Summary

In this lesson, farmers learn about what makes the CSA model different from other marketing options, what American customers like about a CSA, and how to use knowledge of different veggie-types to pack diverse CSA shares.

The need: The concept of CSA is new to many New American farmers, and this lesson will help them see how this marketing option is different from market and wholesale, and what it will require of them in terms of skills and resources. Additionally, most new Americans come to the US with their own traditional eating habits and are unfamiliar with the eating habits of American customers. One of the skills they can learn is how to pack diverse CSA boxes, using knowledge of different vegetables types, and what American customers like in a CSA.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: This teaching resource was developed by Meredith Walrafen from New Roots for Refugees of Catholic Charities of NE KS, in partnership with the Institute for Social and Economic Development (ISED Solutions). Refugee farmer training programs across the country provided feedback on this lesson, which is now integrated throughout the guide. From 2015 to 2017, ISED partnered with twelve refugee farmer training programs through a USDA BFRDP educational enhancement grant, to support the design and testing of new and shareable teaching resources for culturally and linguistically diverse farmers. To learn more about this project, or to access the whole list of newly developed teaching resources for refugee farmer training programs, see the New American Resource Library. For more in-depth explanations of the teaching approaches and activities used in these materials, please see the ‘Refugee Farmer Teaching Handbook’. While these resources were designed with refugee audiences in mind, they can be adapted and used in any farmer training or incubator setting.

VARIATION: Throughout this guide, boxes (like this one) contain variations and adaptations that serve varying programs and farmers. They are suggestions and reflections from other programs based on how they made this workshop work for them.

TEACHING TIP: Throughout this guide, boxes (like this one) contain teaching tips to help you better facilitate farmer learning. Most come from other programs who have tested and reflected on using this lesson.

DEVELOPER’S NOTE: Throughout this guide, boxes (like this one) contain notes from this guide’s developer that provide insight into how a lesson is typically taught at the developer’s program.

ICONS: You will find the icons below throughout this guidebook. They are there so you are prepared for the activity and can get an idea of what it will bring at a glance.
WHAT TESTERS SAY:  “I loved the practice of packing the CSA bag. I think that is so valuable. I’m going to use that in my CSA workshop. Also, I think Meredith did a great job in using many different teaching strategies. I like how she laid out the workshop, and think the flow works well.” - Jessica, Cultivating Community, Portland ME

“Okay every week” and “ok sometimes” sheets are great, and we would adapt a little for what we grow. The part about American cooking habits is also very interesting, we’ve never explained it this way.” - Katie, Global Gardens, Boise ID

“Great for a basic/intro lesson for CSA!” - Kelly, Transplanting Traditions, Chapel Hill, NC

“The vegetable grouping activity is great. The “okay every week” vs “okay sometimes” pictorials were something I would have never thought to put together. I love the manipulatives and the activity that involves packing the boxes.” - Lauren, The Nashville Food Project, Nashville TN

“The vegetable guide is incredible for generalizing eating/shopping preferences and habits.” - Robin, Global Growers, Atlanta GA

CORE SKILLS:

- CSA packing
- CSA pick-up log
- American preferences for CSA packing
- Vegetable types for packing diversity
- CSA pros and cons
5 IS THIS GUIDE RIGHT FOR YOU
• Audience and Objectives
• Resources needed

7 CSA INTRODUCTION & COMPARISON / ACTIVITY 1 / 25 MINUTES
• Group discussion, CSA requirements activity

10 AMERICAN CUSTOMERS AND VEGETABLE GROUPING
ACTIVITY 2 / 35 MINUTES
• Large group discussion of American preferences

13 CATEGORIZING VEGETABLES / ACTIVITY 3 / 15 MINUTES
• Farmers will understand the different vegetable ‘types’ important for CSA packing diversity

14 CATEGORIZING VEGETABLES / ACTIVITY 4 / 45 MINUTES
• Farmers will ‘pack’ sample CSA boxes to demonstrate their understanding

VARIATION:
• This lesson can be paired with a general introduction to CSA if farmers are new to CSA.

• Several reviewers suggested pairing this with a lesson about customer retention and why customers stay or go. If you do any end of year surveys with customers you can simplify and share the results with the farmers and explain what customers like and don’t like.

• Reviewers discussed following up with a lesson on production-planning and crop-mapping for CSA. In a follow-up lesson, you could also reinforce the idea of planting for customer preference, and planning for shorter and longer growing cycles for different crops (Kale vs. Radishes).
OBJECTIVES: At the end of this module, farmers will be able to
- Understand how CSA differs from other sales outlets
- Reflect on how prepared they are to meet the requirements of a successful CSA
- Group vegetables into families or categories based on ‘types’ and how often they should be packed
- Pack three sample “boxes” using veggie flash cards

CORE SKILLS:
- American preferences for CSA packing
- CSA packing
- Comparing the requirements of different marketing options

TIME / SEASON: 2 hours
- Off-season, or right before the marketing season starts

LANGUAGE / LITERACY: Appropriate for all levels with interpreter

STAFF / INTERPRETER: One staff member and one interpreter needed

FARMING EXPERIENCE: This training will be best suited for farmers who have some experience with American vegetables, customers and vegetable names in English.

REGION / CLIMATE: Appropriate for all climates

LOCATION: Classroom / packing shed etc.
It might be helpful to have tables available for groups of farmers to gather around and ‘pack’ their sample CSA boxes.

MATERIAL NEEDED: Skills, experience and knowledge
- Veggie flash cards
- Smiley face flashcards
- white board/poster-board to write pros and cons on
- PowerPoint of CSA explanation (optional to print these)
- CSA categorization tool
- Something to represent the CSA shares: smaller baskets, real boxes, bowls, etc. will do.
Resources needed
Adaptable except where noted.

TIME: 2 hours

STAFF / INTERPRETERS: 1 Staff Member and 1 Interpreter

LOCATION: Classroom / packing shed etc.
• It might be helpful to have tables available for groups of farmers to gather around and ‘pack’ their sample CSA boxes.

SUPPLIES: Each farmer should receive
• Veggie flash cards
• Smiley face flashcards
• white board/poster-board to write pros and cons on
• PowerPoint of CSA explanation (optional to print these)
• CSA categorization tool
• Something to represent the CSA shares: smaller baskets, real boxes, bowls, etc. will do.
STEP 1: INTRODUCE CSA

1. Today we are going to talk about another way to sell vegetables in the US - CSA. CSA is the abbreviation we use for a longer phrase- can anyone tell us what CSA stands for? [Write Community Supported Agriculture on the board and underline the letters CSA].

2. What does this mean? [Prompt explanation] CSA is a model of selling where the customers connect more deeply with farmers and purchase a season’s worth of vegetables before the season starts.

STEP 2: GO OVER IMPORTANT POINTS OF CSA (GOOD / DIFFERENT)

1. Can someone who has done CSA before explain why they like it? What are the good things about it? [list what they say on board] What makes CSA hard or different from markets? [list things on board]. You can write plain language equivalents to these words, or skip the writing all together if farmers would not benefit from it. Some points you are looking for farmers to bring up:
STEP 3: WHAT IS REQUIRED OF YOU FOR CSA?

1. Using the lists you just made, show the requirements or flashcards to reinforce what skills and resources a farmer needs to be a good CSA farmer. The six points are below. As you show the slides or print outs, make sure farmers understand what each one is saying, and discuss how each is different from farmer’s markets and wholesale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOOD</th>
<th>DIFFERENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• money at the beginning of the season&lt;br&gt;• relationship with customers&lt;br&gt;• consistent&lt;br&gt;• not much time</td>
<td>• lots of planning&lt;br&gt;• can be stressful if weather/season is bad&lt;br&gt;• need to be responsible and on time (for deliveries, or harvest deadlines, etc.)&lt;br&gt;• need transportation&lt;br&gt;• lots of communication&lt;br&gt;• variety</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TIME
Be on time “You need to be on time!” Is time more important with CSA, wholesale or market?

COMMUNICATION
Talk with CSA customer “You need to be okay with talking to customers!” Is there more communication with CSA, wholesale, or market?

RECORDKEEPING
Keep good records “You need to keep track of all CSA customers and their shares!” Is there more recordkeeping with CSA, wholesale or market?

PLANNING
Plan your vegetables “You need to plan your vegetables more than for farmers market” Is there more planning with CSA wholesale or market?

TRANSPORTATION
Transportation “you need to have a car or someone with a car” Is there more transportation with CSA, wholesale or market?

DEVELOPERS NOTE:
This session was taught 2 weeks after a workshop on Marketing in the US, in which farmers talked about how different market avenues (wholesale, CSA, and markets) have different requirements in regard to consistency, prices, quantity, quality, and the importance of communication, recordkeeping, and variety. We will refer back to that lesson during this one.

STEP 4: SMILEY FACE (OR THUMBS UP THUMBS DOWN) REFLECTION

1. Now it is the farmers turn to reflect on how prepared they feel to be a successful CSA farmer. This can also help you to tailor further guidance for each farmer, or for the farmers as a group. Handout the smiley-face cut-outs, three per farmer (frown, neutral and smiling, or alternative could just be thumbs up or down picture)
2. Ask farmers “what will be easy for you, and what will be hard for you?” Make sure they understand that easy is the smiley face, hard is the frowning face, and okay is the neutral face.

3. Hold up each print out from the slides (below) and have farmers hold up their corresponding face or thumbs up or down.

4. Let this generate some questions or discussions, and allow yourself to get a sense of what farmers want more guidance on.

VARIATION: Depending on your program, you can add some additional things to the list. For example, one review suggested reliance on STAFF and COMPUTER for CSA more than other marketing option. On the plus side, farmers can know their gross profits with more clarity than other marketing options, so you could add MONEY to the pros (goods) and cons (differences) list as well.
TIME: 35 minutes

OVERVIEW:
In this activity, farmers will learn about how American customers shop for food, and how knowing this will help them to pack good CSA boxes. They will learn about different veggie ‘types’ for CSA packing and will demonstrate their knowledge in a sorting activity.

MATERIALS NEEDED:
• “OK every week” sheet
• “OK sometimes” sheet

OBJECTIVES / LEARNING:
By the end of this activity, participants can:
• Group vegetables into families or categories based on how often they should be packed

VOCABULARY
recipe type

STEP 1: ASK
1. Ask advanced farmers to list the most common vegetables that Americans buy.
   a. Think about being at market. What vegetables do you sell the most? What vegetables will people buy any time of year? What do your CSA friends ask for the most? [write these vegetables, or use the flashcards and hold them up/tape them to a wall]
   b. Some answers you are looking for: See attached “OK every week” sheet for desired vegetables.

STEP 2: TALK
1. Talk about American customers. Some sample talking points:
   a. The average English-speaking family is 2.5 people. This is smaller than most of your families, yes? The average English speaker eats at a restaurant 18 times
per month. When they buy groceries, they only buy a little bit, and they mostly buy things that are processed and easily prepared. Some people in the US are beginning to realize that this is unhealthy, and they want to change this.

b. Because of this, many people want to shop at farmers’ markets. But they might not know much about vegetables or cooking. They may need a little help from you in learning how to cook the vegetables that you are selling. Most English-speaking families eat different things every night unlike other cultures that may eat similar things most days. How many of you eat rice every day? How many of you eat chili peppers every day? (insert food that is appropriate for farmers in your program). English speaking families eat many different types of food.

c. Both women and men cook in English speaking households, but women still do the majority of the cooking. When the English-speaking mom wants to cook, she usually picks out a recipe, and then buys all the ingredients to make that meal.

d. English speaking families often use written recipes when they cook. Many cultures have learned how to cook by watching other people cook over and over again. Some Americans have learned to cook this way, but many have not. When they are trying something new or don’t know how to cook, they will follow a written recipe, where the ingredients and the steps for cooking are all listed out.

VARIATION:
One reviewer thought about how to adapt this lesson if the CSA customers were immigrant / refugee customers. You could adapt this lesson to meet those needs as well by changing the talking points about eating and cooking habits.

STEP 3: REFLECTION
“What does this mean for our CSA?”
Looking for:
- customers want variety - not the same things every week
- provide written recipes to more unusual vegetables, or explain what they are
- writing a list of vegetable names is great if you are able

STEP 4: VEGGIE CATEGORIZATION
Hand out the veggie categorization tool.
At the beginning of this activity we made a list of vegetables that are commonly bought by American customers. Ask farmers to compare the list that they just created to the one they see before them. “Let’s look at the ‘OK every week’ page. These are vegetables that you can give to customers every week. Are there any ones listed here that we didn’t say earlier? Or any that we listed that you don’t see?”

STEP 5: “OK SOMETIMES” SHEET
These are vegetables that aren’t as familiar to English speaking customers. If
you have these vegetables in your garden, you shouldn’t give them every week. Are there any other vegetables that you think should be on this page? Or are there any that are missing? When you give out these vegetables in your CSA, you should bring recipe cards with you.

**DEVELOPERS NOTE:**
Our program provides farmers with small recipe cards available to them at our farm at any time. We encourage them to take these to market, and are further encouraging their use with more uncommon vegetables in CSA shares.

**TEACHING TIP:**
One review said: “We use skits when we teach about CSA. Particularly around American preference because it’s something farmers think is really funny but also it takes something that is hard to teach and makes it tangible.”
STEP 1:  INTRODUCTION

1. Introduce the vegetable groups page. “We can sort vegetables based on category, and that can make it easier to know what kinds of things to put in a CSA share.”

TEACHING TIP:
One reviewer suggested: “Farmers could take a stab at organizing the vegetables into categories before even learning about the different categories! This could show you what they already know and could be an interesting base for a discussion.”

STEP 2:  VEGGIE FLASHCARDS

1. Make sure farmers (in groups of 1, 2 or 3) have a set of veggie flashcards. To test their understanding of the 7 veggie groups, have them sort their cards into the 7 groups. Vegetables that don’t fit into these groups are ethnic crops, which you can explain should be put in the boxes every two weeks or so. You are making sure they understand that all veggies can fall into one of these groups (7 groups plus the ethnic crops group). You can say “chard”, and they hold up chard flash card, and then you say “what group does it belong in?” Do this until all vegetables are in a group.
Packing CSA Boxes

TIME: 45 minutes

OVERVIEW:
Farmers will use their knowledge of the veggie families, and the categorization tool to “pack” three sample CSA shares. Optional discussion about the pros and cons of two different CSA models.

MATERIALS NEEDED:
• Something to represent the CSA shares: smaller baskets, real boxes, bowls, etc. will do.
• White board/ large sheets of paper

• Vegetable groups sheet
• Markers
• All flashcards

OBJECTIVES / LEARNING:
By the end of this activity, participants can:
• Pack three sample shares using veggie flash cards

VARIATION:
Several reviewers mentioned using actual CSA boxes and real vegetables if season, timing and resources permit. Otherwise, the simulation activity will be the lower-maintenance option.

STEP 1: INTRODUCTION

Explain that each basket or vessel (whatever you are using) represents a CSA share (this can be three sample shares to represent first three weeks of CSA or middle of the season). Hand out veggie flashcards. Tell them that using veggie flash cards, they will “pack” CSA shares. Give the farmers 15 minutes to “pack” three shares.

STEP 2: EXPLAIN TO GROUP

When they are done, go around and have each group explain their “boxes”. This would be a great time to encourage them to use the veggie category names and knowledge of what they learned in the previous activity.

a. “Tell us what is in your boxes”

b. “Why did you choose those vegetables?”
STEP 3: GROUP DISCUSSION

The facilitator can then discuss any ways they can see to improve it: explaining the need to diversify not only in each share, but from week to week. One of the benefits of having several groups do this is showing that there can be more than one right answer.

a. Talk through how seasonality plays a role in the decision of what to put in each share- less options to choose from early and late in the season.

VARIATION:

Option to add in a quantity discussion. One reviewer says: “Quantity is a difficult and important concept to teach as well, since more is not always better but you do have to have enough diversity but not too much product that it can’t be used before the next share. The other aspect of quantity is having enough of each crop to make a meal out of (not just a few green beans or one potato etc.)”

STEP 4: OPTIONAL

If your program offers packed shares and market pick up CSA, you can guide farmers through understanding the pros and cons in the last step of the lesson. If any farmers have done this before, you can ask them about their experience in both. These can just be a discussion, or you can make a list. You may also be able to refer to the requirement pictures and discussion from activity 1 to reinforce your points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PACKING SHARES</th>
<th>MARKET PICK-UP/ LETTING CUSTOMERS CHOOSE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Farmer can sell veggies that they have too much of in their garden</td>
<td>• Don’t have to plan CSA as much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consistency for all customers</td>
<td>• Unsure of what customers will take every week- might lose high-dollar items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Customers may give more feedback about wanting different things</td>
<td>• Customers are happy they get to choose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Takes less time when delivering</td>
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