

Vermont Senior Farm Share Program

Sponsored by the USDA Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

Best Practices for Creating Senior Shares

BACKGROUND

Just like your CSA programs are designed to cater to the demands and preferences of your community members, your Senior Farm Shares are most satisfying to the partnering housing site(s) when the shares meet the needs of the seniors and disabled adults that will be benefiting from them. You will all provide **\$50 worth of farm fresh produce to each approved participant** over the course of the growing season; however, the contents and delivery of these shares should be unique to your farm and the needs of your assigned housing site(s).

Generally, most farms and housing sites have arranged to either have \$5 shares delivered over the course of 10 weeks or \$10 shares over 5 weeks, but you are encouraged to engage in discussions with the housing site coordinator if there is a schedule that works better for your farm and doesn't interfere with the overall experience and impact of the Senior Farm Share program (e.g. delivering \$10 shares every other week for a 9 week time period).

BEST PRACTICES

Here are some suggestions to help you plan how to organize, coordinate, and distribute your senior farm shares:

- Set realistic expectations with the housing site coordinator prior to the first delivery of shares. This includes what volume of produce they should expect in each share, based on the value of the share. Doing so will help to avoid conflict later in the season.
- If you plan to provide bulk produce to your housing site(s), please remember to include enough so that individual servings can easily be divided among all of the participants.
- Some farms have found success in augmenting the amount of produce that they can provide for the seniors by using these shares as an outlet for surplus produce. While this is a generous way to give more to the seniors, it is important not to think of this program as an outlet for 'seconds.'
- Seniors are often especially fond of smaller items that might be hard to sell at your other retail outlets (e.g. smaller cabbage heads).
- Seniors tend to favor the 'classic' fruits and veggies like green beans, zucchini, cucumbers, tomatoes, and corn.
- Seniors may have dietary restrictions that prohibit them from eating some foods (e.g. dark greens).
- One of the best ways to incorporate senior shares into your CSA is to provide shares during the height of your production. We recommend that you start your shares in mid-July; however, the exact start date is up to you and the housing site coordinator to determine.
- Remember that this program is intended to supplement the participants' diets with a sampling of farm fresh produce. Ideally, these folks will also be able to purchase some produce on their own.

If you have any successful strategies that you'd like to share, **please send them to Johanna Doren at NOFA-VT (802-434-7162, johanna@nofavt.org)** so that, together, we can continue to improve the Senior Farm Share.

Senior Farm Share is administered by the Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL); in collaboration with the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT), and the University of Vermont (UVM) Extension.

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