposals that are put forward. Use short summaries of where the conversation is as to keep yourselves on track.

Help everyone to participate: encourage quiet people, limit over-talking, don't let anyone dominate the discussion. Introduce techniques such as ideastorming options, forming small groups for discussion, delegating to working groups, and go-rounds, to make the meeting more efficient and participatory. Some exercises may not be suitable for everyone – consider what role hearing, sight and mobility might play in activities. Make sure the discussion is not moving too fast and that everyone is able to actively take part.

TIP

Talking object - an object which is placed in the middle of the group. If somebody wants to talk, he/she needs to hold the subject. It enables only one person to speak in any moment, while others are actively listening to that person.

**Check the feeling of the group
and change dynamics**
Check on the overall feeling of the group throughout the meeting: energy levels, interest in the subject, whether the aims are being fulfilled, whether the structure is appropriate (e.g. large or small groups) and time.

Change the dynamic during the meeting: use short items, fun items, announcements and breaks throughout the agenda to provide rest and relief from the more taxing items. In tense or tiring situations try humor, affirmation, games, changing seats, silence, taking a break etc.

Make sure that the meeting is a safe space. If one participant says or does things that are offensive or hurtful, it is important that this is challenged - even if you don't think the comment applies to anyone in the room. At the same time, remember that people often cause offence without meaning to. As a facilitator, it is usually most effective to show respect for everyone concerned.

TIP

**CHANGE THE DYNAMICS OF
A MEETING BY SPLITTING INTO
SMALLER GROUPS**

Small groups are great for equalising participation and creating a safe atmosphere for expressing opinions and feelings. They can also make meetings more efficient, e.g. groups can each focus on a different topic so more ground is covered overall. Explain

clearly what groups should do. Write up the task where people can see it. If you want feedback at the end, you need to say clearly on what they need to feed back, and give them time at the end to decide what to say and who will say it.

End the meeting
Make sure the meeting finishes on time or gets everyone's agreement to continue if need be. Ensure someone has taken on writing up and circulating the minutes or notes as soon as possible. Provide some satisfying closure to the meeting: sum up, remind people of what they're committed to doing before the next meeting and remember to thank everyone for turning up and contributing.

Evaluate the meeting
Evaluation of the meetings can help to constantly improve them. It's a good idea to leave a few minutes at the end of every agenda and ask the group what went well and what needs to be improved. You could also get together afterwards with the other organisers to evaluate the meeting.

Celebrate
Celebrate what you have achieved! It can be nice to follow the meeting with an informal social activity like sharing a meal or going to a café. Think about any special needs, try to choose an inclusive venue or activity.

4.3. Feedback as a way of learning

Clear communication and providing good feedback are essential in building strong communities and preventing problems. In the case of CSAs it is not always clear how different actors can give feedback to each other. If the evaluation methodologies are well planned, some basic tools could be applied for feedback giving mechanisms (e.g. evaluation questionnaires at the end of each year, planning meetings), but there could be other every-day issues that require feedback in order to prevent long-term conflicts. It is often the case that consumers do not dare to give feedback on the quality or quantity of the product, or a CSA farmer does not dare to talk honestly about the costs and prices. Community coordinators can facilitate this process with some easy methodologies, based on principles of nonviolent communication (*https://www.cnvc.org*). Keep in mind that receiving and giving feedback is a sensitive matter and it is therefore good to follow certain principles.

Giving feedback [21]

» *Create a safe environment. Find the right place and time for the person receiving the feedback to feel safe and open.*
» *Start with the positive and be specific. Everyone needs encouragement and affirmation. Begin with what they are doing well and what their strengths are. Rather than making general comments such as "that was brilliant" try to pinpoint what the person did that was brilliant (or awful) and what effect it had on you. e.g. "I really liked how you cleaned the delivery point, however I could not find some things."*
» *Be honest. There is no point in saying that something was done well whilst thinking the opposite. In this case the person who is receiving feedback does not learn anything and will continue to make mistakes in the future.*
» *Speak from your own perspective or experience. Do not make universal judgments. Begin with "I" or "In my opinion". Speak about specific situations rather than people's personalities.*

Receiving feedback [21]

» *Be open to constructive feedback, because the feedback is there to help you learn. Listen carefully and hear both the positive and the negative. Make sure you understand what is being said. Ask if you are unclear or want more feedback about a specific aspect. Try not to get defensive or counter every negative point with an excuse or explanation (what we might call feedback tennis).*
» *If you're finding the feedback difficult, ask for it to stop.*
» *Thank the person for giving the feedback.*
» *Decide what you will do to incorporate the feedback - what changes will you make?*

4.4. Dealing with conflict

Conflict occurs when two or more people have seemingly incompatible opinions, values or needs. Conflicts arise in every shape and size of community. Whilst it is not always easy to resolve conflicts, we invite you to perceive conflict not as a problem, but rather as an opportunity to make positive changes that will improve life for all involved in the long run.[45; 46]

Conflict isn't a problem, it's an opportunity

How conflict fits into the life cycle of a group

In 1965 Bruce Tuckman, an educational psychologist, developed one of the most influential models that helps to understand the lifecycle of group and its dynamics. The model represents the different phases groups need to go through to grow as a team. As all stages have their own focus, they also correspond to a different set of feelings, behavior and group tasks. It is helpful especially for CSA coordinators and other main community organisers to understand that conflicts are natural part of community development.[9]
Famous community founder Morgan Scott Peck adapted the theory of a teams' development to the formation of communities, which typically go through four stages: Pseudo community, Chaos, Emptiness and True Community.[3]

Stages of conflict resolution that lead to collaboration

The first step to prevent, recognize and resolve any conflict is understanding how conflicts may arise and escalate.

TIP

Learn more about Fridrich Glasl's theory[29] about the nine stages of conflict escalation in Youtube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBjOwPBxYgA

» ***Identifying the conflict:*** *At this stage we identify the situation, the "conflict". The conflict causes stress, so we might identify feelings, specific behaviors or symptoms.*
» ***Decision on cooperation:*** *We can manage this step if we have recognised at an early stage that there is a conflict. We should consider if we are capable of resolving the conflict, the importance of the topic at hand, how threatening the situation is, and what the result of the conflict could be. Through deciding to buildg cooperation, we build trust.*
» ***Mapping the needs:*** *We should see clearly the needs of stakeholders, their values and point of views.*
» ***Identifying the methodologies:*** *We should identify as many ways of solving the conflict as we can. We can organise a brainstorming session.*
» ***Agreement, plan:*** *Stakeholders choose the methodology which is suitable for all of them and work on an agreement. We should list the steps which are needed for solving the problem.*
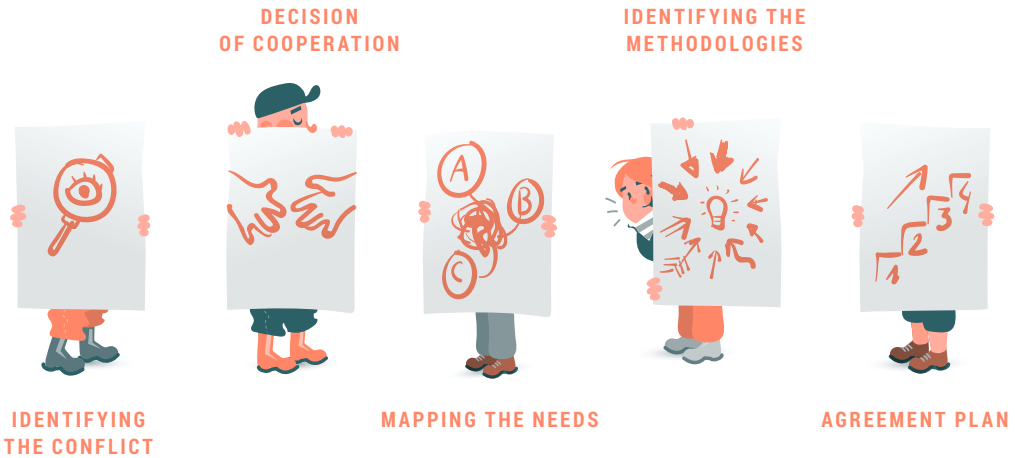
DECISION OF COOPERATION

IDENTIFYING THE METHODOLOGIES

IDENTIFYING THE CONFLICT

MAPPING THE NEEDS

AGREEMENT PLAN

COMMUNICATION THAT HELPS TO PREVENT AND SOLVE CONFLICTS [46]

Good listening and communication are at the core of a well-functioning community. This helps us build trust and openness in the group, understand each other, and ultimately, come up with better decisions and avoids conflicts.

You've got two ears and one mouth - use them in those proportions!

Active listening

Sometimes conflict arises simply because people do not listen or pay attention to each other. Active listening enables us to hear and understand what others are saying. Careful listening also builds trust – it is much easier to be open when we feel heard and understood. To actively listen you need to:

» *Create a safe atmosphere for the speaker. Find a suitable space and deal with any distractions (turn off mobile phones, televisions, computers etc).*
» *Show that you're listening. Stop talking and be aware of your body language. Signs of listening are: leaning toward the speaker, an interested facial expression, and maintaining good eye contact. Facial gestures and small movements such as nodding our heads can show interest and support. Avoid signs of impatience such as looking at your watch.*

» *Make the mental space. Don't think about how you want to respond but focus on the speaker.*
» *Try to set aside your own interpretations and opinions about what someone is saying.*
» *Use verbal cues to draw out your speaker's thoughts, e.g.: how did you feel about that? Tell me more.*
» *Summarize and restate what's been said.*
» *Make any limits to your listening clear from the start - if you've only got a certain amount of time, say so. If you're expecting a phone call you just have to take, apologize in advance.*

Questioning

Questioning helps clarify what people are saying, or supports people to explore their needs and come up with new possibilities. Asking good questions is part of the process of active listening. This can help a good understanding of what someone is trying to put across.

» *Use clarifying questions e.g. "What I think you're saying is... Am I right?" or "When you say that we 'aren't pulling our weight', can you say more about what you'd like us to do?"*
» *Ask open questions which don't have yes/no answers. Open questions give people more choice over what they want to put across, and create space for the group to generate new ideas.*
» *You can try out the 5 whys method which helps to understand the reason for a problem: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_whys*

Summarizing

Summarizing helps remind us of the key points in the discussion and checks that we have the same understanding.

» *Wait until the speaker has finished.*
» *Offer the summary tentatively and allow people to correct you if you get it wrong.*
» *Use phrases such as: "What I've heard people saying so far is... Did I miss any thing out?", "It sounds to me like the main concern you're raising is.... Is that right?"*
» *Keep it short and simple. What you say should be easy to understand and concentrate on - rather than repeating everything that's been said already!*
» *Think about when it is helpful to use your own words, or to use the words of the speaker.*
» *Bear in mind also that a summary carries more weight than an average contribution to a discussion. Especially when you are summarizing the views of the whole group. For example, if you say "So we're all agreed that..." it makes it harder for someone to disagree!*
» *It might be helpful to take notes during the group discussion, in order to make summarising easier.*

Speak about yourself, not about others
» *Make sure you are speaking for yourself by using 'I' statements. In this way you are speaking about your own feelings and perceptions, you are not attributing blame, you are being direct and honest about the effect the other person's actions are having on you.*
» *Avoid making moral judgments and blaming others for your feelings.*
» *Clearly describe your own emotions, rather than your policy positions.*

BEST
PRACTICES

Laurent Marbot's Amap, Paris area, France

Laurent participated, as the founding farmer, in the creation of an Amap in 2006. It was one of the first in the Paris region. There was no feedback or support from experienced CSA farmers at the time, as the movement was just starting (the first Amap was created in the southern part of France in 2001). "*There were no ready-made rules to help us in the creation process. Luckily, the newcomers in the area now have a much better environment to start out their business*", Laurent recalls.

The price was chosen quite randomly, since the calculation tools were not available then. The price was set at 15 euro/share. "*When you looked at the price, it was more like a store than a real Amap. Amap is different, it is a two-way solidarity relationship, it is sharing the harvest*". The group grew very fast to 60 members, which helped to generate a small margin for Laurent.

During the General Assembly of the group for the third year of operation, the core group pushed for a deep change. They decided to re-calculate the price based on a target income for Laurent. The chosen target income was 2,000 euros per month, which was then around 20% above the median wage in France at the time. All the accountancy was reorganised around this objective, meaning the provisional costs had to be re-calculated too. Nowadays, Laurent is helping a lot of new CSA farmers, and notices that the costs are quite similar from one farm to the other in the Paris area, making his experience very valuable for new entrant CSA farmers.

Laurent has participated in the development of a more favourable environment for newcomers. There are now 130 organic vegetable growers in the region around Paris, and most of them (more than 80) have started their operation over the last 10 years. There are two new organisations that have dramatically changed the situation for new CSA farmers in the region. The first is the regional CSA network, Amap-IdF, which is organising farmer-to-farmer talks as well as comprehensive trainings, because "*faire de l'Amap, c'est un métier en plus*" ("*running a CSA is an additional job*"). Thanks to its role as an active member of a coalition of organisations, the Amap-IdF network is providing starting CSA farmers a spot in a farm incubator programme. The second newly created organisation is a farmers' cooperative, which allows the mutualisation of tools. Instead of taking a 200,000 euro loan to get started, a young vegetable grower can pay a 20,000 euro contribution to the cooperative and have access to all the necessary equipment. This scheme is crucial for CSA farmers, who can hardly ask their new CSA group members for support, since time is needed to build trust. The association with other farmers can also help them to achieve *economies of scale*, to share tools and even to be able to take holidays.

Laurent stresses how important it is to have help from people with the right skills and to be transparent when a problem occurs. In his group, he is lucky to be able to count on a financial controller who

is ready to help, to correct his calculation mistakes and to present the figures and the consolidated budget to the Amap members. The network is also providing a training on how to present the budget to the CSA group, with role-playing techniques.

Laurent's current situation seems to be quite sustainable: the shares he is producing are sold at a lower price than in organic supermarkets, 150 families are committed to his farm, and he is working in association with other farmers, some of whom have been trained in the farm incubator he co-founded, allowing space and time for some holidays.

Solawi Weinheim: Usage of free software

A good example of how to use free software comes from the Solawi Weinheim. A fresh Solawi with ~40 members that could profit from the experiences of the nearby Solawi MA-LU (Mannheim – Ludwigshafen) was founded. The biggest question for each CSA is how to communicate with the members in an optimal horizontal format, to let everyone be heard, and to keep the conversations structured.

The evolution went from email lists to forums and messengers. Solawi MA-LU experimented with some Wordpress plugins to imitate a forum/facebook-like appearance but had very little user acceptance. In Weinheim the top OpenSource forum Discourse had been introduced from the start with success. Discourse adds some intelligence to your e-communication – just try it yourself! The Solawi uses it for all kinds of communication, the only additional communication channels are informal peer to peer human communication and a physical board at the garden. In detail it is used for polls, minutes of meetings, saving and archiving of files and in general for discussions of all kinds. Within the discourse groups are set up to address individuals by interests e.g. finance, communication. For other kinds of record keeping, simple and easy web tools are preferred: Solawi MA-LU uses Ethercalcs for volunteer coordination and Solawi Weinheim uses Libreoffice spreadsheets for accounting. On their website *https://solawi-weinheim.de* they have a Wordpress blog. Solawi MA-LU uses a Nextcloud as a free dropbox replacement.

Le Champ des Possibles: Self-harvest by consumers, coloured-flags system

Le Champ des Possibles is a project based on organic vegetable growing and self-picking relying on the principle of trust between the consumer and the producer. The 130 members have free access to the field through a shared combination code at the door. They come and collect their share each week when they want to. The field is always accessible to them. There is a board on the site listing all the possible harvests and a system with flags allowing the members to know what is to be picked. A yellow flag means "please pick-up according to the table" whilst a red flag means "please pick as much as you need". According to the farmer, there is no problem with damaged vegetables, wrong vegetables or thieves!

Luzernenhof, near Freiburg i.B., Germany

The Luzernenhof is a CSA in the South-West of Germany. The farm operates under principles of circular economy and produces about 120 different products including cereals, pork and cattle meat, dairy products and vegetables. Animal manure, rather than commercial products, is used as fertilizer. The pigs receive whey from the cheese production, the cows are fed alfalfa and milked twice a day.

The farm's customers are a community of consumers who almost entirely finance the production. Each year, the farm draws up a budget (for 2019, 400 000€). 80,000€ can be covered by agricultural subsidies and some sales. 320,000€ will be contributed by consumers who meet at the general assembly in November. They contribute as much as they can, guided by a calculation of their orders over the past year.

Consumers, once they have made their financial contribution (which can be transferred monthly) to finance the farm, can then make weekly orders of the seasonal products they want from the list: dairy products, vegetables, meat, cereals, flour. Farmer Johannes Supenkämper stressed that one of the main benefits of the farm are the wages of the people who work on the farm (12 people in 8 positions). He called for agriculture to be carried out with greater human involvement and warned against the mechanization of agriculture, which tends to destroy soil fertility.

Through a fundraising campaign Luzernenhof was able to not only secure their land, but also their farm house, both taken out of the market with the help of two respective organisations that are specialised in this: Mietshäusersyndikat for the housing, Kulturland cooperative for the farm land. *https://www.luzernenhof.de*

CSA CooLAND, Czech Republic

CSA CooLAND is typical and one of the biggest consumer-led CSA in the Czech Republic. After 5 years of existence, the community has 90 consumers and collaborates with three organic farms producing vegetables, goat's cheese and buffalo milk.

The general framework and vision of the community is enshrined in the shared codex. Each consumer concludes an agreement with each farmer for one season, confirmed via online registration. Responsibility is distributed among consumers and members as follows. Farmers grow the food, take care of the land and deliver their products to pick up points in the city. Consumers pay in advance and as volunteers participate in the delivery service to pick-up points. Among consumers, there is a core group of 5 coordinators responsible for the overall CSA organisation. The core group manage administration related to members and payments. The CSA uses digital tools such as Google Drive, Google Spreadsheets, Google Documents, and Google Forms for member registration and occasional orders. For communication with members mainly email (mail list) is used. Members occasionally receive a newsletter. There are two meetings every season, organised by consumers, as well as other meetings organised by the farmers at least once a year, at each farm.

Consumers send all payments to the CSA's transparent account and a CSA

coordinator transfers money for products to the farmers. Consumers pay for their shares in two payments (April, July) and also pay for their CSA membership (10 EUR) which covers the costs of coordination. Most of the fees cover free shares as a reward for people who work for the community as coordinators. The CSA budget is based only on membership fees and in 2019 it was about 1000 EUR. Farmers budgets are separated from the community budget and decision-making about growing and farm practices is the full responsibility of farmers. The coordination group together with the farmers, discuss and set up rules for the season including the price.

The huge benefit of the scheme for the farmer is that the community takes on much of the work with the consumers and distribution. For the community it is easier to create this informal group since the administration is simpler and costs are lower. However, the sharing of responsibilities, decision-making and funding can be difficult. As CSA CooLAND is an informal group of people, only one person takes responsibility for the

account, because there is no organisation with legal status under which this could be managed. This is potentially a risky situation, not only for those responsible but also for the community. As the community is growing, it is more and more difficult to maintain transparent rules for decision-making and the amount of work and administration is increasing. The CSA model is dependent largely on volunteers and their motivation. Therefore, the CSA is considering the establishment of a non-profit organisation. Since the beginning, the community has mapped its activities via blog posts (*https://blog.cooland.cz*) with the aim to promote the idea of local food supply based on agroecological principles. In 2015 CooLAND together with street photographer Kevin V. Ton created a photography exhibition and one year later published a Czech story of community supported agriculture in his booklet "Our love for landscapes goes through our tummies".

http://www.cooland.cz, https://kpzcooland.tumblr.com, https://laskakekrajine.tumblr.com

Spolkový obchod Obživa — An example of SFS from the Czech Republic
In 2018, farmers and consumers in Prague established a community shop selling organic and fair products. The aim is to enable and facilitate members' livelihood, based on personal relationships and reciprocity. At the beginning, each member puts an investment contribution into the association (EUR 192) and then pays each month an operating fee (EUR 14 / person, EUR 18 / family). Monthly fees are used to cover the costs of running a business (wages, rent, etc.). Only members can buy in the store and the goods are sold without a trading margin. In June 2019, the association had 120 members. *https://obziva.cz*

Háromkaptár Organic Garden, Hungary

The Háromkaptár (three hives) farm was one of the first Hungarian CSAs, started in 2010. During the years the CSA has grown, now around 60 families belong to the community. The CSA is farmer-led, but in a really unique way: family members take an active role in the life of the farm and the CSA. The farms are open to the members and they organise really transparent planning meetings each year, to evaluate the season and the performance of the CSA.

During these meetings core members had the impression that some changes needed to take place, as the CSA had ended the year with a financial deficit. According to the farmer the CSA closed the year at net "zero", but this was without giving the farmer a salary. So a group of around 10 members decided to find out how the CSA could be sustainable, including financially, giving a good living for the farmer and her family. in order to achieve long-term financial sustainability, solidarity and long-term engagement of the members is key. As one of the members said: "The community could be helpful, but farmers should be open to involve them in the CSA." Below is a list of activities offered by core member volunteers through meetings held 3-4 times a year.

1. First they checked the budget, systematically going through the costs. Based on that they suggested an increased membership. This was especially important as the farmer did not dare to ask more from the members, but as it came from the mem-

bers' side, it worked out well. They also organised a special fundraising within the community for an investment to support building a polytunnel, which was needed but not included in the CSA budget.
2. They suggested a reformation of some activities.
2.1. Instead of having three sizes for the membership ("big box", "small box" and a "box for babies"), they suggested to have two sizes, as the labour involved in packaging is the same with all three, but they would earn less for a baby box. They first moved to a big share and small share at 70% of the price. From next year they will operate only with big shares, asking families to organise themselves if it is too big for them and they would like to split it with someone else.

2.2. They also suggested not to have delivery every week during the winter season, as the quantity of vegetables is lower and members were also okay with receiving it less often. With this they could cut unnecessary transport costs and work.

3. They also introduced the "working contribution" of members. Members could decide if they pay extra (around one more month of a big share) or they work on the farm 3 days during the year. It is a serious challenge for the farmer to find workers, so they expected that this action could reduce the workload or increase the amount which could be used for finding someone to work on the farm. The first experiences are mixed, in some cases the extra fee was not paid yet, but the idea

seems promising and they will continue with it. They believe that working on the farm contributes to the retention of members, creating deeper connections.

4. They also helped the farmer with the diversification of incomes on the farm with organically connected activities.

4.1. The farm started a special course on organic farming, sharing their experiences with future farmers or anyone who is interested and also provides other kinds of workshops (e.g. for children).

4.2. Members also organise workshops in the farm building (for example soap making) and offer the income for the CSA, and they also try to promote the farm for use as an event venue.

https://haromkaptar.hu

Oma Maa Luomuosuuskunta, in Finland

Oma Maa Luomuosuuskunta (Own Land Organic Cooperative), is one of the most emblematic local food initiatives in Finland. It is a combination of a CSA (weekly share with prepayment) and Food Coop (the members buy a share until they get out of the operation). Lassila Farm, which is selling through Oma Maa, would need 120 shares to sell 100% through the CSA and to be fully sustainable. The current membership is around half of that target. However, the initiative is clearly a best practice to be showcased from various angles. Ruby, a Dutch citizen living in Finland and a long term Oma Maa mem-

ber, has made the jump from conscious consumer, working in a sustainable development foundation, into working in the fields. She recalls the various efforts to involve consumers: "*it is the key point to get the consumers to understand what it is all about*". Ruby explains that there have been many different attempts to communicate widely about the farm and its objectives: "*There have been dinners at the downtown Oma Maa restaurant, we have been active on social media. Also, at the beginning, the farm's share was advertised as a way of covering all nutritional needs for a family with 2 parents and 2 children! This involved a little bit of calculation, but it was a great pedagogical tool, showing that with local faber beans, for example, the needs in terms of proteins could be fulfilled. This is still a starting point when we are planning the next shares. A starting point rather than something to be strictly followed I would say.*"

Jukka, the Oma Maa family farmer, might look thoughtful. But just pronounce the magic word "biodiversity", and his face will start shining immediately. He will lead you to the spelt field and tell you that the local variety was actually brought from far away 100 or 200 years ago, before getting forgotten and reintroduced, without any intervention of academics, a couple of decades ago. Jukka will tell you in a smile: "*Generally, a farmer starts by bringing a variety back to Finland, then only the academic people start getting interested and writing articles... Otherwise, it wouldn't work very well...*". Jukka will show you the rustic crops he managed to get through Maatiainen *(www.maatiainen.fi)*, an association promoting the use of landrace varieties. He will lead you to the still nascent

orchard, where hazelnut trees are protecting pear trees, and where one can find plum, kiwi, quince, pear, apple and cherry trees, with climbing bushes around them. Some trees are native to Finland, especially some pear and apple trees, and are highly resistant to the frost (one has been used widely in Russia). There are even minikiwis planted outdoor (in Finland!), from a variety developed in the colder parts of China. Jukka will lead you to the brand new greenhouses, where a self-made, artisanal heating, heat-collecting and water-collecting system will attract your attention, once you have observed dozens of different varieties of tomatoes.

Jukka will also show the maize-zucchini-beans combinations in the field. He will also mention an Amerindian variety of maize, that has been developed further in Finland, a variety that does not need a lot of water, is very resistant, but not very productive. Jukka will tell you how this blossoming biodiversity is fed, through informal exchanges with other farmers, not only from Tuusula, not only from Finland, not only from Europe, but also from Brazil, Nepal, West Africa and Asia. Though, even with all of this biodiversity, Jukka is determined to do more: "*There is still so much work to do to get even the most committed consumers on the farm to understand what all of this is about...*".

http://www.omamaa.fi/liity-mukaan

Examples of CSA networks and umbrella organisations in Europe
URGENCI Europe: *http://urgenci.net*
Miramap France: *http://miramap.org*
Community Supported Agriculture, United Kingdom:
http://communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk/
The alliance for better food and farming *https://www.sustainweb.org*
AMPI - Asociace místních potravinových iniciativ, Czech Republic:
http://www.asociaceampi.cz, https://kpzinfo.cz
Solawi - Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft, Germany
https://www.solidarische-landwirtschaft.org
KöKiSz, Hungary: *https://tudatosvasarlo.hu/cikk/kokisz*
Tudatos Vásárlók Egyesülete, Hungary *https://tudatosvasarlo.hu/csa*
GASAP, Belgium *https://gasap.be*
FRACP - La Fédération Romande d'Agriculture Contractuelle de Proximité,
French speaking network in Switzerland *https://www.fracp.ch*

PARTNERS
AND THEIR COUNTRY'S
SITUATION

Hungary

The Association of Conscious Consumers (ACC/TVE)

The Association of Conscious Consumers (ACC/TVE) was established in 2001. TVE's activities focus on sustainable and ethical consumption; the aim of the organisation is to make consumers aware of environmental, social, and ethical aspects of their consumption and to help them live more sustainable lifestyles. To achieve this aim, TVE provides information, delivers campaigns and community learning, publishes and distributes educational materials, conducts background research, and lobbies decision makers.
https://tudatosvasarlo.hu/english

CSA in Hungary

In Hungary, there are around 20 operating CSA farms, but also some others which are testing the community-based form of operation. The majority of the CSAs are farmer-led, but the size of the communities varies between 35 and 150 families. Around two thirds of these are certified organic farms, whilst the others decided not to apply for official certification. The majority of these farms produce vegetables, but there is also already meat, eggs and fruit available through CSAs. The consumers – who are often called "members" – are mainly from urban areas. They sign a contract with the farmers to commit to support the farm for either a whole season, or spring through autumn. They pay a monthly membership fee which is often, but not necessarily, paid in advance.

The CSA concept was introduced to Hungary in 1998, but the first farms which were influenced by the English CSA concept eventually gave up the model, and replaced it with something similar, but more open. In 2010, three new CSA farms started to operate, resulting from a number of influential visits by the French AMAPs, which were organised by URGENCI. The French influence is still clearly visible among the Hungarian CSAs, some of them using the translated AMAP charter, for example, but new forms have appeared too, such as the social cooperative.

In 2014, the informal Hungarian CSA network was formed (Közösségi Kisgazdaságok Szövetsége ~ Alliance of Small-scale CSA Farms) with its own specific declaration. Members of the network meet regularly and organise common purchasing and support. The next milestone for the network will be the establishment of a participatory guarantee system which will help in defining which farms can be called a "CSA".

TVE is promoting the idea of the CSA in Hungary, publishing information about national and international best practices, organising trainings for local communities, and coordinating projects to spread awareness and understanding on the topic, such as Be part of CSA!, Solid base and the Food & More European training programs. Since 2012, more than 1800 participants have attended our CSA-related events. It should also be mentioned that, in Hungary, there are some initiatives which are similar to CSAs. Box-schemes offering organic vegetable boxes have begun to operate. These also contain seasonal vegetables which were harvested on the farm and given for a fixed price every week. Buying groups and box ordering are also popular

in the country. In that case, people from urban areas form a community, and search for farmers within 30-50 kilometers from their home. The products are seasonal and local but not necessarily organic. The personal guarantee system has a crucial role in the operation: organisers and consumers visit the farms regularly.

Follow TVE on Facebook or Instagram. You can find more information about CSA and the list of operating initiatives available in Hungary on the *https://tudatosvasarlo.hu/csa* website.

Germany

Die Agronauten

Die Agronauten is a non-profit research organisation based in Freiburg, Germany. The name is derived from the Greek legend of the Argonauts, linking agriculture with the undertaking of the Greek heroes and heroines in their quest to find the Golden Fleece. Like these heroes, Die Agronauten aims to travel to unknown spheres and return with wisdom and insights for the benefit of agriculture.

Founded in 2011, we have been dealing with many aspects of local food and farming culture. These include topics such as partnership models of producers and consumers, new forms of innovative food systems, food sovereignty and regional resilience, regional logistics and network organisation, indicators of sustainable farming, intergenerational and intercultural learning, access to land, seeds and biodiversity. For us, understanding the cultural dimensions of how we produce food and feed ourselves is a crucial pre-

condition for change. Although our main research focus is on local food systems, the Agronauten have been active on a national and European level, cooperating with initiatives in most European countries. The approach of the Agronauten is interdisciplinary with a high emphasis on participatory research, in an attempt to further democratise agricultural research. The Agronauten have been very active in communication with wider society through exhibitions at schools, films, festivals and other events. Currently there are 6 people working for Agronauten, amongst them farmers, social scientists, biologists and geographers. *https://www.agronauten.net*

Solidarische Landwirtschaft (Solawi)

The Solawi network is an association of people with an agricultural background, as well as consumers, who are committed to the dissemination of Community Supported Agriculture. It sees itself as a movement, a grassroots democratic organisation and an association in equal measure.

Solawi offer contact and consultation opportunities as well as networking for CSA at regional and national levels. In order to promote solidarity and environmentally friendly agriculture, we are in exchange with other organisations at home and abroad.

The association Solidarische Landwirtschaft e.V. serves the network as a supporting association for all formal matters. Our structure is grassroots, democratic and participatory. It is built to give as many people as possible the opportunity to get involved and help shape the movement.

We are committed to the maintenance and promotion of sustainable, rural agriculture in which producers and consumers work together in a binding manner and see agriculture as a social responsibility. We offer help for self-organisation and concrete possibilities for action, for both producers and consumers. Finally, we aim to support a whole paradigm shift within agriculture! *https://www.solidarische-landwirtschaft.org*

CSA in Germany

The development of CSAs in Germany started off slowly. After the foundation of the first CSA, Buschberghof, in 1988, only three further CSAs were set up in the following fifteen years. Between 2003 and 2007, the number doubled to eight CSAs. After this, and with the establishment of a national network, the movement grew very dynamically. Today, approximately 300 CSA farms are operating, or just beginning.

There has been a remarkable and growing interest in CSA from consumers and producers, as well as from the media, within science and political discourse. In many areas, people are looking for serious solutions for a change towards a small-scale, regional agriculture. This challenge has also been recognized in a global report by the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (McIntyre, 2009). In 2009, the first German CSA, Buschberghof, received a national award from the Ministry of Agriculture for the development and successful implementation of its economic system. The national CSA network sees itself both as a movement and an association of grassroots democratic organisations. It is a union of individuals and farms working together to promote CSA. The central tasks of the network include offering advice and support to CSA farms, introducing consumers and producers, public relations, and coordinating inquiries from scientists and politicians. In order to exchange experiences and further develop the movement, national meetings are held twice a year. During these meetings, a network council, which represents farms as well as individual members and which takes central decisions, is elected. In order to guarantee a strong link with farming realities, at least half of the council consists of representatives of farms. The council itself elects a coordination body which meets for a telephone conference twice monthly to discuss important decisions and queries to the network. Thematic working groups and regional groups also exist and are represented in the council. Most of the work done by the network takes place on a voluntary basis. Bigger tasks are carried out by paid network officers. In line with CSA principles, their budget is covered by membership contributions. Risk sharing is a central defining aspect of Solawi/CSA. It means, for instance, that if the harvest is negatively affected by factors outside of the farmer's control (e.g. weather), members will pay their contributions anyway.

The Czech Republic

Asociace Místních Potravinových Iniciativ (AMPI)

AMPI is a non-profit organisation founded in 2014, focused mainly on the development of local food, solidarity-based initiatives and food sovereignty in the Czech Republic. Its main targets are to educate adults, youth and children on the environmental aspects of agriculture and food consumption, to provide farmers and consumers with guidance in setting up local food initiatives and social enterprises, to promote local food alternatives and perform research and study activities in the field.

http://www.asociaceampi.cz,
https://kpzinfo.cz

CSA in the Czech Republic

Farming in the Czech Republic is based on largely industrial production, with an average acreage of 800 hectares. Only 7% of big agricultural enterprises "cultivate" 65% of arable land in the country. Family farms with independent distribution cultivate only 6% of arable land. The majority of food is distributed through retail chains, widely owned by foreign capital and offering a large proportion of food from abroad. Despite these facts, the movement for local food is growing stronger through the development of farmers' markets, box-schemes and community- and solidarity-based initiatives ranging from organic-buying groups to CSA farms.

The first CSA was founded in the Czech Republic in 2009. At the moment, there are about 40 CSA schemes or initiatives that are already successfully operating. The majority of the CSA initiatives act as a community subscriber group, where a group of consumers commit to an existing farm for a whole/part season delivery, and take care of the distribution from the pick-up point. In this model, the farming remains the responsibility of the farmer, acting largely as an entrepreneur who sells their produce to members. Another sector of these initiatives is represented by community-owned farms, where a community (or an NGO) runs a farm on its own, employing a farmer, or farm-workers, and shares the whole harvest and any income from sold harvest, amongst the community. In this case, the community is responsible for the operation of the whole enterprise. The last section of the CSA initiatives is formed by subscription CSAs, where farmers offer their produce and consumers subscribe to shares for a whole season at a discounted price. Delivery and outlet is organised by the farmer. There is no commitment apart from advance payment and a subscription for the whole season is required from the subscribers. Seen from the farmers' side, there are a maximum of 20 farmers supplying those CSAs in total. Some of them are officially certified organic farmers and the rest at least declare to be farming according to organic principles.

Europe

URGENCI

URGENCI, the international Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) organisation, is a network of alliances between

producers and consumers, with members from 32 European countries. It has been promoting CSA as an experimentation and a struggle, a living lab rather than a fixed model. URGENCI represents the movement in all its diversity, fostering exchanges and peer-based solidarity among initiatives who contribute, through their down-to-earth action, to the overall credibility of the food sovereignty movement. Local solidarity-based partnerships between farmers and the people they feed are, in essence, a member–farmer cooperative, whoever initiates it and whatever legal form it takes. There is no fixed way of organising these partnerships, it is a framework to inspire communities to work together with their local farmers, to provide mutual benefits and to reconnect people to the land where their food is grown.

The emergence of Community Supported Agriculture, first in Japan with Teikei created back in the late 1960s, and through many other initiatives since then, shows how consumers and farmers in various places and contexts are responding to the same global pressures. This supports the development of organic family-run farms and fair local food systems. URGENCI is organising a European Meeting of CSA Movements every second year. The 4th European meeting took place in Thessaloniki in November 2018. *http://urgenci.net*

CSA in Europe

In Europe, the diversity of the CSA movement is fully reflected in the growing number of initiatives:

» *Association pour le Maintien de l'Agriculture Paysanne (AMAP) in France*
» *Groupes d'achats solidaires de l'agriculture paysanne (GASAP) and Voedselteams in Belgium*
» *Solidarische landswirtschaft in Germany or Austria*
» *Kumppanuusmaatalous or 'partnership agriculture' in Finland*
» *Gruppo di acquisto solidale in Italy and Grupos de Consumo in Spain*
» *GSR (Groups of solidarity exchange), SEG (Ecological solidarity groups) and RIS (exchange and solidarity) in Croatia*
» *Agriculture contractuelle de proximité in Switzerland*
» *Asociatia pentru Sustinerea Agriculturii Taranesti (ASAT) in Romania*
» *Komunitou podporované zem d lství (KPZ) in the Czech Republic*
» *Közösségi mez gazdálkodás in Hungary*

Despite the diversity of approaches and the lack of solid organising structures, CSA can be seen as an alternative movement, characterized by a common aim to connect producers and communities. Many members and organisers of CSA initiatives express a desire to see the concept spread, with active support and encouragement provided by some established initiatives. According to research conducted in 2015 throughout 22 countries, 6292 CSAs were operating in Europe in 2015, producing food for half a million to one million eaters – depending on how broad the definition for CSA is.

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»   ATTRA Sustainable Agriculture, Publications: *https://attra.ncat.org/publications*

»   Buscheberghof: *http://buschberghof.de*

»   Community Supported Agriculture: *https://communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk*

»   Conflict Resolution Network: *http://www.crnhq.org*

»   CSA CooLAND: *http://www.cooland.cz*

»   Die Agronauten: *https://www.agronauten.net*

»   FRACP - La Fédération Romande d'Agriculture Contractuelle de Proximité: *https://www.fracp.ch*

»   GASAP, Belgium: *https://gasap.be*

»   Háromkaptár biogazdaság: *https://haromkaptar.hu*

»   KöKiSz: *https://tudatosvasarlo.hu/cikk/kokisz*

»   Komunitou podporované zemědělství: *https://kpzinfo.cz*

»   Luzernenhof: *https://www.luzernenhof.de*

»   Miramap: *http://miramap.org*

»   Obživa: *https://obziva.cz*

»   Omamaa: *http://www.omamaa.fi/liity-mukaan*

»   Our love to landscapes goes through our tummies: *https://laskakekrajine.tumblr.com*

»   Sociocracy for all (SoFa) *http://sociocracyforall.org*

»   Solawi - Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft: *https://www.solidarische-landwirtschaft.org*

»   Svobodný statek: *https://www.svobodny-statek.cz*

»   The alliance for better food and farming: *https://www.sustainweb.org*

»   The Center for Nonviolent Communication: *https://www.cnvc.org*

»   Tudatos Vásárlók Egyesülete (TVE): *https://tudatosvasarlo.hu*

»   URGENCI: *http://urgenci.net*

»   URGENCI´s Hub: *https://hub.urgenci.net*

»   Volunteer Centre Sheffield: *http://www.sheffieldvolunteercentre.org.uk*

»   WorldWide Opportunities on Organic Farms: *https://wwoof.net*

Notes

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