

Community Supported Agriculture Brings Fresh Produce to Consumers

CSA Directory Available Online

MILLHEIM (Centre Co.) — Pennsylvania's portion of the national Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) online directory was recently updated through a partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA), the Robyn Van En Center for Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Services, and the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture.

"The term CSA describes a mutually beneficial relationship between the farm and the people who consume the food the farm produces," said Sam Cantrell, owner of Maysie's Farm CSA in Chester County.

CSA farms are based on a shareholder system. Generally, CSA farmers like to secure shareholders by the beginning of March each year so that they know how many seeds they need to buy and can start planning their crops.

For the price of a share, generally \$300-\$650, consumers receive fresh produce each week during the local growing season (late spring- late fall). While share sizes can be adjusted, a weekly share generally provides enough produce for a family of four, or two adult vegetarians.

CSA shareholders accept risks and successes as part of their investment. Shareholders bear, with the farmer, the financial commitment involved with farming. If there is crop damage or drought, shareholders will receive less produce. In contrast, when there is extra produce due to an abundant harvest, they receive more than a regular portion of that particular type of produce.

While CSAs all work a little differently, they have a couple of general principles:

- Be a supply source for organic produce raised with minimal pesticides.

- Create a market for local farmers, thus sustaining the local community.

- Form a relationship between consumers and their food source.

- Provide a weekly delivery or pick-up point during the growing season for customers to get fresh produce.

- Produce is generally picked less than 24 hours before delivery.

- Provide opportunities for shareholders to visit the farm and participate in growing and harvesting the produce.

Consumers can locate the CSA closest to them by going to www.csacenter.org and selecting "directory."

The directory is maintained by the Robyn Van En Center for CSA Resources located in the Fulton Center for Sustain-

able Living at Wilson College in Chambersburg. The directory is a national listing of CSAs.

"We are excited to partner with other organizations to promote the growing number of CSA farms in Pennsylvania," said Stephanie Repp, coordinator, Robyn Van En Center.

"We often get questions from people looking for CSAs and we direct them to the Robyn Van En Center. The online directory is easy to search and points prospective consumers in the right direction," said Kate Gatski of the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture.

"CSAs are a smaller, but very important group of farmers. They provide a value-added service to consumers in Pennsylvania and cater to a niche market," said Dave Bingaman, chief of PDA's Di-

vision of Conservation and Agricultural Technology Division.

Christine Wise, partner in Friends Farm CSA, Blair County, spoke about her positive experiences with community supported agriculture.

"My husband and I have had our CSA for nine years," Wise said. "We have a CSA for the sense of community it brings and because it encourages people to become involved with the food they eat. Our CSA shareholders are simply amazing and provide us with moral and emotional support. During the drought last year, one member sent us a gift certificate to a restaurant to keep our spirits up. The members give us a lot of encouragement because they know that we're doing our best. In return, we give them the best produce in their CSA shares."

Pa.'s 2002 Trout Production Valued At \$4.56 Million

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Pennsylvania's 61 commercial trout growers sold 1.64 million pounds of trout, valued at \$4.56 million, during 2002, ranking fifth nationally behind Idaho, North Carolina, Washington, and Arkansas, according to the Pennsylvania Agricultural Statistics Service (PASS).

This was down from the 1.88 million pounds valued at \$4.89 million sold in 2001. In addition to those sold, an estimated \$5.9 million worth of trout were distributed for conservation and recreational purposes throughout the state, primarily by state hatcheries, cooperative nurseries, and private fishing clubs.

PASS, a joint operation of the National Agricultural Statistics Service and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, compiles data on Pennsylvania food and fiber production as part of a nationwide effort.

Sales of trout 12 inches or longer by the state's growers totaled 1.41 million pounds, or 86 percent of the total production sold during the period. This was down 230,000 pounds or 14 percent from the same period a year ago. Averaging \$2.64 per pound, compared to \$2.50 last year and \$1.07 nationally, the 12-inch and larger trout were valued at \$3.72 million. Fee and recreational sales accounted for 63 percent of the production, and restaurant and retail sales accounted for another 19 percent.

Sales of trout 6 to 12 inches long by Pennsylvania growers totaled 550,000 fish, or 221,000 pounds live weight during the period. This was down 11,000 pounds or 5 percent from the same period a year ago. At an average of \$3.50 a pound, compared to \$3.20 last year and \$2.50 nationally, sales of 6- to 12-inch

trout were valued at \$774,000, with 75 percent of the volume sold to fee and recreational establishments.

Sales of trout 1 to 6 inches long by Pennsylvania growers totaled 220,000 fish, or 7,000 pounds live weight during the period. This was up 1,000 pounds or 17 percent from the same period a year ago. At an average of \$298 per thousand fish, compared to \$237 last year and \$156 nationally, sales of 1- to 6-inch trout were valued at \$66,000.

Trout distributed for restoration or conservation purposes,

primarily by the state fish commission but also by private fishing clubs, included 5.61 million fish 6-12 inches long.

Total losses of all Pennsylvania trout intended for sale were 1.02 million fish during 2002, with 75 percent being lost to predators and 18 percent lost to drought.

The National Agricultural Statistics Service surveyed commercial trout growers in Pennsylvania and 19 other states: Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Idaho, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri,

New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Information was collected by mail, telephone, and personal interview.

For the 20 selected states, the total value of all sales, both fish and eggs, received by trout growers during 2002 totaled \$69.6 million, a decrease of 9 percent from 2001. Nationally, sales of fish totaled \$65.2 million for 2002, while egg sales totaled \$4.45 million. The state of Idaho accounted for 47 percent of the total value of fish sold.

Farm Pond Management CD ROM Available

ITHACA, N.Y. — Funded by a grant from the Cornell Small Farms Program, a new pond management resource is now available through your cooperative extension office.

The "Commercial Farm Pond Management CD ROM" is a compilation of fact sheets, publications, Internet links, and other resources to provide up-to-date information about ponds on farms in New York.

The CD is being made available to cooperative extension offices for free, and farmers can access the information either electronically or in print form, by making arrangements with your local CCE office.

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