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Plan offers local farm produce

Farmers would sell 'shares' to consumers

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Local residents might soon be able to buy fresh produce from local farms throughout the growing season.

The TEAM Santa Rosa Economic Development Council is gauging the public's interest in establishing a Consumer-Supported Agriculture program in Northwest Florida with possible production starting in the spring.

"If there is demand in the region, a farmer or small group of farmers would offer a certain number of 'shares' to the public," said Cindy Anderson, executive director of TEAM Santa Rosa. "These shares are much like a membership or subscription to the CSA program. Each week, shareholders would receive a box, or 'share,' of fresh seasonal produce."

Gulf Breeze Mayor Beverly Zimmern said she would welcome a local food program. Right now, she orders fresh vegetables from an Internet-based company.

"It would be great to have it even more locally, here. I'd love to be able to access fresh fruits and vegetables," said Zimmern, who recently joined the TEAM Santa Rosa board. "I think our community is certainly health-smart and savvy. Eating locally and without as much time and distance, the freshness is just so much better."

The produce would consist mostly of vegetables and fruits but might also include eggs, meat, honey, preserves and fresh-cut and potted flowers, Anderson said.

The program would not be limited to Santa Rosa County.

"For this to be successful, we would need producers and consumers from the entire region," Anderson said.

Farmers may be attracted to the program because it gives them financial support early in the season. TEAM also needs more input from consumers who might be interested in participating.

No price has been set for participants.

The Web site www.localharvest.org lists just one Community-Supported Agriculture program in Northwest Florida, Jaseegan Farms in Cantonment. For that, consumers pay \$22 per week per share, with an eight-week minimum subscription. Jaseegan Farms has 30 shares available.

Additional Facts

More information

TEAM Santa Rosa is looking for farmers and produce consumers who would be interested in participating in a Community-Supported Agriculture program.

Anyone interested should contact TEAM Santa Rosa Executive Director Cindy Anderson at canderson@teamsantarosa.com.
