



KENTUCKY FARM  
SHARE COALITION  
**Workplace CSA  
Toolkit**

[www.kyfarmshare.org](http://www.kyfarmshare.org)



# Acknowledgements

The Kentucky Farm Share Coalition project is indebted to the work of organizations that came before us and to a small group of visionaries here in Kentucky that trialed an innovative farm to household model by connecting CSA farmers with workplaces.

First, we give thanks to Fairshare CSA Coalition in Madison, WI. Their partnership with health insurers offering incentivized CSAs provided much of the inspiration for the Kentucky Farm Share Coalition workplace CSA voucher program. They have shared 30+ years of best practices and published resources to assist our project and countless others.

Second, we are grateful for the leadership and vision from Dr. Tim Woods and Dr. Jairus Rossi at the University of Kentucky Agricultural Economics Department. In addition we appreciate the employer commitment from Jody Ensmann and Vanessa Oliver at University of Kentucky Health and Wellness who first piloted the workplace CSA voucher program in 2016.

This project was able to grow with funding through the USDA Local Food Promotion Program and Farmers Market Promotion Program. The project has served over 20 different employers and brought certified organic vegetables to more than 2,500 households over 5 years and will continue to expand certified organic, fresh food access for Kentuckians.

Lastly, the program only exists with the thoughtful and committed partnerships from Advisory Committee Members. These research, employer, local food advocates and farm partners have worked together growing the program since 2016. We are grateful to the endorsed farm partners that provide an unsurpassed product and experience for CSA members.

This toolkit is intended to be a resource to increase awareness of workplace CSA opportunities. If you would like to re-share content we ask that written and verbal attribution be given to Kentucky Farm Share Coalition.



Connection is health. And what our society does its best to disguise from us is how ordinary, how commonly attainable, health is. We lose our health - and create profitable diseases and dependences - by failing to see the direct connections between living and eating, eating and working, working and loving.

**-Wendell Berry**



*University of Kentucky CSA leaders*



*KY Farm Share Coalition Staff, farmers, and Employer Partner at a CSA lunch and learn*



*KY Farm Share Coalition CSA farmers*

# Thank you for your interest in bringing fresh, healthy food to the workplace!

The Kentucky Farm Share Coalition has prepared this workplace CSA (community supported agriculture) toolkit to help employers learn more about CSA and how to start a CSA voucher program.

In this guide, we explain how to offer CSA vouchers as an employee health benefit, perks of partnering with a Kentucky Farm Share Coalition-endorsed farm, and how the coalition can make your CSA voucher program a success.

CSA is more than just a food subscription. CSA programs makes it easier for participants to access local and organic foods and maintain a healthy diet. When members receive a weekly delivery of fresh vegetables from a local, certified organic farm for 21-22 weeks they can make long-lasting changes to their eating habits. The weekly farm subscription from May to October encourages members to try new foods, cook more fresh vegetables, and eat less processed foods.

When CSA is promoted in the workplace it can also work towards decreasing employer's diet-related medical claims, strengthening the culture of wellness at work, and promoting a strong regional food system. Consider offering a CSA program at your worksite next growing season to promote healthy employees and family farms.

## Table of Contents

What is workplace CSA?	4
CSA's impact on health and wellness	5
What's in a CSA share?	6
Meet the partner farms	7
Bringing CSA to the workplace	8
How to start a CSA voucher program	9
10 reasons why employers offer CSA vouchers	10
Best practices for workplace CSA	11
Start a CSA program at your worksite	12

## About KY Farm Share Coalition:

We are a farmer-led wellness program bringing CSA to the workplace and communities.

Our mission is to help improve employees' access to fresh food, increase positive health outcomes for Kentuckians, and help local, organic CSA family farms thrive.

This program is administered by the Organic Association of Kentucky.





CSA pickup at Lexington-Fayette County Health Department (LFCHD)

# What is workplace CSA?

**Community supported agriculture (CSA)** is a subscription-based model of buying food directly from a local farm. Members sign up in advance and then receive a weekly share of the farm's harvest throughout the growing season.

This model of **food purchasing is about community and sharing the risk and reward of producing food**. Farmers benefit by having a secure market for their product. Members benefit by convenient access to fresh food and a relationship with the farmers that grow it.

**Workplace CSA is how employers can promote local food subscriptions at a worksite**. They can do this by partnering with a local CSA farm and providing a convenient pickup on-site for employees or promoting nearby community pickups.

**Kentucky Farm Share Coalition works with employers to offer an additional financial incentive to promote workplace CSA called a CSA voucher**. This CSA voucher is offered as a wellness benefit and allows each participant to apply additional funds (typically \$200 per employee) towards a CSA share. When employers offer a CSA voucher it is a strong motivator for employees to sign up. It reduces the financial barrier to participate in the program. CSA vouchers also represent a strong commitment to employee health and well-being.

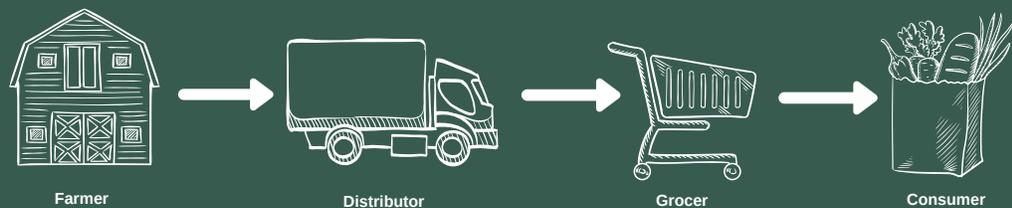
## What makes CSA unique?

CSA is more than a convenient way to access fresh food. When you buy a CSA share your food travels fewer miles and is produced for nutritional quality and freshness. CSA members know their farmer by their first name. And 100% of CSA food dollars stay in the local food system.



"Community Supported Agriculture programs are win-win programs. Farmers are able to provide their food directly to consumers in their communities, rather than having to ship them potentially long distances. Consumers are able to enjoy farm-fresh food that has not been sitting on a truck or in a store for days and days. Not only that, but I found myself trying new foods and recipes and I now look forward to new foods much more than I did before participating in the program."

**-Lexington-Fayette County Health Dept. CSA Member**



Food item purchased in the grocery store

1500 miles



Food item purchased from a local farm < 150 miles

*Food in the United States travels on average 1500 miles to reach consumers, while local food in Kentucky travels 150 miles or less.*

# CSA's Impact on Health and Wellness

Healthy food matters. Only 6.3% of Kentucky adults meet the daily vegetable intake recommendation and a majority struggle with diet-related illnesses.<sup>1</sup> Starting a CSA program that is focused on increasing access to fresh vegetables is a low-cost way to invest in employee health.

CSA is a commitment to consuming more fresh food. When members join a CSA they plan meals around the locally grown vegetables they receive in their weekly shares. Research shows CSA members cook more at home, eat less processed food, increase their fruit and vegetable consumption, and feel overall healthier.<sup>2</sup>

These positive lifestyle behaviors have a strong impact on long-term health outcomes. Research on workplace CSA programs shows that participants go to the doctor less, spend less on prescriptions, and have fewer non-preventative doctor visits each year.<sup>2</sup>

When the CSA voucher program was piloted at the University of Kentucky in 2016 agricultural economists found for every \$1 invested in CSA vouchers \$2.47 was saved on diet-related medical expenses for employees who started the program in a poorer place of health. On average, this was between \$1000-\$1500 saved for employees in poorer health the 12 months following the program.<sup>3</sup>



Workplace CSA members at Kentucky Medical Service Foundation

"This CSA was somewhat of a forced-commitment-lifestyle-change that really worked. I grow kale and still would never have eaten this much of it without this CSA. It made me try new tricks for the lesser loved veggies, and to be creative each week with my cuisine!"

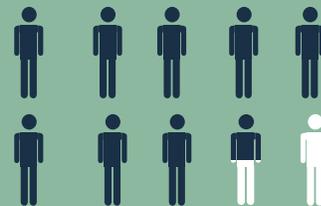
-Lexington-Fayette County Health Dept. CSA Member

## CSA members Eat More Vegetables

On average, **6.3%** Kentuckians consume the daily recommended amount of vegetables.



On average, **84%** Kentucky Farm Share Coalition CSA members consume the daily recommended amount of vegetables.



Adults should consume 2.0-3.0 cups of vegetables per day, according to national dietary recommendations.

## References

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018). State Indicator Report on Fruits and Vegetables 2018. <https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/downloads/fruits-vegetables/2018/2018-fruit-vegetable-report-508.pdf>
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# What's in a CSA Share?

When an employer partners with a Kentucky Farm Share Coalition-endorsed farm they will be able to offer each employee a weekly produce CSA share that is 100% certified organic and grown on-farm of their choice.

Weekly CSA shares will include a mixture of vegetables and some fruit that are harvested seasonally for quality and flavor. Each member will have the ability to customize their CSA share via an online account and choose from a list of items that are seasonally available each week.

Partner farms offer a lot of flexibility to make it easy to participate in their CSA program. Members have the ability to add on extras each week like additional produce, meat, or eggs when available. Participants can also pause their CSA share while on vacation or change their CSA pick-up day throughout the season if needed.

Each CSA program offers multiple share sizes (see descriptions below) for different households and varying payment plans that allow members to pay in full or split up payments if needed. Typically, larger CSA share sizes will have a greater number and quantity of each item.

The cost of a CSA share varies based on the number of items and weeks in the CSA season (21-22 weeks). On average, a small CSA share is \$450-500 for the entire season (\$21-23 per week), a regular share is \$616-700 for the entire season (\$29-32 per week), and a XL share is \$800-900 for the entire season (\$35-40 per week).

Members can expect to receive weekly emails from their partner CSA farm with reminders to customize their share, updates of what is happening on the farm, and recipes on how to use the produce in their box. By joining a CSA employees stay more connected with how their food is produced and get to learn more about the farmers who grow it.

## Seasonality of CSA

When members join a CSA they experience the rhythm of locally-grown food and the wide variety of products that can be produced in Kentucky.

CSA members can expect a flush of greens in the spring, classics like tomatoes and peppers in the summer, and lots of root vegetables and storage crops in the fall.

These items inspire members' weekly meals and motivate participants to try new foods and recipes with the items being harvested each week.

## A CSA Share Size for Every Household

### Small Share



5 - 8 items

Ideal for first-time members, single adults or households of 1-2 people.

### Regular Share



7 - 10 items

Ideal for households of 2-4 people who cook most nights per week.

### XL Share



11 - 14 items

Ideal for larger families or plant-based households who cook most nights.

# Meet the Partner Farms



## Barr Farms

[barrfarmsky.com](http://barrfarmsky.com)

Serving: Louisville, Elizabethtown, Rhodelia, Fort Knox, and Brandenburg



## Elmwood Stock Farm

[elmwoodstockfarm.com](http://elmwoodstockfarm.com)

Serving: Lexington, Georgetown, Versailles, Frankfort, Louisville, or Cincinnati



## Lazy Eight Stock Farm

[lazyeightstockfarm.com](http://lazyeightstockfarm.com)

Serving: Lexington, Berea, Richmond, and Danville,



## Rootbound Farm

[rootboundfarm.com](http://rootboundfarm.com)

Serving: Louisville, Crestwood, Lexington, and Frankfort



## Sustainable Harvest Farm

[sustainableharvestfarm.com](http://sustainableharvestfarm.com)

Serving: Lexington, Knoxville, Richmond, Berea, Somerset, and Corbin



## UK Organic Farming Unit

[ukcsa.wordpress.com](http://ukcsa.wordpress.com)

Serving: Lexington UK staff, faculty, students, and program supporters



Each coalition-endorsed farm is USDA certified organic, follows good agricultural practices (GAP), and has been operating a CSA program for over 3+ years.

When employers partner with a coalition farm they are providing their employees access to food that has been produced for nutritional quality, sustainability, and safety. Learn more about each farm on our website [here](#).



## Why Certified Organic?

Certified organic foods are always non-GMO and are produced without synthetic pesticides and herbicides.

Organic farmers focus on growing methods that improve soil health and produce food that is nutrient-dense.

Organic farming promotes biodiversity, native pollinators, and healthy soils that can sequester more carbon.



University of Kentucky weekly on-campus CSA Pick-Up

## Bringing CSA to the Workplace

When employers promote CSA they are making it easier for employees to access local, fresh foods in their community.

When a worksite creates a CSA pickup there is a natural focus on supporting local farms, seasonal foods, and preparing healthy meals among employees that join the CSA program.

When organizations offer CSA vouchers as an additional financial incentive for employees to join a CSA it becomes an innovative employee health benefit. From CSA research we know CSA vouchers promote eating more locally-grown foods and cultivating a healthier lifestyle.

Overall, when employers offer a CSA voucher they reduce the financial barrier for participants to join a CSA, attract more employees to CSA, and communicate a strong commitment to employee health and well being as well as the local food system.

When employers offer vouchers for CSA shares those funds go directly to the partner farm. In 2021, the Kentucky Farm Share Coalition worked with Kentucky employer partners to bring local, certified organic vegetable shares to over 1000 households and generate more than \$550,000 to the local farm economy.

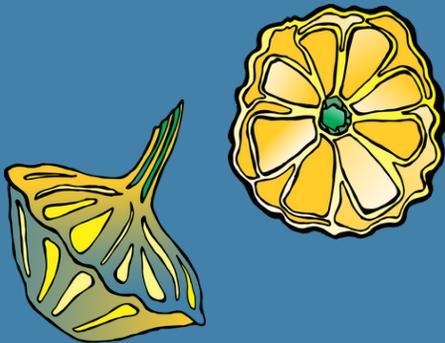


"UK HR strives through benefits and health & wellness programming to provide innovative impactful ways to support employee well-being in the workplace and that concurrently support our local community farms. The CSA Voucher Program, currently provided by KY Farm Share Coalition, helps us do just that."

-Richard Amos,  
Chief Benefits Officer  
University of Kentucky

### KY Farm Share Coalition offers all the tools to make CSA vouchers a success:

- Each worksite receives templates for all program communication.
- Coalition coordinates CSA voucher sign-ups with partner farm.
- Staff share cooking resources and events with CSA site coordinators.
- Program offers an end of season survey to measure employee satisfaction and impact of workplace CSA.



CSA member cooking class at The Food Connection



Chef Demo at City of Lexington workplace CSA pick-up.

# How to start a CSA voucher program

## 1. Determine budget for CSA vouchers.

Each voucher is typically \$220 per employee. \$200 goes directly to the farm to pay for a portion of the CSA share and \$20 goes to KY Farm Share Coalition/Organic Association of Kentucky for assistance implementing and administering the program.

When considering how many vouchers to offer, keep in mind roughly 5-10% of an employee population will initially want to take part in a CSA program. Employers often make an estimate based on this percentage for a pilot program. For example, if a workplace has 200 employees they might offer 20 vouchers the first year.

## 2. Choose a partner CSA farm.

Each employer selects which partner farm they would like to work with for the season. If a worksite is offering more than 20-30 vouchers they often partner with multiple farms.

## 3. Finalize dates for a CSA program rollout.

The coalition will help each employer decide the best time frame to host a CSA kick-off event, sign-up window for employees to claim a CSA voucher, and deadline to redeem a voucher with partner farm.

## 4. Promote CSA program to employees.

Once dates are confirmed the coalition will provide employers with templates for all the program communication and design a workplace-specific landing page to share with employees.

## 5. Host CSA kick-off event and launch sign-ups.

The coalition and partner farm(s) organize a kick-off event for employees to learn more about CSA, how to claim a CSA voucher, and share more about the farm's CSA offerings. Voucher sign-ups typically launch after the event for 1-2 weeks. Afterward, employees have an additional 1-2 weeks to redeem their voucher and sign up for a share with the workplace partner farm.

## 6. Designate a workplace CSA site coordinator.

Each workplace chooses a CSA site coordinator to manage the weekly CSA pick-up. This coordinator ensures the farm has access to delivery location and participants pick up their weekly shares. This is most success when the coordinator is also a CSA member.

## 7. Evaluate workplace CSA program.

At the end of the CSA season, the coalition sends a program survey to gather employee feedback and schedules a meeting to evaluate program with employer partner.

### Workplace CSA Program Timeline



# 10 Reasons Why Employers Offer CSA Vouchers

1

CSA increases employees access to local food that is harvested for freshness and quality.



2



CSA program strengthens culture of wellness in the workplace by promoting discussion of healthy cooking and preparation tips.

3

CSA members report positive changes in health and diet and these changes may lead to lower health expenditures over time.



4

Health benefits of CSA can be greater for employees that start the program in a poorer place of health.



5

Investing in CSA promotes healthy employees that are present and productive.



6

CSA vouchers support the local farm economy and demonstrate a commitment to healthy food systems and communities.

CSA is a community builder. Members develop relationships with farmers and learn more about how their food is grown and where to find other locally-grown foods.

7

CSA is a health benefit that can positively impact the whole household and benefits can get stronger over time.



8



9

CSA shares support certified organic farming methods that promote clean water and healthy soil.



10

CSA is a low-cost way to promote a healthy diet. Members report increased servings of fruits and vegetables and decrease in processed foods.





## Best Practices for Workplace CSA

### Offer financial incentives for employees to join CSA.

To promote the program to a wider audience offer CSA vouchers that can be applied as a coupon code during signup. Consider offering employees a payroll deduction option to spread out payments for CSA share. Introduce new employees to CSA by purchasing an extra CSA share and raffling it off each week of the season.

### Get support from leadership.

CSA thrives in the workplace with support from management, human resources, and when program is aligned with workplace wellness and corporate social responsibility goals.

### Identify an ideal CSA pick-up location.

A good CSA pick-up will be accessible to the farm making deliveries, located indoors in an air-conditioned space, and convenient for employees to collect their share as they leave work.

### Nominate a site coordinator who is also a CSA participant.

The CSA site coordinator will be the one to monitor the pick-up each week and make sure employees pick up their shares. When they are also a CSA member it is easier for them to communicate important farm updates and know what is happening throughout the season.

### Host a CSA lunch and learn prior to the start of the season.

CSA lunch and learns or kick-off events are a great way for employees to get to know the partner farm, learn more CSA and what to expect, and ask questions to know if it's a good fit.

### Make a plan for leftover CSA Shares.

It is important to communicate what will happen if employees do not pick up their share during the designated pickup window. Generally, site coordinators will leave leftover shares for up to 24 hours in an on-site fridge, give remaining shares to other employees, or donate shares to a local food pantry.

### Promote CSA events and cooking resources.

The coalition will host cooking demos throughout the season that are open to all workplace CSA members. Employers can promote these opportunities and share other coalition CSA resources. They can also create an internal CSA group that allows participants to ask questions and swap recipes with fellow workplace CSA members.

### Gather feedback from members.

Many site coordinators will check in frequently throughout the season to gauge employee satisfaction and at the end of the season send out a program survey to gauge overall member experience.

“

“The City is thrilled to offer this unique benefit to our employees as it not only affords them convenient access to fresh, seasonal produce, but it also directly supports our local farm economy.”

-Ashton Potter Wright,  
Bluegrass Farm to  
Table Coordinator at  
City of Lexington



## Start a CSA Program at your Worksite

There has never been a better time to team up with the Kentucky Farm Share Coalition. We offer a workplace CSA program that has been refined over 5 years with more than 20 employers. Coalition staff provide full administrative support and a wealth of tools to make workplace CSA a success.

When a worksite partners with Kentucky Farm Share Coalition they can expect to gain access to a network of experienced CSA farms that will deliver a quality member experience to their employees.

They will also receive an custom landing page and tailored communication packet that will allow the site coordinator to easily share all the program dates and details.

Each workplace will receive CSA resources throughout the season to share with members that include handouts, links, and opportunities to take part in live cooking classes so members can make the most of their weekly vegetable share.

## Support Healthy Employees and Farming

CSA programs are not merely a single wellness event but a seasonal eating experience that lasts from May through October. Over the span of this five months, participants have the opportunity to make long-lasting improvements to their health that can continue even after the growing season ends.

Participating in CSA motivates members to try new foods, cook more vegetables, and the ability to support a local, Kentucky farm. When employees gain familiarity with vegetable-based food preparation and feel successful they are more likely to continue these healthy habits and join a CSA program again.

Workplace CSA is a win for employee health and a thriving local food system. When employers offer a CSA voucher program with the coalition they are investing in local, organic farms and in turn supporting farming methods that create healthy soil, conserve water, and promote biodiversity across the bluegrass.

## Become a Workplace CSA Partner

If you are interested in workplace CSA get in touch with us at [kfarmshare@oak-ky.org](mailto:kfarmshare@oak-ky.org) or learn more at [www.kfarmshare.org](http://www.kfarmshare.org).



Early summer CSA share from Sustainable Harvest Farm.



"CSA through Kentucky workplaces is a great way to get farm fresh vegetables into your weekly meal plan. Delivery to your workplace leaves you with no excuses."

- American  
Printing House  
CSA Member

