

Seguin: CO-CSA Intervention –Guide for Interviews with Farmers with cost-offset CSAs

After informed consent is signed...

Hi! My name is XXX and we are working on a USDA funded project to learn more about how Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs) can improve people's diets and strengthen the local economy. The project is called "Innovative Community Supported Agriculture Cost-Offset Intervention to Prevent Childhood Obesity and Strengthen Local Agricultural Economies". As a part of that project, we are interviewing farmers with CSAs who currently have a cost-offset to help lower-income consumers purchase CSA shares. Through this interview, we want to learn more about your CSA, how it operates, and how you subsidize cost-offset CSA shares. We will also ask you questions about your CSA marketing and business needs. **If at any time, you do not want to share any information we are asking about, that is fine with us.**

This is a multi-state project, involving Washington, Vermont, New York, and North Carolina. We want to thank you so much for being willing to take part in this study! This interview guide looks very long, but it should take approximately 45-60 minutes, and afterward, we have a \$50 incentive to thank you for your time. All the information you share with me is really important, so I would like to record this interview, so that I don't miss anything you say. Is that okay with you? As I said before [in informed consent form], everything you share with me is private and confidential. Your specific answers may be discussed among the research team, but will not be shared with other farmers or with our funders (USDA). Any reports will be written in general terms so that no one can identify who you are.

There are some questions that are short answer, and others may require a longer answer.

(Interviewer note:

The short answer questions are **asterisked*.

For non-asterisked questions, encourage the participant to go into detail.)

Section I. First, I'd like to hear more about your farm.

- **How long have you lived in XXX County?*
 - a. **PROBE: How long have you farmed here? How long has your farm been in business?*
 - b. **PROBE: Is this a family farm? Are you the sole owner/operator?*
- What got you interested in farming?
 - a. PROBE: What got you interested in the CSA model of marketing your crops?
 - b. **PROBE: How long have you been marketing through a CSA? How long have you been running your CSA?*
- **How many acres do you farm?*
- **How many full-time staff does your farm employ?*

- *How many part-time staff does your staff employ?
- *Do you ever hire occasional staff? If yes, can you give an example of when you might employ occasional staff?

Section II. These next questions are overview questions about your CSA.

- Please describe your CSA model.
 - a. PROBE: What are some reasons you selected that particular CSA model?
 - b. *PROBE: What are the CSA payment modes?
- *During the 2014 CSA season, what crops did you grow?
 - a. *PROBE: In 2014, what was the approximate acreage per crop?
 - b. *PROBE: In 2015, what crops do you plan to grow?
 - c. *PROBE: For 2015, what is the approximate acreage you are planning for each crop?

2014 crops	2014 acreage/crop	2015 crops	2015 acreage/crop

- *Which crops do you grow in the largest quantity?
 - a. PROBE: What are some reasons you grow those crops in large quantity?
- *Which CSA items are the most popular with your customers?
 - a. PROBE: What might be some reasons for that popularity?
- Can you describe your CSA customers?
 - a. PROBE: Are most of your customers residents of this area? Do you have any schools or restaurants that purchase your CSA shares? What about residents of neighboring areas?

- *When does your CSA season begin and end? (PROBE: Be sure to get the exact start and end dates)
- *Please describe your normal CSA season. We are trying to learn about the timeline for your CSA items and when each is available. We are interested in knowing about each crop you grow and the dates available in your CSA shares.

Crop	Dates available in the CSA
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- *How does the CSA food get to your customers (choose as many as apply; Interviewer: Probe on all aspects of delivery/pick-up and selection of food as follows:)? (Interviewer note: Be sure to probe on each method they utilize.)
 - PROBE: Delivery of box?
 - PROBE: Pick-up of box? (If so, what is the location?)
 - PROBE: Self-selection at farm?
 - PROBE: Self-selection at another location?
 - PROBE: Pick-your-own?
 - PROBE: Other?
- What are some of the pros and cons of each of the delivery methods your CSA uses?
 - What do you think would be the ideal method for you operation and why?
 - If you are not currently operating under that ideal, what are some reasons you are not?

Section III. The next question is about ways others have created a cost-offset CSA program, to allow lower-income customers to pay a lower cost for your CSA shares. Which of the following strategies do you use to cover the cost-offset for our CSA? (choose as many as apply)

Cost-offset strategy	Do you use? (yes or no)	Your thoughts on the strategy
Accepting SNAP/EBT (EBT refers to the electronic card payments that participants in the SNAP program – what we used to call the Food Stamp program – can use to purchase food.)		
Work-shares as a cost-offset? A work-share is an agreement where the customer would work a certain number of		

hours in return for a discounted CSA share.		
Installment plans as a cost-offset? An installment plan is a way for the CSA share to be paid for in smaller amounts over a longer time, versus in one up-front cost.		
Half-shares plans as a cost-offset? A half-share is a smaller share offered at a lower cost.		
Having your full-pay members pay extra as a cost-offset?		
Charitable donations as a cost-offset?		
Grants as a cost-offset?		
Fund-raising as a cost-offset?		
Revolving loans as a cost-offset? (Note: A revolving loan fund (RLF) is a gap financing measure primarily used for development and expansion of small businesses. It is a self-replenishing pool of money, utilizing interest and principal payments on old loans to issue new ones.)		
Other methods?		

- Are you interested in learning more or trying any of the above mentioned cost-offset CSA strategies that you aren't currently using?
 - Which ones?
 - *What is your preferred method to get more information? (e.g., webinar, talk to extension agent/expert, talk to other farmers, or other way to find out more (please specify!))

Section IV. These next questions are short-answer questions about your farm and CSA. If you do not want to share the information, that is fine with us.

- *In 2014, approximately what proportion of total farm income came from your CSA? (PROBE for a percentage.)
- *How many CSA shareholders did you have in 2014? How does the number of current/most recent shareholder compare to the past few seasons?
- How many of your shareholders are repeat members from year to year?
- Of those, how many (or what percentage) were CO-CSA shareholders?

- *How many CSA shareholders do you anticipate having in 2015? Of those, how many do you think will be CO-CSA shareholders?
- *Next, I'll list several different types of ways you can get the word out about your CSA. Tell me if you use that method, your thoughts about that marketing method, and if you are interested in learning more about that marketing method.

Method	Thoughts (pros/cons)?	Want to learn more?
Marketing using email listserves? Yes/No		Yes/No
Marketing using newspaper ads? Yes/No		Yes/No
Marketing through farm-to-table restaurants? Yes/No		Yes/No
Marketing at local farmers' markets? Yes/No		Yes/No
Marketing at large employers in the area? Yes/No		Yes/No
Marketing using social media (Facebook, Twitter)? Yes/No		Yes/No
Marketing through word-of-mouth? Yes/No		Yes/No
Marketing through the health department? Yes/No		Yes/No
Marketing through cooperative extension? Yes/No		Yes/No

- *For those marketing methods you'd like to know more about, what is your preferred method for getting information?
 - PROBE: Webinar?
 - PROBE: Talk to extension agent/expert?
 - PROBE: Talk to other farmers?
 - PROBE: Are there other ways you could get more information?
- *Are there any other ways you market your crops?
 - farmers' markets
 - farm-to-institution
 - retail
 - food hub
 - conventional distributor
 - Other? (specify)

Section V. Now I'd like to ask about your thoughts on your experience to date with CSAs in general, and CO-CSAs in particular.

- Overall, what are some of the challenges you've experienced in marketing and distributing the crops you grow?
 - Has your CSA program helped make marketing and distribution easier? How?
 - Has the CO-CSA helped you address these challenges, or created any new ones? In what ways?
- What are some of the lessons you have learned about running a CO-CSA?
- *Thinking back, if you could have had training/technical assistance to help you with business needs related to starting a CO-CSA, what would they have been?
 - information on inputs such as fertilizer, pesticides, etc
 - agribusiness training, or information on how to run a farm business: financial, bookkeeping, marketing, labor management
 - information on how to market the CSA including identifying & targeting new customers
 - information on internet sources for marketing
 - finding funding/financing for cost offset programs
 - learning how other farmers have run their CO-CSA
 - new delivery methods
 - how to increase participation
 - marketing
 - Other?

Section VI. This next section is about your business needs.

- *First, I'd like to ask what are your major business needs? (Interviewer note: Check all that apply.)
 - information on inputs such as fertilizer, pesticides, etc
 - agribusiness training, or information on how to run a farm business: financial, bookkeeping, marketing, labor management
 - information on how to market the CSA including identifying & targeting new customers
 - information on internet sources for marketing
 - finding funding/financing for cost offset programs
 - learning how other farmers have run their CO-CSA
 - new delivery methods
 - how to increase participation
 - marketing
 - Other?
- *What would be your preferred way of getting help with these issues?
 - PROBE: Webinar?
 - PROBE: Talk to extension agent/expert?
 - PROBE: Talk to other farmers?
 - PROBE: Are there other ways you could get more information?

In closing, is there anything else you feel we did not cover?

THANK YOU. [provide incentive] We will be in touch with you as this project moves forward! What is the best way to contact you in the future?

Seguin: CO-CSA Intervention –Guide for Interviews with Farmers with *NO* cost-offset CSA

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Through this interview, we want to learn more about your CSA, how it operates, and your CSA marketing and business needs. We will eventually be implementing a cost-offset CSA intervention so we would like to collect more information on how you would consider subsidizing cost-offset CSA shares. We also want to learn more about your CSA products and availability, so that we can tailor nutrition education for this project. **If at any time, you do not want to share any information we are asking about, that is fine with us.**

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- b. *PROBE: How long have you been marketing through a CSA? ? How long have you been running your CSA?
- *How many acres do you farm?
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- Please describe your CSA model.
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- *During the 2014 CSA season, what crops did you grow? (Interviewer note: Complete table below)
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 - c. PROBE: Self-selection at farm?
 - d. PROBE: Self-selection at another location?
 - e. PROBE: Pick-your-own?
 - f. PROBE: Other?
- What are some of the pros and cons of each of the delivery methods your CSA uses?
 - a. What do you think would be the ideal method for you operation and why?
 - i. If you are not currently operating under that ideal, what are some reasons you are not?

Section III. The next questions are about ways you could create a cost-offset program for your CSA, to allow lower-income customers to pay a lower cost for your CSA shares. There are several types of models. Please tell me if you would consider each, and your thoughts on each.

Cost-offset strategy	Would you consider using? (yes or no)	Your thoughts on the strategy

Accepting SNAP/EBT (EBT refers to the electronic card payments that participants in the SNAP program – what we used to call the Food Stamp program – can use to purchase food.)		
Work-shares as a cost-offset? A work-share is an agreement where the customer would work a certain number of hours in return for a discounted CSA share.		
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Other methods?		

- Are you interested in learning more or trying any of the above mentioned cost-offset CSA strategies?
 - If so, which ones?
 - *What is your preferred method to get more information about cost-offset CSA models?
 - PROBE: Webinar?
 - PROBE: Talk to extension agent/expert?
 - PROBE: Talk to other farmers?

- PROBE: Are there other ways you could get more information?
- Overall, what do you see as some of the potential pros of running a cost offset CSA program?
- What do you see as some of the potential cons of running a cost-offset CSA program?

Section IV. These next questions are short-answer questions to help us better understand your farm operation and your CSA program. If you do not want to share the information, that is fine with us.

- *In 2014, approximately what proportion of total farm income came from your CSA? (PROBE for a percentage.)
- *How many CSA shareholders did you have in 2014? How does the number of current/most recent shareholder compare to the past few seasons?
- How many of your shareholders are repeat members from year to year?
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Method	Thoughts (pros/cons)?	Want to learn more?
Marketing using email listservs? Yes/No		Yes/No
Marketing using newspaper ads? Yes/No		Yes/No
Marketing through farm-to-table restaurants? Yes/No		Yes/No
Marketing at local farmers' markets? Yes/No		Yes/No
Marketing at large employers in the area? Yes/No		Yes/No
Marketing using social media (Facebook, Twitter)? Yes/No		Yes/No
Marketing through word-of- mouth? Yes/No		Yes/No
Marketing through the health department? Yes/No		Yes/No
Marketing through cooperative extension? Yes/No		Yes/No

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 - retail
 - food hub
 - conventional distributor
 - Other? (specify)

Section V. Now I'd like to ask about your thoughts on your experience to date with CSAs

- Overall, what are some of the challenges you've experienced in marketing and distributing the crops you grow (NOTE: This is not just those you market in the CSA, but all the crops grown)?

Has your CSA program helped make marketing and distribution easier? If so, what are the ways it has made marketing and distribution easier?
- What are some of the lessons you've learned about running a CSA?
- *Would you be interested in working with us to build a cost-offset CSA program?

Section VI. This next section is about your business needs.

- *First, I'd like to ask what are your major business needs? (Interviewer note: Check all that apply.)
 - information on inputs such as fertilizer, pesticides, etc
 - agribusiness training, or information on how to run a farm business: financial, bookkeeping, marketing, labor management
 - information on how to market the CSA including identifying & targeting new customers
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