

Mutualism and Cooperation

Ever heard of CSA?

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is an initiative backed by *Équiterre* that promotes the benefits of eliminating all pesticides and chemical fertilizers from the food we eat and encourages responsible agricultural practices by supporting over 140 local organic farms.

Each spring, individuals, couples and families can receive a share of a farmer's harvest by paying an amount based on the size of the share they want to receive. In return, over a predetermined number of weeks, the farmer delivers a basket containing a dozen or so varieties of organically grown fruit and vegetables to a drop-off point near peoples' homes.

Receiving payment up front at the beginning of the season makes it easier for farmers to plan production and ensures a certain degree of financial security.

As consumers, we have the power to make a real difference. Just changing our consumption habits can have many positive effects, such as:

- Promoting overall health and protecting the environment.
- Eating "local". Food that is produced and consumed in the same area travels less distance, helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Fruit and vegetables are picked just before they are sold, meaning they are fresher and taste better.
- Supporting the local economy.
- Eliminating the "middle man", allowing farmers to simultaneously lower prices and maximize their income.
- Increasing the fertility of the soil, with a healthy rotation of crops and the use of compost or "green" fertilizers.
- Significantly reducing packaging.
- Fostering a feeling of solidarity between producers and consumers.

Registration for organic food baskets begins in February each year. You can register on line via *Équiterre's* Web site at: <http://www.equiterre.qc.ca/en/agriculture/paniersBios/>.

I tried organic food baskets last year and they were a hit with the whole family! I can strongly recommend the experience. Each Tuesday night for 14 weeks, from July to October, we picked up our basket between 5 and 6 p.m. from a convenient drop-off point. Each week, the farmer was there with our basket and a warm smile. We were lucky enough to enjoy an abundance of delicious fresh fruit and vegetables all summer and into the fall. Needless to say, we'll be doing the same thing this year too.

According to an old Native American proverb, *we have not inherited the Earth from our ancestors, but borrowed it from our grandchildren.*

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February 2006