Alternative Models and the Future of CSAs

Laura Krouse, Abbe Hills Farm
Danelle Myer, One Farm
Erik Sessions, Patchwork Green Farm
Jordan Scheibel, Middle Way Farm
Abbe Hills Farm
Abbe Hills Farm

Founded in 1996 (or ‘95?)
72 acre farm, 4-5 acres vegetables

120 equivalent family size shares, about 200 families served

Family share $500 / 20 weeks
Single share $300 / 20 weeks

Annual gross CSA income = $60,000
Weekly family size shares: enough for a family of four, or two good vegetarians
First CSAs in US = 1986
Indian Line Farm, South Egremont, MA
Temple-Wilton Community Farm, Wilton, NH

First Laura heard of it = 1993

First CSA in Iowa = 1994
Virginia Moser, Wildwood Garden, Garrison
Shared risk
Community involvement
Environmental stewardship
After 30 years, CSA has evolved!

11 CSA models described by Small Farm Central
Traditional CSA
Seasonal box
Market-style
Buy-down CSA
Flexible-week CSA
California-style CSA
Full-diet CSA
Multi-farm CSA
Winter only
Distributor
Grocer
We started:
packing in used tomato boxes
harvest to fill boxes
pick up at the farm after work
“community” only, 10 families

Now:
pack your own bags
some “free”, “choice” items
pick up at the farm after work
“community” grew, 200

Abbe Hills is the most traditional model on this panel
Grocery landscape has changed

Millenials are primary grocery buyers
Like to know provenance of their food
Like to eat well
Don’t know how to cook that well
Have to have convenience, speed
It’s inconvenient to belong to Abbe Hills Farm CSA

Give me lots of money months before you get any food
Come on the days I say
Come exactly at the time I say
Eat the vegetables I choose for you
Deal with the amounts I give you
Drive on a dirty gravel road
Trust me

Who is willing to do all that?