

TEAM Santa Rosa interested in growing community supported agriculture program

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Panhandle Fresh is seeking input from the community regarding the possibility of creating a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program for Santa Rosa County. This program would provide a way for consumers to buy local, seasonal foods directly from a farm. The initiative would offer shares to the public mostly consisting of vegetables and fruits, but could also include eggs, meats, honey, fresh-cut and potted flowers and preserves.

CSA is becoming popular for consumers to buy local and season food directly from a farmer. If there is demand in Santa Rosa County, a farmer or small group of farmers would offer a certain number of "shares" to the public. 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.

CSA's are gaining momentum across the nation, and in some areas, demand is outweighing availability. Each year in the U.S., more than 300 new CSA's are formed.

Advantages for farmers:

- Spend time marketing produce early in the year, before their stint in the field begins
- Payment received early in the season, helping farm cash flow
- Opportunities to know their customers and receive input on products in demand

Advantages for consumers:

- The freshest food possible with all the flavor and benefits of ripe produce
- Exposure to new produce and ways of cooking
- Recipes for experimenting with produce never used before
- Visiting the farm from which household foods come and getting to know the family farmer
- Kids can pick/harvest their own produce
- Pick-up or delivery is available

Please contact Cindy Anderson at TEAM Santa Rosa if you are interested in the creation of a Community Supported Agriculture program for Santa Rosa County. She can be reached by phone 850.623.0174 or via email at canderson@teamsantarosa.com.