



Saugeen River CSA

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Spring Newsletter

Hello everyone,

The CSA model has been around for over 30 years now. It is still, by far, the best food distribution system to counter the fossil fuel economy we are imbedded in.

When CSA's started with just a few farms trying it out, it was a radical approach to farmer/customer relations. Its main aim was to reconnect people to the land that feeds them. Not everyone wants to be a farmer or gardener, so in order to directly connect to the land, there needs to be something that creates the link.



The fossil fuel industry is the dominant force in all our economic relationships. It is often cheaper to ship something grown thousands of miles away, than to buy it from local farmers. This has created a distribution system that caters to the whim of the consumer. The growth of on-line

shopping is digging us deeper into the illusion that we should be able to get what we want, when we want it.

If we are truly going to move humanity and the Earth forward towards true sustainability, we need to develop different social and economic relationships that connect us to the land.

What does "sustainable" mean? How long are we thinking when we use the word sustainable? 20 years? 50 years? 100 years? 3,000 years??? In modern day we tend to think 100 years is a long time... but is it really? Over the last 150 years or so (I use this number since it is Canada's 150th birthday), the changes in technology have transformed most of our lives. The changes are coming faster and faster, exponentially. This also contributes to the illusion that we are moving forward, and that the solutions to all our problems are just around the corner with a new invention looming.

The often-overlooked problem is that our progress in developing healthy social and economic relationships is not changing very fast at all.



As the CSA model hits more of the mainstream there are some interesting things that happen. Today there is an over abundance of advertising. Any kind of economic relationship is seen in this light, even if conventional advertising isn't used.

CSA is often seen as another marketing scheme. This is true among farmers as well as the general public. What advertising tends to do is encourage us to relate economics to our own individual needs. "Does such and such work for me? Is it cheaper, more convenient?"



There has been a growing concern about whether or not a product meets certain ethical and environmental guidelines. But there is as much "Green-washing" out there where companies take advantage of this trend without really making big changes in

how they do things. Most of us are pretty cynical and skeptical of any advertising whatsoever. The danger is that the cynicism pushes us right back into looking for what is cheaper and more convenient, since it is not really clear what is better.

CSA's don't advertise well in the conventional sense. If a CSA is based on the land, members are not able to choose what they want when they want it. It can't match the convenience of the supermarket. CSA's are the cheaper way to get fresh organic produce, however this seems to be the rub these days...

The current CSA model is dependent on people being able, and wanting to do quite a bit of cooking! Over the 25 years that I have been involved in CSA's, this fact seems to be getting harder and harder to address. Many people, due to different aspects of their lives, find the everyday cooking demands very challenging. Whether it is work schedule or other internal as well as external pressures, finding or making the time to cook seems, for many, to be not so high on the priority list.

I'm sympathetic to this. I grew up in a family where all (ALL!) the cooking was on the shoulders of one person, my mother. She was working full time as well in a stressful job. I ate a great deal of frozen processed meals. Now, I also can relate: when I've been farming for 12 hours, and struggle to make food that everyone in the family loves, it is challenging being limited to what ingredients are on hand.

In an effort to address this reality, as well as try to keep the farm alive, we are renovating our processing kitchen to be certified. This will allow us to process extra produce from the farm to sell to the public or provide to the CSA.



The challenge will be, not diminishing the principle of connecting the people to the land.

Most processors simply buy in ingredients from distributors, like any grocery store, but try to make something unique with these ingredients. Even when a processor is committed to local produce, it's a challenge. If something is not available due to the nature of the growing season or other factors, but is a product that sells well, they are left with having to buy it in from where ever they can. Once again appealing to the customer demand to get what they want when they want it. This is again, a fossil fuel based economy.



The current CSA model doesn't seem to be meeting people's needs. Maybe this is because I haven't been able to do a good enough job of growing what people want. Maybe it is the novelty of all the cooking needed to be a member is wearing off. Maybe stresses of day-to-day life are making being a member of the current model not feasible. Whatever the reason, I am committed to exploring how to develop more land based economic systems. With a new certified kitchen we will be exploring how to meet the needs of the land and the community.

Cory