

Farm to Family Toolkit

How to design a CSA program
to connect SNAP participants
with fresh / local produce

WSU EXTENSION
Skagit County

VIVA FARMS

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Introduction

Skagit County
WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION



Washington State University Extension Skagit County engages people, organizations, and communities to advance economic well-being and quality of life by connecting them to the knowledge base of the university and by fostering inquiry, learning, and the application of research.

WSU Skagit County Extension programs offer life-long learning opportunities across a variety of skills for a host of audiences to promote best practices in farming, health and wellness, leadership development, and community engagement.

The WSU Skagit Family Living Program offers education programs to increase knowledge and skills that improve community health, family resilience, and access to resources. This project reflects our commitment to the community to develop and deliver practical, relevant, and accessible food education.

Viva Farms is a non-profit, farm-business incubator and training program established in 2009. Viva operates in both Skagit County and King County in Washington state. The organization's mission is to empower beginning and limited-resourced farmers by providing bilingual training in holistic organic farming practices, as well as access to land, infrastructure, equipment, marketing, and capital. Viva Farms has provided bilingual education to over 900 small-scale and beginning farmers in sustainable organic farming and supports nearly 30 farm businesses in its incubator program.

Viva Farms vision is to "preserve sustainable farming by creating a strong and just local food system." As part of the mission, Viva Farms offers a CSA subscription of weekly boxes of farm-fresh organic produce, grown by the incubator farmers. Consumers receive local, fresh, organic, produce directly from farmers as the CSA contributes to beginning farmers' success in building viable farm businesses.

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About this Toolkit

The Farm to Family SNAP CSA Toolkit offers the reader a guide to developing and supporting the operation of a CSA serving low-income households and customers using SNAP benefits. The ideas generated from four years (three harvest seasons) of experience with the development and implementation of the modified CSA are shared as emerging and best practices in this quickly changing landscape.

This toolkit is divided into four main sections:

- ⇒ Outreach and Marketing
- ⇒ Operations and Transactions
- ⇒ Food Education
- ⇒ Sample/Replicable Templates.

Lessons learned through the implementation of the incentivized CSA with SNAP customers are shared, and additional resources and references are listed.



This toolkit shares....

- ⇒ ...successful strategies for connecting with potential customers – from creating outreach materials, identifying effective communication channels, and developing food education materials – that will help you as you support your customers in learning about local foods, food preparation, and your farm.
- ⇒ ...a description of recruitment and retention of a reliable customer base, templates and systems to stay engaged with your customers, and a guide to creating food education components are detailed for you to follow in creating your own CSA program for families with limited resources or using SNAP benefits.
- ⇒ …ideas for partnerships to enhance your marketing and support food education at a low cost (or free).

We hope the materials developed over this four-year project (three active harvest seasons) and presented in this toolkit guide your steps in creating a CSA program to engage SNAP shoppers. Please feel free to copy and adapt these materials in ways that best meet your needs.

~Diane Smith & Viva Farms

Farm to Family Program Description

Viva Farms and WSU Skagit Extension Family Living Program partnered on the *Farm to Family CSA: Providing SNAP Clients Affordable Access through Local Produce and Food Education through Community Partnerships* (referred to as *Farm to Family SNAP CSA*) to pilot strategies to provide a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) food box to individuals and families receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits (SNAP).

What is Community Supported Agriculture?

As a farmer, you may already be familiar with CSA–what the letters stand for, how it operates, and the concept of shared risk between the farmer and the consumer; however, many shoppers are still unfamiliar with this model of purchasing farm goods directly from the farmer which has the customer pay upfront to receive food boxes throughout the harvest season.

Community-supported agriculture (CSA model) or crop-sharing is a direct-to-consumer model that connects the producer/farmer and the consumer with local farm-fresh food, typically fruits and vegetables, but can also include meats, eggs and cheese, and flowers.





In the traditional CSA model, the customer subscribes to an annual "share" of a farmer's crop and pays upfront, often before the crop is even planted.

The *Farm to Family CSA* offered a food box at a discount (cost offset) to shoppers using SNAP benefits to receive a weekly produce box delivered to pick-up sites in the community. Instead of joining for a season, a plan was designed to allow SNAP shoppers to purchase a CSA box for a shorter time frame, every two weeks, and using SNAP EBT to pay for the CSA box.

What is SNAP?

SNAP is an acronym for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps, and is called Basic Food in Washington state. This federally funded program helps people with low incomes make ends meet by providing monthly benefits to buy food and provides the potential for many families to purchase healthier food. An individual is eligible for SNAP in Washington state if he or she makes less than $20,609 per year. For a family of four, qualification entails an annual income of less than $42,488. To qualify for SNAP, individuals must be Washington state residents over the age of 18. SNAP recipients receive benefits to use with an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card which can be swiped at a store like a debit card. SNAP can be used for many foods including fruits and vegetables, meats, and dairy. SNAP cannot be used to purchase prepared foods or hot, ready-to-eat items (USDA, 2020).

SNAP recipients are now able to use their benefits to pay for "shares" in a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. Non-profit and for-profit direct marketing farmers that operate a CSA can accept payment up to 14 days in advance of delivering the food to the SNAP customer or making the food available for pickup. This is a form of pre-commitment, as those SNAP funds are "committed" to fresh farm produce and thus not available to purchase less healthy items from traditional retailers.

SNAP
USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
Putting Healthy Food Within Reach



Farm to Family SNAP CSA

The *Farm to Family SNAP CSA* cost-offset offered a food box at a 50% discount when purchased with SNAP EBT on a four week cycle. The SNAP CSA was structured as a '*buy two get two*' plan, with the shoppers EBT card charged at the beginning of a 4 week cycle. Shoppers receive two paid boxes within 14 days, then the last two boxes are free. This cost offset was made possible by a USDA Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive grant. This incentive program matched SNAP benefits with grant funds thereby allowing SNAP shoppers an opportunity to participate in a CSA program at 50% discount. This ensured affordable access to healthy food for consumers while creating an additional revenue stream for local farmers. Customers were offered the choice of two different box sizes at different price points that could be picked up from one of multiple locations in the community.

Marketing and Outreach

Section 1

Creating a Marketing Plan

Creating a marketing and outreach plan is effective in guiding promotion activities, developing outreach materials, connecting with new audiences, and creating the perceived value for your CSA to your potential customer. Below are ideas to consider as you customize a marketing plan for your CSA.

For the *Farm to Family SNAP CSA* program, a marketing plan was designed by the Western Washington University (WWU) community health program students completing a Community Health social marketing practicum. After completing a situational analysis, a positioning statement was created to guide the marketing: "We want Skagit County SNAP recipients to see the Viva Farms CSA program as a convenient, fun, and exciting way to incorporate fresh, local organic fruits and vegetables into their diet and as being more important and beneficial than resorting to fast food or grocery store produce."



To get the word out that SNAP benefits can be used to participate in a CSA, both social media advertising and traditional marketing avenues, such as newspaper and radio ads, bus ads, flyers and postcards were developed. Other promotion ideas to consider include posters, bumper stickers, bar coasters, TV ads, paycheck inserts, and video posted on social media. Combining these methods in a community outreach plan leaves an impression on those who are exposed to the messaging over time. Delivering messages through multiple communication channels and in a variety of ways increases the likelihood that your target audience will act on those messages.

Social Media

Social media is an opportunity to tell your story, share news and information, and engage your local community. It is a low-cost method to focus your outreach on specific target audiences. Primary social media channels include Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Facebook can be used as a platform to inform your customers that SNAP benefits can be used to purchase a CSA and also to share tips on food preparation, selection, and storage. Recipes and cooking techniques shared via Facebook can highlight local produce available throughout the harvest season. Posts can range from pictures and graphics to short videos and text. Visual content can enhance messaging as it can have a more meaningful impression on users than words alone. Also, Facebook posts can be scheduled out in advance. Instructions can be found online on how to schedule Facebook posts ahead of time. "Boosted" Facebook posts can strengthen and target your social media engagement. For a minimum charge, ~ $10, posts can be more focused on a demographic based on age, gender, proximity to your farm.



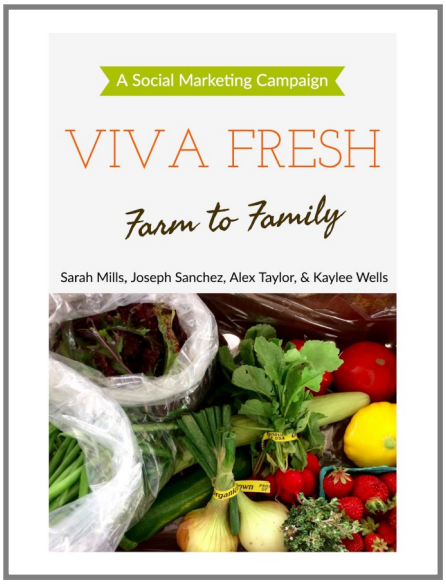
Print Materials

In developing print materials, consistency is key in marketing. Extensive research shows black, dark blue, or red text on a background of yellow or white is the most readable combination. A few more design tips are listed here on what to consider when designing your marketing materials.

The *Farm to Family SNAP CSA* marketing campaign built on the existing infrastructure and reflected community values. The campaign highlighted that the farm was a neighbor offering farm-fresh, organic, seasonal produce, which enhanced the perceived value of the CSA box. This concept was reinforced with a weekly farmer interview, introduced in the newsletter for the customer to get to know their farmer, their neighbor.

Design Tips:

- ⇒ No more than 2 different fonts in a single promotional material (posters, bus ad, brochures, etc.).
- ⇒ Identify a color palette with 2-5 colors for your campaign.
- ⇒ Keep objects and text in alignment.
- ⇒ Use contrasting colors, especially when emphasizing words.
- ⇒ Use a line (or two) between content to create a sense of order.
- ⇒ Leave enough room for negative space.



The *Farm to Family SNAP CSA* print materials were designed with a consistent color palette and fonts consistent across all formats. A radio PSA, newspaper article, flyers and postcards were developed to get the message out. Samples of the messaging and print material are included in this toolkit for your use. All marketing materials were made available in both English and Spanish, most typically as back-to-back print material, or as needed, printed separately with English and Spanish on separate pages.

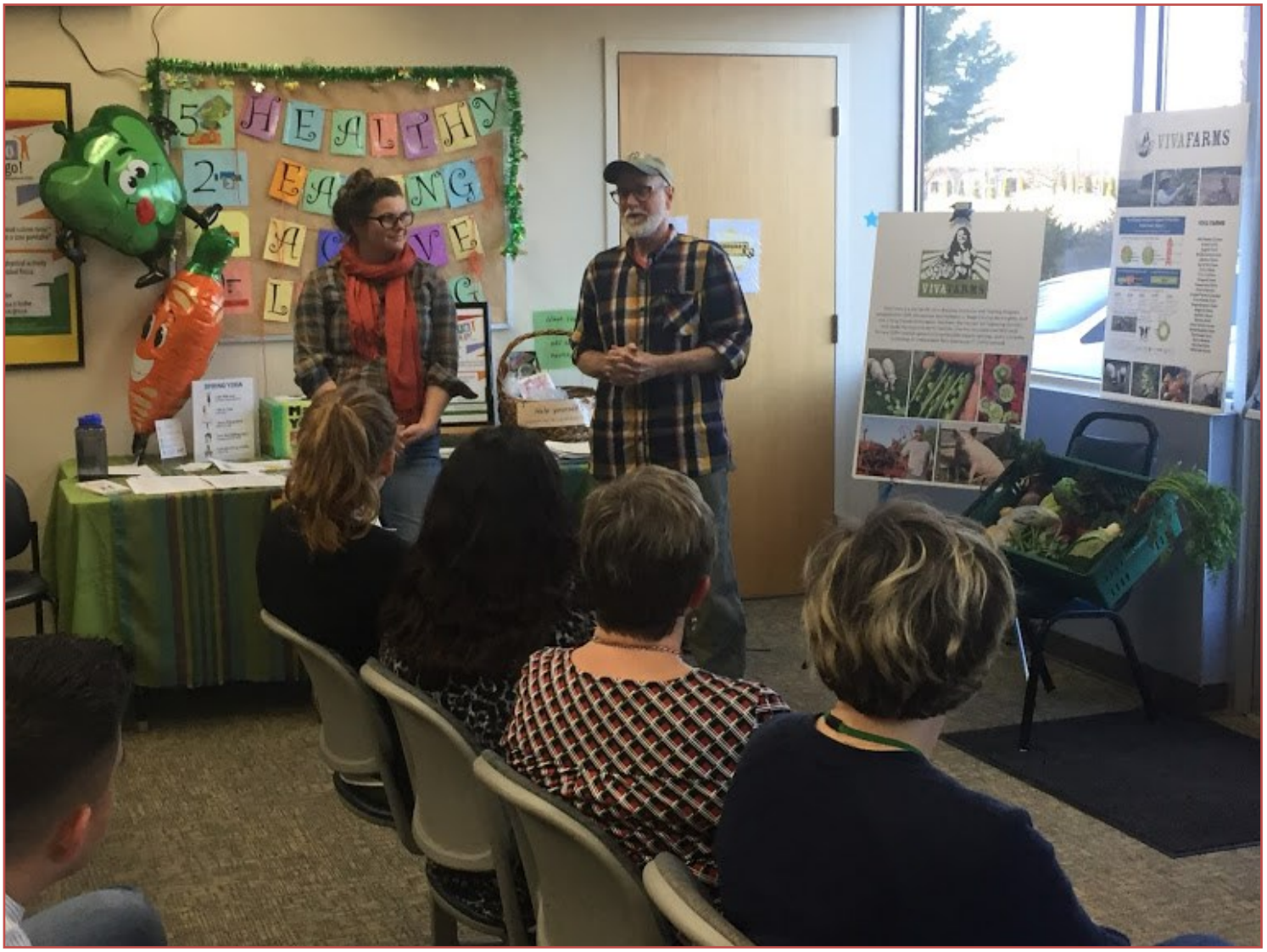


Community Health students at Western Washington University Washington created marketing materials as part of their Capstone project.

Finding Partners

Partnering with a local vocational school, university, community college, or technical academy to recruit students who are studying graphic design or social marketing can be a cost-effective way (sometimes free) to jump start a branding and marketing campaign for your CSA while providing an opportunity for hands-on experience and resume-building skills for students. The students invited feedback from community members throughout the design and planning process to ensure that marketing materials are easy to read and understand.

Sharing information about your CSA with groups that serve your target audience, such as the social services providers, public health agencies, and job training centers expands your reach by empowering others to share the message of eating more fruits and vegetables and buying local.



Promoting Your CSA

Recruitment and retention of a customer-base is a key factor in a successful CSA. Outreach strategies and templates developed for *Farm to Family SNAP CSA* are listed below.

CSA Rack Cards

CSA Rack Cards were designed to advertise the program to the target population. Available in English and Spanish, the cards highlighted the 50% off discount for SNAP Customers. The cards provided contact information to enroll in the program, CSA delivery dates, and pick-up location. The CSA Cards were a great way to promote the CSA pre-season.

Direct Mailers

Viva Farms partnered with Department of Health and Social Services (DSHS) on direct mailing of CSA promotion postcards aimed at recruiting new shareholders. The targeted direct mailing to SNAP recipients was to specific zip codes served by the CSA project. Viva Farms found this to be the most effective recruitment strategy to SNAP-eligible customers to enroll in the CSA program.

CSA Poster

The CSA Poster, printed in both English and Spanish, provided potential customers with information on the CSA. Posters were displayed at public offices and community venues frequented by limited resourced audiences and SNAP customers.

Pick-Up Payment Schedule

Pick-up and Payment Schedule posters, provided in both English and Spanish, gave a week-by-week (up to week 4) schedule of when the customer would pay and when they would pick up their box. At the end of the 4 weeks a customer would repeat the same process.

Weekly reminder emails

Customers selected the location for box pick-up at time of enrollment. An email was sent out once a week to remind customers of the pick-up time and location. The MailChimp® platform was used to format and deliver the weekly emails. During COVID, instructions on how to safely enter the pick-up location were listed in the email.

Weekly Newsletter

Viva Farms staff was responsible for creating and distributing the newsletter using the Mailchimp® platform. The consistent format of the weekly newsletter included an opening greeting, event updates, listing of box contents, farmer spotlight, and recipe links. The weekly Food Box contents were listed with specific crop varieties and the farm that grew the produce. Recipes gleaned from food blogs and internet searches were chosen based on the box contents. Recipe selection prioritized recipes that used multiple items found in the food box from the week and included recipes for vegetables that may be less familiar to many customers. Each week a different farmer participating in the Viva Farms incubator program was featured. Lastly, standard language around pick-up and health and safety protocols were included.



2019—CSA Rack Card



CSA Rack Cards were designed to advertise the program to the target population. Available in English and Spanish, the cards highlighted the 50% off discount for SNAP Customers. The cards provide contact information to enroll in the program, CSA delivery dates, and pick-up information. The CSA Cards were a great way to promote the CSA pre-season.

2020 - Bilingual CSA rack card



The print marketing material was updated in the third year of the project to provide clarity of the process, based on feedback and program changes.

2020 - Pickup and Payment Schedule

A rack card with the Pick-up and Payment schedule was illustrated for ease of understanding. The CSA model is not familiar to many shoppers and can create confusion for those paying with SNAP benefits since the rules allow for produce to be purchased not more than 14 days in advance of produce pickup. This pattern of payment, pick-up and re-upping the subscription was more easily explained with the visuals, as seen on this card. This card was useful in simplifying the payment system which is based on SNAP rules. A deposit was required to start the CSA and was fully refunded after the first SNAP EBT payment. The information was made available in both English and Spanish.

MONTHLY PICK-UP & PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Pre-enrollment:
Go to vivafarms.org/snap-csa or call (360) 969-7191 x3 to reserve your box. You'll pay a deposit of $12 (small) or $21 (large) by credit/debit card that we will fully refund after your first SNAP EBT Payment. Check/cash deposits accepted in person by appointment.



Week One:
On the day of (or prior to) pick-up, you'll swipe your EBT card for $48 (small) or $84 (large) and pick up your first box!



Week Two:
Pick up box 2



Week Three:
Pick up box 3



Week Four:
Pick up box 4



Repeat!:
Renew and repeat Weeks 1-4!

SEE WEBSITE FOR PAYMENT TIMES AND LOCATIONS
VIVAFARMS.ORG/SNAP-CSA

HORARIO MENSUAL DE PAGAR Y RECOGER

Depósito de inscripción:
Visita a vivafarms.org/snap-csa o llame al (360) 969-7191 x3 para reservar su suscripción. Pagará un depósito de $12 (pequeña) o $21 (grande) con tarjeta, lo que devolveremos totalmente después del primer pago con estampillas EBT. Se puede pagar en efectivo o con cheque con cita previa.



1er miércoles
El día de la primera entrega (o antes), cargará su tarjeta de estampillas unos $48 (cajas pequeñas) o $84 (cajas grandes) y recogerá su primera caja.



2º miércoles:
Recoger la segunda caja



3er miércoles:
Recoger la tercera caja



4º miércoles:
Recoger la cuarta caja



5º miércoles:
Cargará su tarjeta de EBT unos $40 o $70 para renovar la suscripción. ¡Recoja su caja y repítanse las semanas 1-4!





PARA VER LOS LUGARES Y HORAS DE PAGAR, VAYA A:
VIVAFARMS.ORG/SNAP-CSA

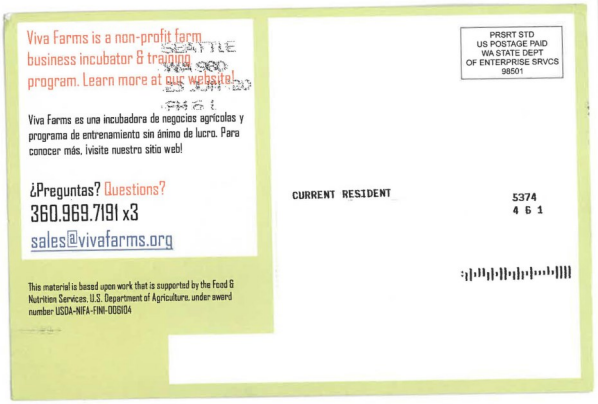
Direct Mailings

The service Every Door Direct Mail® (EDDM®) from USPS allows you to promote your small business/ CSA in your local community. With EDDM®, you can send postcards and flyers to the target customers. The EDDM® Online Tool gives you access to a map of ZIP Code(s)™ and neighborhoods which can be filtered by age, income, or household size using U.S. Census data. EDDM® flyers, postcards, and other flats are considered USPS Marketing Mail® products. The pricing structure is listed on the USPS.com webpage with rates from as low as $0.164 per piece.

The direct mailer was sent to SNAP recipients at their home address. The *Farm to Family SNAP CSA* staff considered this the most effective marketing strategy in increasing the number of SNAP customers to sign-up for the CSA.

2019 - DSHS Mailer





Address side of the Direct Mailer post card

2020 - DSHS Mailer

The 2020 DSHS mailer was updated with additional details and easy-to-read format. This is an example of how messaging and marketing efforts evolve over time with changes to the look, building on lessons learned from the previous year.



2019/2020 - CSA Poster

Handbills and posters alerting potential customers can be posted (with permission) at local offices and services where families using SNAP benefits may frequent. These include (but not limited to):

- ⇒ Libraries
- ⇒ Hospitals and out-patient clinics
- ⇒ Department of Social and Health (DSHS) Community Service Office (CSO)
- ⇒ Mental Health Providers Offices and Counseling Centers
- ⇒ Mobile DSHS Van
- ⇒ Community Parks & Rec Center
- ⇒ Community Action Agency
- ⇒ Laundromats
- ⇒ WIC Clinics
- ⇒ Childcare Centers
- ⇒ Subsidized Housing
- ⇒ Faith Communities



Weekly Reminder Emails

Reminders keep customers informed about day, time, and location of the weekly CSA pick-up.

The CSA produce box is typically dropped off at a central location or picked-up from the farm on a weekly basis. The farm's routine can include harvest on one day (let's say Tuesday) and, pack and deliver on the next day (let's say Wednesday). The pattern and routine is well-established throughout the season. If the farmer identifies what will be harvested and included in the box earlier in the week (for this example, Monday), then customers can be notified of what will be in the box when sending out the reminder email, and recipes selected to give customers ideas on how to prepare the produce in the box.

A CSA pick-up may be a new routine for the SNAP customer, so an electronic notice can be sent out to remind customers to pick up their box. Either an email or text message can be used to connect with your customer. An automatic email or text message platform can be used to set-up the reminders to reduce the time required. The email notification can be as simple as an email list or as fancy as an automated personalized mass email distribution platform. No matter what system is used, key information to include are: the day/date of the pick-up, time frame or window for pick-up, location, and box size (if you offer the different sizes).

The *Farm to Family SNAP CSA* reminder system used the Mail Chimp platform which allowed for an automatic personalized email to be sent to customers. Some of the email distribution products available include Constant Contact® (https://www.constantcontact.com/) and MailChimp® (https://mailchimp.com/). Pricing for automated email platform is competitive and offers additional email marketing features in terms of automation, contact segmentation and reporting.

Text Messaging

An automated SMS (short message service) text message system is another way to stay connected to your CSA customer. Email can be overflowing with updates, notifications, and special offers are common place now, so the reminders could be lost or ignored. The text message service allows users to send and receive messages of up to 160 characters. There are companies that offer services at a low cost, either pay-as-you-go or have low volume, low fee monthly plans. Some text distribution products available include Talkingpts.org https://talkingpts.org/ and Text-em All https://www.text-em-all.com/

Asking your customer about their preference on how they want to stay informed can help you decide which system is going to work for most of your customers. In the *Farm to Family SNAP CSA*, 80% of the respondents selected email notice as the preferred way to be reminded weekly, followed by text messaging.



Sample weekly email reminders

Sample e-mail reminder to customer on day, time, and location of weekly box pick-up

SAMPLE REMINDER EMAIL

Dear Diane,

This is just a friendly reminder that your 1 small CSA share will be ready for pick-up tomorrow, Sep 18, 2019, at Farmstrong Brewing, from 12pm - 6pm. Please log into your account if you need directions: http://csa.farmigo.com/account/vivafarms/csa.

Best regards,

Anna Chotzen
Business & Marketing Manager
360-969-7191 x3

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TEMPLATE

Dear _____, (customer)

This is just a friendly reminder that your _____ (box size) will be ready for pick-up tomorrow, _____(date), at _____ (location), from _____ (pick-up time frame). Please log into your account if you need directions: http://csa.farmigo.com/account/vivafarms/csa.

Best regards,

Anna Chotzen
Business & Marketing Manager
360-969-7191 x3

Always include contact name and phone number so the customer feels confident on who to call should a question arise.

VIVAFARMS

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Weekly email reminders changed over time.

During COVID-19 more information was provided in the weekly email reminder to include procedures for customer to follow to stay safe when picking up the produce box.

SAMPLE EMAIL DURING COVID RESTRICTIONS

Hi Diane,

This is just a friendly reminder that your 1 Small CSA Share will be ready for pick-up tomorrow, Aug 19, 2020, at Farmstrong Brewing, 110 Stewart Road, Mount Vernon 98273, from 12pm - 6pm. Please log into your account if you need directions: http://csa.farmigo.com/account/vivafarms/csa.

In order to keep everyone safe and comfortable, we've worked up some enhanced safety protocols and have specific asks of you as a customer this season, which we've listed below:

1. Respect the pick-up site's rules. We partner with many independent businesses and organizations who generously offer us their space, and we must respect their health and safety rules in addition to our own. Please read all signage and follow any additional safety protocols that your pick-up site requires.
2. Wear a mask at all times while picking up your CSA.
3. Maintain 6' of distance between yourself, other customers, Viva staff/volunteers, and pick-up site staff at all times.
4. If you come at a busy time, please be patient and maintain 6' of distance while you wait (outside if possible!)
5. If you have the option to come alone to pick up your CSA share, please do so.
6. Minimize contact with surfaces.
7. Bring your own pen to sign the pick-up sheet.
8. Your CSA will be packed into a single use liner inside a reusable crate. We will sanitize the crates each week between use.
9. Please avoid touching any crates or liners besides your own.
10. After you have removed your liner, please neatly stack your empty crate below or to the side of the full crates, nested with any other empty crates that are already stacked.

Let us know if you have any other questions.

Thank you, and enjoy!

Anna Chotzen
Business & Marketing Manager
360-969-7191 x3

VIVAFARMS

Growing Farmers, Community and Food

Weekly Newsletter

A weekly newsletter was developed using the Mailchimp® marketing platform (https://mailchimp.com/pricing/) and sent out on the day that the CSA box was delivered. The newsletter provided a connection with the customer, shared updates from the farm and introduced one of the farmers that grow the produce found in the CSA Box.

The consistent features of the newsletter included:

- ⇒ Introduction.
- ⇒ Housekeeping and Reminders.
- ⇒ Listing of the box contents.
- ⇒ Recipe for preparation a fruit or vegetable featured in the box.
- ⇒ Farmer Interview.



Sample Newsletter

VIVA FARMS

Viva Farms 2020 CSA: Week 23

Thank you for supporting the next generation of family farms!



Carnival Winter Squash

Hello local food enthusiasts,

As we move further into winter, the seasonality of our produce is starting to show its true colors. With produce like squash, apples, daikon radishes and more, it's time to start using the oven more often. Let it be a reason to become more in tuned with the seasons and celebrate the seasonality of our local food!

Check out the recipes below to see what we'll be making at home this week. The beauty about recipes is the ability to experience new foods and to adjust them to our personal liking. We encourage you to tag us @vivafarms on Instagram and Facebook with your culinary creations!

Happy Eating!

The Viva Farms Team



Sample Radio PSA for Community Radio Spot

What to include in a radio PSA? Below are two examples of Public Service Announcements used for the *Farm to Family SNAP CSA*. A successful message will include the What, Why, Who, and How of the opportunity which serves to inform, educate, and motivate your potential customers.

English #1- 2018

Eat better and feel better in a SNAP with Viva Farms boxed produce program!

Do you or your loved ones use SNAP? Do you or your loved ones struggle to buy fresh fruits and vegetables because they are just too expensive, even with the help of SNAP? Viva Farms in Skagit County is expanding its weekly boxed produce program to individuals and families who use SNAP benefits. SNAP users participate for a reduced price that won't break the bank!

You can get 4 weeks of local, organic produce for the price of 2 weeks. For a small box that feeds 1-2 people, you pay at $10 per week or for a large box that feeds 3-4 people, you pay $17.50 per week. With Viva Fresh, you get lots of healthy food for a low cost and alleviate the stress of not knowing when you will next get fruits and vegetables for your loved ones. The program begins June 13th and runs for 14 weeks. Sign up now by visiting the Viva Farms website or calling (360) 969-7191.

English #2 - 2019

Hey SNAP recipients! Do you feel that fresh, organic produce is out of your budget? Well, good news! Viva Farms is offering fresh, local produce at a discounted rate. The Viva Farms Community Supported Agriculture program offers a permanent 50% discount to all SNAP beneficiaries in Skagit county and surrounding areas. You can enjoy a weekly box of fresh, local, organic fruits and vegetables and feel great knowing that you are supporting your family and local farming! Just $40 a month gets you weekly small boxes that feeds 1-2 adults. And for only $70 a month, you'll get weekly large boxes that feed 3-4 adults or a family of 5. Viva Farms' CSA program makes incorporating more fruits and vegetables into your diet affordable, convenient, fun, and exciting. For more information, please visit vivafarms.org or call (360) 969-7191.



Spanish #1-2018

¡Coma y siéntase mejor en un momento con el programa de SNAP y Viva Farms!

¿Usa SNAP? ¿Le cuesta mucho comprar frutas y verduras frescas porque son demasiado caras? ¿Ni siquiera la ayuda de SNAP?

En Skagit, Viva Farms está expandiendo su programa semanal de cajas de productos agrícolas para las familias que utilizan los beneficios de SNAP.

Puede participar por un precio reducido. Los usuarios de SNAfamiliesP pueden obtener 4 semanas de productos agrícolas orgánicos y locales por el precio de 2 semanas. Por un caja pequeña que alimenta a 1 a 2 personas paga $10 por semana o $17.50 por semana por una caja grande que alimenta de 3 a 4 personas. Con Viva Fresh , puede obtener una gran cantidad de alimentos VIVA FRESH saludables a un bajo costo y aliviar el estrés de la inseguridad alimentaria. Este programa comienza el 13 de junio y continúa durante 14 semanas. Inscríbase para este program en el sitio web de Viva Farms o llame al (360) 969-7191.

Spanish #2 -2019

¡Oigan los beneficiarios de EBT! ¿Sientes que los productos frescos y orgánicos están fuera de tu presupuesto? Bueno, buenas noticias! Viva Farms ofrece productos frescos y locales a un precio reducido. El programa Viva Farms Agricultura Apoyada por la Comunidad ofrece un descuento permanente de 50% a todos los beneficiarios de EBT en el condado de Skagit y las áreas circundantes. Puede 2 HLED 410 VIVA disfrutar de una caja semanal de frutas y verduras frescas, locales y orgánicas y sentirse bien al saber que está apoyando a su familia y a la agricultura local. Solo $40 al mes te da cajas pequeñas semanales que alimentan a 1-2 adultos. Y por solo $70 al mes, recibirá cajas grandes semanales para 3-4 adultos o una familia de 5. El programa CSA de Viva Farms hace que la incorporación de más frutas y verduras en su dieta sea conveniente, divertida y emocionante. Para obtener más información, visite vivafarms.org o llame al (360) 969-7191.

Press Release

A press release is a formal, official announcement regarding something new or significant about you and your farm business. A successful press release has 4 simple parts – Headline, Opening sentence, Body: What's the story, why does it matter?, and Contact information. Sample Press releases are provided here for inspiration.

Local newspaper is a great venue for sharing your CSA serving SNAP recipients. This is a marketing strategy that has been working for many businesses as it is a more direct way of reaching your customer base and sending out your brand message .

Some advantages to creating a press release:

1. There is typically no charge, or a minimum charge to publish a press release in a local paper, making it more affordable than television, direct mail, or radio advertising.
2. Flexible timelines and no limit to exposure with print ads as they can be viewed at leisure. Readers can take their time with the messages by browsing your promotion in the local paper, and seeing it pop up every time they go back to finish reading a story.
3. Many local newspapers are available in an online format that increases the reach to local community members who may not read the print copy and can generate word-of-mouth referrals.



2019 Sample Press Release – English

Final Materials -2019

Press Release - English
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 1st, 2019
Contact: Anna Chotzen
Phone: (360) 969-7191
Email: anna@vivafarms.org
Website: vivafarms.org

Viva Farms: Community Supported Agriculture Organization

Fresh Organic Produce Available for SNAP Recipients

Skagit County, WA (Month Day, Year) - Beginning June 12th, Viva Farms is starting our annual summer harvest of fresh, organic produce available at a 50% discount for anyone who receives SNAP benefits.

Food insecurity is health issue that impacts one in four families in Skagit County and as a result, there is a large population of individuals who are unsure of where their next meal is coming from. Viva Farms aims to help the community combat food insecurity by providing a 50% discount of their CSA produce boxes to SNAP benefits recipients. This discount is meant to increase access and affordability of fresh, local, organic produce to those most in need.

A CSA box consists of a variety of fruits and vegetables that are picked up weekly at one of five SNAP-site locations. To sign up for the Viva Farms CSA produce boxes, visit vivafarms.org or call the main farm at (360) 969-7191. After registering, SNAP recipients pay $40 at the start of the month to receive a weekly small box of fresh local produce that feeds 1-2 adults. There is also a larger box available for $70 per month, which is plenty for 3-4 adults. The summer harvest lasts 14 weeks, ending on September 11th.

Viva Farms is an agricultural non-profit organization, founded in 2009, whose mission is to connect the community to farmers by providing local, organic produce in Skagit County. Viva Farms increases access and affordability of these foods to the surrounding communities through their CSA program.

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For more information on Viva Farms and their SNAP program please visit vivafarms.org or contact Anna Chotzen at anna@vivafarms.org or (360)-969-7191.

2019 Sample Press Release – Spanish

Press Release - Spanish
PARA LANZAMIENTO INMEDIATO: primero de junio de 2019
Contacto: Anna Chotzen
Telefono: (360) 969 - 7191
Correo electronico: anna@vivafarms.org
Sitio web: vivafarms.org

Viva Farms: Organización de Agricultura Apoyada por la Comunidad

Productos Orgánicos Frescos Disponibles para recipientes de EBT

Condado de Skagit, WA (mes, día, año): a partir del 12 de Junio, Viva Farms comenzará nuestra cosecha anual de productos frescos y orgánicos disponibles con un 50% de descuento para cualquier persona que reciba los beneficios de SNAP.

La inseguridad alimentaria afecta una de cada cuatro familias en el condado de Skagit. Esto significa que hay una gran parte de la población que no están seguras de donde va llegar su próxima cena. Viva Farms tiene como objetivo ayudar a la comunidad a combatir la inseguridad alimentaria brindando un 50% de descuento en sus cajas de producción de CSA a los beneficiarios de EBT. Este descuento está destinado a aumentar el acceso y la asequibilidad de los productos frescos, locales y orgánicos a los más necesitados.

Una caja de CSA consta de una variedad de frutas y verduras que se recogen en una de las cinco ubicaciones del sitio de EBT. Para inscribirse en Viva Farms visite vivafarms.org o llame a la granja principal al (360) 969-7191. Después de registrarse, los beneficiarios de EBT pagan $40 al comienzo del mes para recibir una pequeña caja semanal de productos locales frescos que se alimenta a 1-2 adultos. También hay una caja más grande disponible por $70 por mes, que es suficiente para 3-4 adultos. La cosecha de verano dura 14 semanas, terminando el 11 de Septiembre.

Viva Farms es una organización agrícola sin fines de lucro que fue fundada en 2009. La mission de Viva es conectar a la comunidad con los agricultores en el condado de Skagit. Viva Farms aumenta el acceso y la asequibilidad de estos alimentos a las comunidades aledañas a través de su programa CSA.

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Para obtener más información sobre Viva Farms y su programa EBT, visite vivafarms.org o comuníquese con Anna Chotzen a anna@vivafarms.org o al (360)969-7191

Survey and Focus Groups: Hearing from Your Customers

The *Farm to Family SNAP CSA* pilot partnered with community groups to gather information from the target audience on interest and motivation to participate in the *Farm to Family SNAP CSA* box program. The use of surveys and focus groups findings helped to craft the promotion materials and better understand what might motivate the customer to choose a CSA.

The survey is a simple paper form that explores what the customer looks for when purchasing produce and identifies their preferred communication method - email, newsletter, text, etc., for reminders and updates/alerts. This information is helpful when deciding which platform and method to use when sending out announcements, reminders, and updates.

A pre-season survey can be an effective way to gather a mailing list to invite potential customers to sign-up for updates and to be on a waitlist and notified when the CSA season opens, seasonal produce available in the CSA box, and any updates on site pick-up locations and dates.

A focus group is a group interview involving a small number of demographically similar people. This more formal way of collecting information can be time-consuming but not only gives you information on customer interest but also can create interest in your CSA and 'word of mouth' promotion. The *Farm to Family SNAP CSA* project staff met with a group of potential CSA customers. This provided an opportunity to explain the cost-offset CSA model and find out which produce they would be most interested in having in the box. This group discussion allowed for questions and answers and to find out the barriers to participation.

Key findings from the *Farm to Family SNAP CSA* Interest Survey -

⇒ 90% of the SNAP customers who completed the survey had not heard of a CSA model.

⇒ The most frequently selected adjectives to describe "what is important to you when buy fruit and vegetables" were “Healthy” and “Affordable.”

⇒ Recipes and fact sheets were the most common response to the question "What might help you to use the produce in the box?”



Farm to Family SNAP CSA project held a focus group with the target audience to better understand their interest and needs. Favorite and preferred produce were identified using a 'dot" vote. A sample food box was displayed to promote the CSA and give the customer a better idea of the volume and contents in the weekly box.

Planning and SNAP Transactions

Section 2

Offering a CSA cost-offset program and accepting SNAP benefits can increase your customer base while breaking social and economic barriers to provide lower income families with an affordable option for accessing fresh, local produce. Having the ability to accept EBT is necessary. References and guides to assist farmers to become authorized to accept SNAP benefits are available.

Two useful references
that provide guidance for farmers trying to figure out how to accept SNAP/EBT payments and learn how SNAP rules apply to CSA farms–

⇒ *Becoming an Authorized SNAP Retailer – Guide for Farm Stands and CSAs*
www.buylocalfood.org/upload/resource/EBTandCSAGuide.pdf

⇒ *The CSA Farmer's Nationwide Guide to Accepting SNAP/EBT Payments*
https://youtu.be/7mj8cfyqeDA

Farm to Family SNAP CSA staff were consistent in their effort to convey that there was no difference in status between the cost-offset CSA and full-pay members. CSA boxes were packed on the morning of delivery, with all boxes, depending on size, containing the same produce and quantities, based on availability. Pick-up sites were selected by the customer at the time they signed-up from locations that were culturally sensitive.

Customer Relationship Management Software (CRM)

To support farmers with CSA transactions and stay connected with customers, customer relationship management (CRM) software is available. CRM helps track and manage customer orders and interactions, and ultimately increase sales. *Farm to Family SNAP CSA* project used CSAware® (https://www.csaware.com/) in the first year of the project; then switched to Farmigo® (https://www.farmigo.com/) in year two thru four.

CSA software can either make life much easier or cause more frustration, depending on the platform you choose. Factors for consideration when selecting a CSA Management software include:

⇒ Easy to learn and use (designed for small businesses).

⇒ Mobile-phone compatible.

⇒ Manage and sort customers along the pipeline from "lead" to established customer.

⇒ Organize all information and interactions with customer in one place.

⇒ Integration with email marketing tool.

⇒ Integrate with social media to monitor effectiveness and potential leads.

⇒ Cost – one time investment vs. recurring costs, like monthly fees.



Customer Sign-ups

The customer sign-up for *Farm to Family SNAP CSA* through Viva Farms' subscription was offered on the online platform Farmigo®. The customer had a choice of box size –

⇒ small box which generously feeds 1-2 adults

⇒ large box which feeds 3-4 adults or a family of five.

A 50% discount was offered to SNAP EBT shopper at the time of online enrollment and verified at time of first box pick-up. SNAP EBT customers were required to pay a deposit, equivalent to the price of one box which was fully refunded when the SNAP EBT was swiped on the first payment.

EBT benefits at one time were distributed on the first day of the month for all beneficiaries. A recent change allows states to stagger issuance of SNAP benefits throughout the month, instead of issuing SNAP benefits for all SNAP households on the same day or couple of days of the month. Benefits are still issued once a month for each household, but not all households receive their benefits on the first day or couple of days of the month. The benefits of staggering benefits include reduced congestion at local grocery stores, appropriately stocked and staffed grocery stores, more consistent access to a variety of healthy food for shoppers, predictable and steady schedules for grocery store employees.

However, when establishing intermittent payment for the CSA subscription with SNAP benefits, the scheduling is based on a four-week cycle rather than a monthly payment at the first of each month. To offer the subsidized box within the USDA rules, a payment for the 4 week cycle—buy two, get two free—is received at the beginning of a four-week cycle. The customer swipes the EBT card and picks-up the first box, retuning over the next three weeks for the other boxes paid for from the first swipe. On the fourth week, the customer had a choice to continue participating in the CSA program by swiping their EBT card for the next four-week cycle.

Accepting SNAP Benefits

Only SNAP-eligible items can be included in the CSA shares when accepting EBT payment. "*Eligible foods are defined as any food or food product intended for home preparation and human consumption, including fruits and vegetables, seeds and plants that produce food*," (USDA).

Foods that are SNAP-eligible include but are not limited to https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligible-food-items:

⇒ Fruits and Vegetables, edible flowers

⇒ Meat, poultry, and fish

⇒ Dairy products

⇒ Breads and cereals

⇒ Other foods such as snack foods and non-alcoholic beverages

⇒ Seeds and plants, which produce food for the household to eat.

USDA guidelines for accepting customer payment with SNAP benefits is limited to 14 days in advance of receiving the produce from the farmer.

Many CSAs require a shareholder to pre-purchase an entire season's worth of produce at the beginning of the season. This may not be ideal for SNAP customers as they can only pre-purchase items using their SNAP benefits 14 days in advance to receiving the product. Instead of SNAP customers making one large payment at the beginning of the season, they will need to make multiple smaller payments throughout the season. *Farm to Family SNAP CSA* utilized a 'buy 2 get 2 free' promotion so that SNAP customers purchased their first two boxes for week 1 and week 2 and then received week 3 and 4 for free.

Note: Make sure to keep a close eye on the SNAP eligibility rules as they change frequently https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/recipient/eligibility

For many of SNAP customers, the CSA model is a new and different way to purchase produce. Providing details and instructions on how the customer can sign-up, make a payment, and when/where to pick-up the CSA box made the process easy.

Viva Farms Website Instructional Scripts

English

Welcome to the Viva Farms website! To sign up for a subscription of our summer harvest of weekly farm-fresh organic produce, click Join Our CSA. SNAP recipients receive 50% off in our CSA program! You can choose to pay either $40 each month for small, weekly produce boxes, or $70 for the large boxes. This works out to $10 or $17.50/ week for a box of fresh, organic, and local produce. To continue signing up, click the Join Our CSA button.

Next, choose a pick-up location. You'll want to choose one of the five locations that are listed as EBT swipe sites. You'll only have to swipe your EBT card here once a month. You can also select 'Map View' to find the location nearest to you. Once you've selected a pick-up location, click next. Now you can choose the size and duration of your CSA subscription. The small boxes generously feed 1-2 adults and the large boxes are great for 3-4 adults or a family of 5. You can also choose between the 28-week or 14-week program. The 14-week program is June to September and the 28 week program lasts until December. These prices don't reflect what you'll be paying. At this time you'll only be asked to make a $20 deposit, which will be reimbursed at the end of the harvest. Clicking next, you also have the option to add some bread to your subscription. This sourdough bread is made in Whatcom County. However, it is not eligible for the SNAP discount. Now, here comes the discount. Choose EBT deposit. This deposit cannot be made with an EBT card. You must use a debit or credit card for this deposit. Cash and check deposits are also accepted in person by appointment. Next, enter your payment information. On the first Wednesday of the harvest, head to your pickup location to make your EBT payment for the month. Keep coming back each Wednesday for your box! You will only have to make your payment on the first week of each month. That's it! You've successfully signed up for the Viva Farms CSA. Wasn't that a SNAP?!

Spanish

Bienvenido al sitio web de Viva Farms! Para inscribirse a la cosecha de verano de productos orgánicos frescos semanalmente, haga clic en Unirse a nuestro CSA. ¡Los beneficiarios de EBT reciben un 50% de descuento en nuestro programa CSA! Puede elegir pagar $40 por mes para cajas pequeñas de productos semanales o $70 para cajas grandes. Esto equivale a $10 o $17.50 por cada semana para una caja de productos frescos, orgánicos y locales. Para continuar con el registro, haga clic en el botón Unirse a nuestro CSA.

A continuación, elija un lugar de recogida. Usted tiene que elegir una de las cinco ubicaciones que figuran como sitios donde aceptan EBT. Solo tendrás que deslizar tu tarjeta EBT una vez al mes. También puede seleccionar 'Vista de mapa' para encontrar la ubicación más cercana a usted. Una vez que hayas seleccionado un lugar de recogida, haz clic en siguiente. Ahora puede elegir el tamaño y la duración de su suscripción de CSA. Las cajas pequeñas alimentan generosamente a 1-2 adultos y las cajas grandes son ideales para 3-4 adultos o una familia de 5. También puede elegir entre el programa de 28 semanas o de 14 semanas. El programa de 14 semanas es de Junio a Septiembre y el programa de 28 semanas dura hasta 17 HLED 410 VIVA Diciembre. Estos precios no reflejan lo que pagará. En este momento solo se le pedirá que realice un depósito de $20, que se reembolsará al final de la cosecha. Al hacer clic a continuación, también tiene la opción de agregar pan a su suscripción. Este pan se hace en el condado de Whatcom. El pan no es elegible para el descuento de EBT. Ahora, en esta parte es donde esta el descuento. Elija depósito EBT. Este depósito no se puede hacer con una tarjeta EBT. Debe utilizar una tarjeta de débito o crédito para este depósito. Efectivo y depósitos de cheques también se aceptan en persona con cita previa. A continuación, introduzca su información de pago. El primer miércoles de la cosecha, diríjase a su lugar de recolección para realizar el pago de EBT del mes. ¡Sigue regresando cada miércoles para su caja! ¡Eso es todo! Te has registrado en el programa CSA de Viva Farms!

Equipment for SNAP Transactions

SNAP currently uses Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) systems to allow SNAP recipients to use their benefits to purchase eligible foods. A list of eligible foods can be found at https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligible-food-items.

Using EBT has many benefits to the customer, eliminating perceived social barriers when it comes to using SNAP benefits. However, the system comes with its own set of barriers, ones that may affect you as a direct-to-consumer retailer. To accept SNAP benefits as payment, specific equipment is required. Currently there are two options for equipment support for farmers accepting SNAP—State EBT Equipment Programs and SNAP Mobile Transaction Processing Applications. Details for these two programs can be found below:

⇒ State EBT Equipment Programs https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/state-ebt-equipment

States are offered an opportunity to obtain funding to provide equipment that can be used to process SNAP transactions, but not debit/credit transactions, at no cost. States are required to provide no-cost, EBT-only POS (point of sale) equipment to certain Direct Market Farmers and Farmers Markets that are exempted from a requirement that SNAP retailers pay for their own EBT equipment (found in the 2014 Farm Bill). Unfortunately, Washington state is not included in this program.

⇒ SNAP Mobile Transaction Processing Application https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/farmer-producer/farmers-market-grant-program:

Through a cooperative agreement, the National Association of Farmers Market Nutrition Programs (NAFMNP) is providing access to a SNAP Mobile Application (The App) free of cost, for one year. The App enables Farmers to accept SNAP EBT payments on their own smart device. The goal is to gradually move from a subsidized equipment program to a more cost-efficient application-based solution that enables processing via smart devices that are privately owned.

- To process SNAP benefits, *Farm to Family SNAP CSA* utilized the SNAP Mobile Transaction Processing Application. While this process was deemed the most efficient of the two for Viva Farms, there were initial start-up costs* which included:
    - Mini-iPads = ~$600/iPad
    - EBT Card reader + Printer = ~$500/set
    - Annual License renewal = $119/year

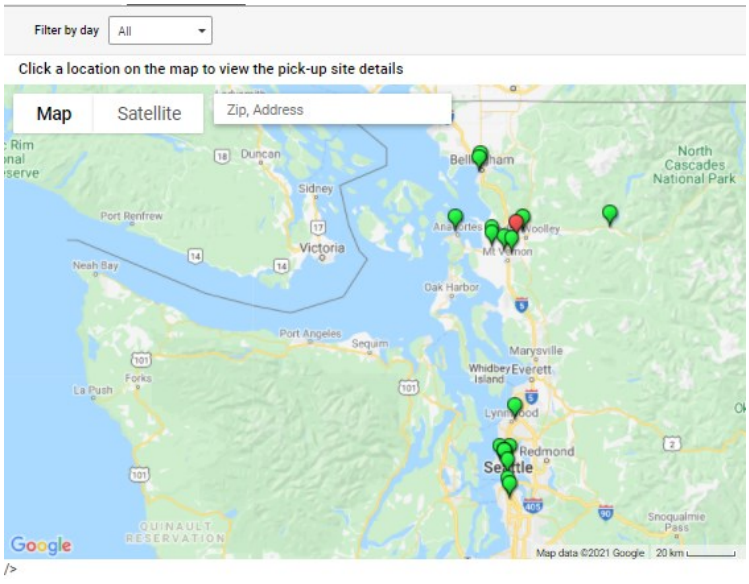
*these costs are for a single site – if there are multiple sites that process payment simultaneously, this suite of equipment is needed for each site.



CSA Box Pick-Up Location

Location accessibility is another factor that can encourage or hinder the SNAP shoppers in participating in your CSA program. To accept SNAP benefits, each SNAP payment site requires one mini-iPad, an EBT card reader, and a receipt printer. Customers can drive to your farm for pick-up and payment, limiting the equipment needed. If there is a cluster of SNAP families in a geographic area away from your farm, a pick-up site can be established in partnership with a business or community service agency. Having multiple payment sites can provide accessibility and ease when it comes to purchasing a share with SNAP benefits; however, it requires more equipment and staffing needs.

The *Farm to Family SNAP CSA* pick-up sites were planned to cover large geographical areas in Skagit County, Seattle, and Bellingham, WA. To plan pick-up sites, different businesses were contacted to gauge their interest in hosting a CSA pick-up site. Their responsibility included receiving the CSA boxes and making space for the boxes on the day of customer pick-up. A list of customers was available at each site so that customers could check-off that they picked up their box. The pick-up time frames were based on how early the Viva Farms staff could physically get to the locations to drop off the CSA boxes on the delivery day itself and best time for the host.





The *Farm to Family SNAP CSA* relied on volunteer staff to be present onsite each week at the pick-up location to accept EBT payment. Volunteers were recruited to handle the SNAP transactions, receiving a CSA Box in return for their service. The pick-up timeframe at the SNAP EBT sites was limited to 1 to 2 hours in order to accommodate volunteers' schedules. The volunteers were consistent at each site, creating a sense of community and shared information about produce in the CSA box and recipe ideas.

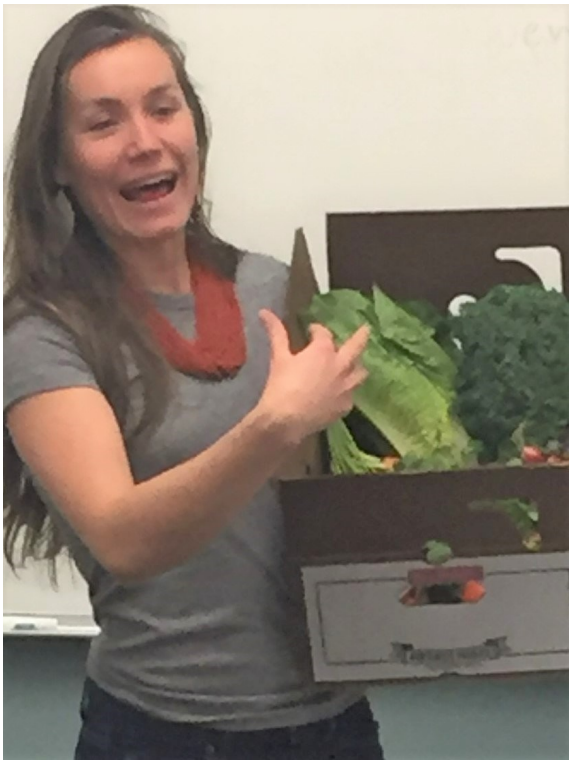
To maintain compliance with the SNAP EBT rules and payment system, protocols were put into place and monitored by Viva Farms staff. Volunteers were trained on SNAP protocols and how to process the transaction. Payment processes were practiced internally in advance and scripts/cheat sheets were created that were used to train the volunteers and made available for reference at the host site throughout the season. The instructions were specific to Viva Farms operations and related software.

A Customer Self-Service system was established at the pick-up site for customers. The customer checked their name off a list curated for the specific week and picked-up their box. If a customer was a SNAP participant, they would check in with the Viva Farms volunteer who would find their name to verify that (1) they had a box to pick-up and (2) check if they had to make a payment for the week. If they did not need to make a payment, the participant took a CSA box.

If SNAP customers needed to make a payment, the Viva Farms volunteer would process the information of the individual such as their EBT card or other payment method and make sure they were eligible for SNAP. The card information would be put in the SNAP processing application where the individual signed confirmation of payment and then was given a receipt for proof of payment. The SNAP customers would then be signed-up to receive CSA boxes for the next 4 week-cycle before they had to make another payment.



Whether an individual had to make a payment or not, the Viva Farms volunteer would input every SNAP participant into a Google Form to track if participants were picking up their boxes. If a participant did not pick-up their box on the pick-up day, their box would be given to another participant, the Viva Farms volunteer, or an employee at the host site.





Price Consideration for CSA Box

The price of the CSA share box is associated with the actual cost of the produce in the box as well as other non-monetary costs such as time and labor. Determination of the customers' perceived value (or willingness to pay) is an important component in developing a pricing strategy for the CSA share box. Although customer-based pricing is important, it is also important that the final price exceeds the cost of production and marketing and includes a fair wage to the farm operator and his/her family. If pricing is below the cost to produce and deliver the CSA, the farming operation will not be sustainable. A contributing factor to CSA burnout and failure is setting the share box price too low. A waiting list of customers suggests that people will pay more for a share. If members are commenting about getting too much food or many customers are splitting shares, the share size might be too large. Adjusting the quantity provided in the box to maintain value while maximizing profits takes adjustments and reassessment.

Viva Farms determined the price of their CSA shares by comparing the price of produce assumed to be in the box each week with the wholesale market prices. It was assumed that each week, 7-10 produce items would be in the box. A standard mark-up fee was then added to the cost of the box to help offset the costs associated with planning, promoting, packing, and delivering the CSA.



Price Comparison of Retail and Direct-To-Consumer Produce

A market survey and price comparison of local retail, farmers market, and CSA produce was conducted to provide a price-point comparison. To determine how the price of the CSA box compared to other sources of produce, the *Farm to Family SNAP CSA* partnered with a SNAP shopper to complete a cost comparison of the produce in the CSA share with sale prices of the same produce at a local Farmers Market, local Food Coop, and national retailers Walmart and Safeway.

The box contents were catalogued, weighed and measured. The edible serving sizes of the produce in the box was calculated based on the USDA MyPlate fruit and vegetable serving size to meet healthy eating guidelines. The USDA recommendation for a healthy diet is consumption of 5-7 serving of fruit and vegetables per day. A typical serving of a cooked vegetable is ½ cup, raw vegetable (like lettuce) is one cup, fruit is ½ cup or small piece of fruit. For items not typically consumed alone, such as onion, garlic or herbs, but used as flavoring, the portion size was not included in the calculation. Where possible, the organic option from the retail outlets was used in the comparison.

The survey found that the *Farm to Family SNAP CSA* box provided between 35-45 recommended servings of fruit and vegetables. This meets the suggested intake for 1 adult for one week or half of the suggested intake for a family of two.

The retail cost of comparable produce was estimated to be $32.00. Another way of stating this–the SNAP-CSA provided a ~33% discount on weekly produce. This is a cost saving of $88.00 per month ($32x4 weeks =$128, compared to $40 for 4 weeks).

Cost Comparison for CSA and Retail Produce

SNAP-CSA cost comparison, estimate of servings offered in small box. Cost of a *Farm to Family CSA Small Box* for a SNAP shopper was $40 for 4 week share or $10/week.

Week 11						
Box items	descriptor	estimated serving	MV Farmers Market	Co-op	Walmart	Safeway
Tomatoes	Heirloom - 1 large 3 small - 1.5#	5 - 1/2 cup serving	$5/#	5.49/#	1.48/# slicing red, not organic or heirloom	2.49/# slicing red, not organic or heirloom
collards	1 bunch - 8 stems	8 - 1/2 cup serving	$3/bunch of 8 stalks	2.49 for 10 stalks	1.48 for 15 stems -organic	1.99 for 7 stems - not organic
sweet onion	1.5# sweet	flavoring	$1 each - comparable quantity would require 2 onions	1.48/#	1.18/# Walla Walla sweets	1.90/# organic white
green beans	1.5 # bag (1#=3 1/2 cups)	5 cups or 10 1/2 cup s ervings	$6/#	3.29/#	1.68 for 1.5# bag	2.99/#
raspberries	6oz	4	$4	4.49	3.76 organic	3.99 not organic
blueberries	1 pint	4 servings	$4	4.69	1.98	3.99 for 10 oz
salad mix	8 oz bag	8 - 1 cup serving	$3 for lettuce bunch	4.99 for 8 oz bag	3.46 for 5 oz organic	3.99 for 5 oz organic
dill	1 bunch	n/a	not available	2.49	1.98	2.50 - organic
Cost Estimate	$20.00	~39 servings	$35.50	$34.62	$20.08	$22.90
Week 12						
Box items	descriptor	estimated serving	MV Farmers Market	Co-op	Walmart	Safeway
Raspberry	2 1/2 pint	8- 1/4 cup	$4.98/pint ($10)	$4/per 1/2 pint ($8)	3.69 per pint ($7.38)	2 pints for $6
Beets	3 per bunch/1/2#	3	2.5/# ($1.25)	3.5/# ($1.75)	1.94/# ($1)	2.99/# organic (1.50)
Carrots	6 per bunch	6	2.5/#	2.49 bagged or-ganic	0.96/#	1.99/# organic
jalopeno Peppers	2	flavoring	25 cents each	7.99/# (.50)	1.38/# (.15)	2.79/# (.45)
Basil	1 bunch	flavoring	not available	2.99	2.98 for basil plant	2.50 organic
Summer Squash	1#	4	$3/#	2.50/#	2.99	2.49/# organic
Zucchini	1#	4	3/#	2.99/#	1.38/#	2.49/# organic
scalloped squash	1#	2	3/#	2.99/#	na	2.49/# organic
tomatos	2 pints	6	5.50/pint ($11)	4.99/pint organic ($10)	4.98 organic medley ($10)	3.99 organic ($8)
leafy greens- bag	8 oz bag	8	2 for $5	4.99/8z organic	4.76 for 2#	4.99 clam shell 10 oz
garlic	1	flavoring	$3	5.99/# (.50)	0.50	0.79
Estimate	$20.00	~40 servings	$42.00	$39.70	$31.64	$33.69

Planning

Preparing for the harvest season is a multi-step process that includes looking at the entire length of the CSA season and estimating how much of each type of produce to include each week based on seasonal availability and customer preference. Using customer feedback through surveys, conversations at CSA pick-up sites, and farmer input about which products they enjoyed most and want more of, and which products they wanted less of can inform the next planting season. After determining how much of each product will be included in the box and when, farmers work on production planning, which adds confidence in reliable sales outlet for their produce.

Working with the Farmers

Matching consumer preference with farmers' harvest ensures that there is market for the produce grown. The *Farm to Family SNAP CSA* asked for customer feedback at the end of each season through an online questionnaire that included produce preference. The findings from the survey were shared with the farmers to guide farm production planning, determining what and how much to grow for the season. This assured that that the produce grown would be consistent with consumer preferences and promote reliable sales.





Customers' Preference

Each year, the planning around what goes into the Viva Farms CSA is guided by customers' feedback on what they want more and less of in the CSA Box. Each season, surveys are distributed to customers through an online questionnaire sent out at the beginning of each planting season.

Online surveys and questionnaires can give a voice to your customer, discover what works best and allow you to use that information to make changes in your operations. Free and open-source survey tools are available to efficiently hear from your customers. Some examples are listed below.

Qualtrics ®. (https://www.qualtrics.com/). This online survey tool allows you to create, distribute, and analyze surveys to find customer, and marketing research insights. The free version includes one active survey at a time, up to 10 questions per survey, summary reports and filtering, survey logic, and online reporting.

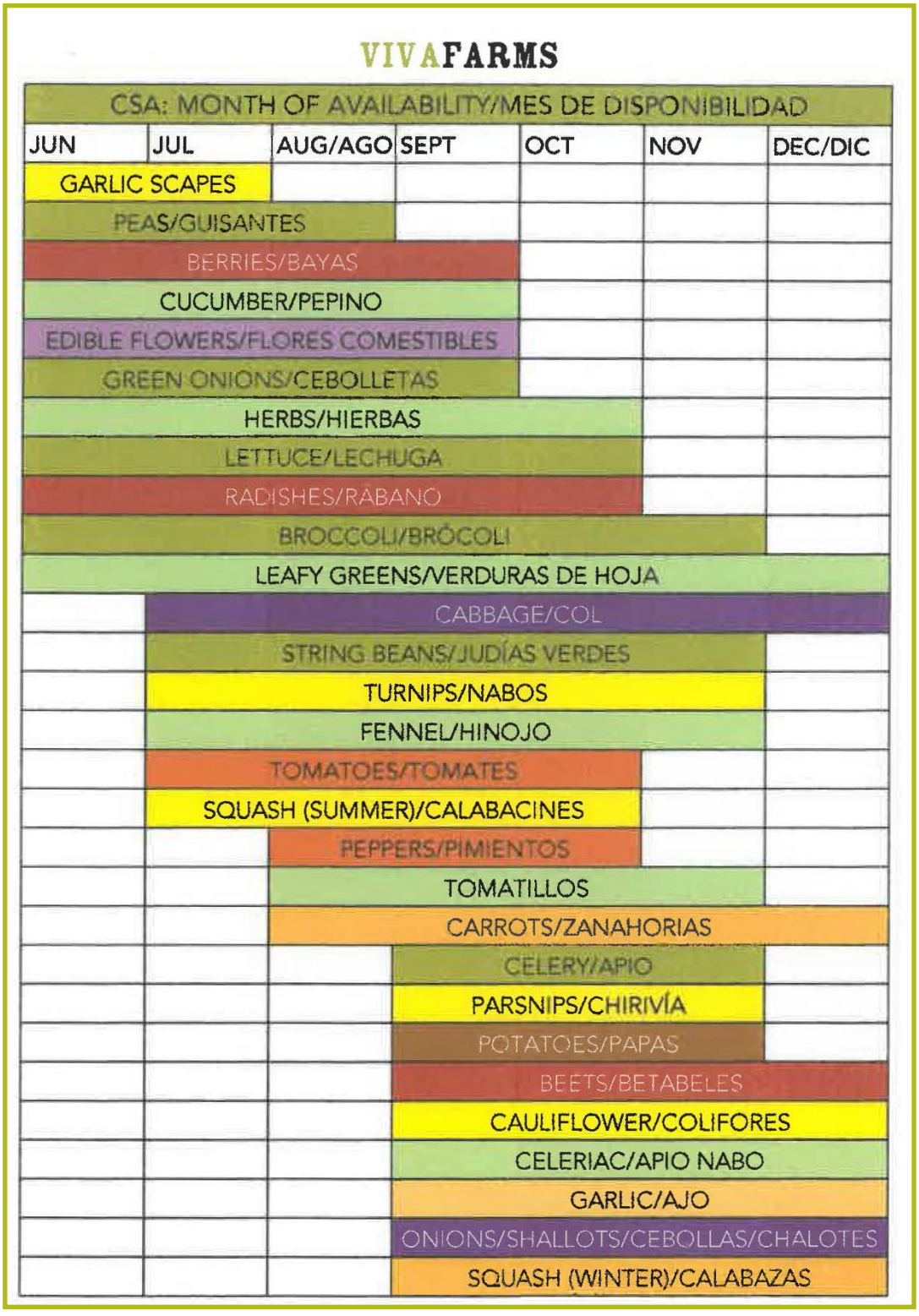
Google Forms®. (https://www.google.com/forms/about/) This survey software is part of the free, web-based Google Docs Editors suite offered by Google. Google Forms lets you collect data and collaborate with others in real time.

Survey Monkey®. (https://www.surveymonkey.com/) Survey Monkey provides both a free and paid version for online questionnaire and surveys.

Delighted® https://www.getapp.com/customer-management-software/a/delighted/?opt=true Delighted is a multichannel customer feedback tool including email, SMS, web link and website**.** Free and paid plans are available**.**

What's in Season and When

Keeping track of the produce available by the season is a good way to predict how much of a certain product ma be needed to include in the CSA box. Seasonal availability follows a predictable rhythm, though unseasonably warm, cold or wet weather can shorten or extend the harvest. A seasonal chart based on the month of year the crop is typically available can help with planning and educate the consumer on seasonal food availability.



Food Education and CSA Recipes

Section 3

The Farm to Family project promoted fresh, local, organic fruit and vegetables to SNAP-eligible individuals and families through a discounted CSA produce box. To encourage customers to make the most of the produce they received, WSU Skagit Family Living Program created both print and video materials to share preparation ideas and recipes that showcased the local produce. The aim was to support SNAP shoppers in exploring new ways to prepare familiar favorites and become familiar with less common produce grown in the Skagit Valley, WA, such as kohlrabi, spaghetti squash, Swiss chard, and kale. The resulting suite of educational supports including print recipes, recipe videos, cooking demos, and farmer interviews helped to achieve the goal of connecting small farms and 40 varieties of healthy produce to SNAP shoppers and other customers.

Choices around food selection and skill in food preparation are critical components in creating healthy, affordable meals. Community-supported agriculture provides a unique opportunity for targeted food education in cooking skills to best utilize local produce, food handling (cleaning and storing) and food preservation.





Consumers access recipes and food preparation ideas when preparing meals in a variety of formats including cookbooks, social media and online recipe sites. SNAP customers are no different. In focus groups and key informant interviews, we learned that both SNAP and non-SNAP CSA customers were unfamiliar with many of the seasonal produce items available in the CSA box, such as kohlrabi, fennel, different varieties of squashes, and garlic scapes. Also, concern was expressed that if the customer did not know how to prepare the food, and the family members would not eat it, the food would be wasted.

The initial findings from the *Farm to Family SNAP CSA* survey found that families were concerned that the cost of fresh, local, organic produce was high priced and unaffordable. Also, since the produce was provided each week based on the harvest rather than selected by the consumer, there was concern that unfamiliar food would not be eaten (go to waste), or that there would be more produce than what could be consumed by the family during the week. These concerns have been reported from other CSA programs.

Food Education

To address these concerns, a suite of food education materials were created to increase consumer confidence in their ability to prepare, serve, and store food to optimize flavor and reduce food waste. The recipes and fact sheets introduced new ways to prepare family favorites and to become more familiar with less common local produce.

The selection of recipes was guided by SNAP participants and included some key themes –easy to prepare, healthy, appealing and kid-friendly, could be customized to reflect personal preference and easily switch out ingredients to those on hand, and culturally diverse. Criteria for choosing the recipes focused on using only a minimal number of ingredients, typically found in the home kitchen, reinforced the idea that the recipe is a guide and could be deviated from to customize for personal preference, and included pictures of steps to follow, with the completed recipe pictured for inspiration.



Community Cooking Classes

An in-person cooking class series was designed to provide a shared experience of preparing food, exchange ideas on how to best use the CSA produce, and build community around a shared meal. These CSA-tailored cooking classes were offered during the harvest season. Instruction centered around opening the weekly CSA Box with the participant, identification of the different fruits and vegetables, and then preparing a recipe using the fresh produce. This time-intensive, resource-heavy activity was poorly attended. A less time-consuming food education model could include samples of less familiar food at the pick-up site or provide recipes in CSA box.



Hosting a field day on the farm with a cooking demonstration from a local chef or culinary talent can bring customers to your farm business, teach cooking basics to showcase local produce, and build community. USDA programs like SNAP-Ed and EFNEP, typically offered through the Cooperative Extension Service [https://www.almanac.com/cooperative-extension-services], offer SNAP-eligible consumers nutrition education including curriculum-based cooking classes. Partnership with these programs may be successful in reaching your customers with valued information.



Recipe videos and online cooking classes

Cooking videos shared online enable your customer to easily understand the cooking process, gain confidence, and inspire them to prepare a recipe from the produce in the CSA box. The *Farm to Family SNAP CSA* partnered with a local film company to create 36 video recipes modeled after Tasty® videos, which are short, only 1-3 minutes long, have captions for English and Spanish viewers, background music, and illustrated steps to preparing the recipe. The recipe videos can be accessed at https://extension.wsu.edu/skagit/farm-to-families-recipes-and-local-food-map/

The filming of recipes was consistent with the harvest season to highlight what was in season. A "Shoot List" was created listing props needed for the recipe filming such as other ingredients, utensils for prep, dishes for service, list of fruits and vegetables, and notes for set-up.

A rack card was designed and included in the CSA Box to alert each CSA customer to the recipe resources. Using a QR code and shortened URL simplified the steps that the SNAP customer needed to follow to link-to and watch the videos.

A partnership with the local culinary school resulted in the filming of cooking demo/ classes. Just as in the in-person class, the CSA Box was opened, produce items identified and described, then the chef created a recipe using the produce. The culinary instructor/chef did not have a preplanned recipe but rather looked at what was in the box, decided what flavors would go together and prepared a dish using one or more of the food box ingredients. The filming and editing was completed by students and the final versions were dubbed in Spanish. The cooking videos can be accessed at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrCVqfP0kncw7Y1mdRjByIg/playlists



Creating and filming professional recipe videos can be expensive and time consuming. However, digital and cell phone technology is rapidly changing with affordable options available.

Links to easy-to-follow video sources:

⇒ How to make videos with mobile phone https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d0v6jRy_29Y

⇒ Create a Movie Using Google Photo https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHQiy36whPY

⇒ Create a Movie Using PowerPoint https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g3y1QBvtWvg

⇒ Create a Movie in iMovie https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT210410

An alternative to creating your own content is to partner with media departments at high schools, vocational programs, or community colleges'. This can provide interested students practice and experience in this area while creating instructional content for your CSA customers.



Print Recipes

Print recipes were created featuring CSA produce. Recipes were gleaned from USDA recipe sources that were designed for families using SNAP benefits are healthy and thrifty, a short list of ingredients and are easy to make https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/nutrition-education/recipes. Most of all they taste good! A template was designed for consistent formatting and sections. Photographs illustrating the steps to follow inn preparing the recipe, with a final picture of finished recipe were included on one side of the page. The ingredients needed and directions were listed opposite the preparation steps. Food Storage tips were included. The recipes are available in English and Spanish.

Print recipes can be found on Viva Farms webpage at https://vivafarms.org/recipes/





*A **recipe rack card** was designed and included in the CSA Box to alert each CSA customer to the recipe resources. Using a QR code and shortened URL web address simplified the steps that the SNAP customer needed to follow to link-to and watch the videos.*

Sample Recipe Card from Video Recipes

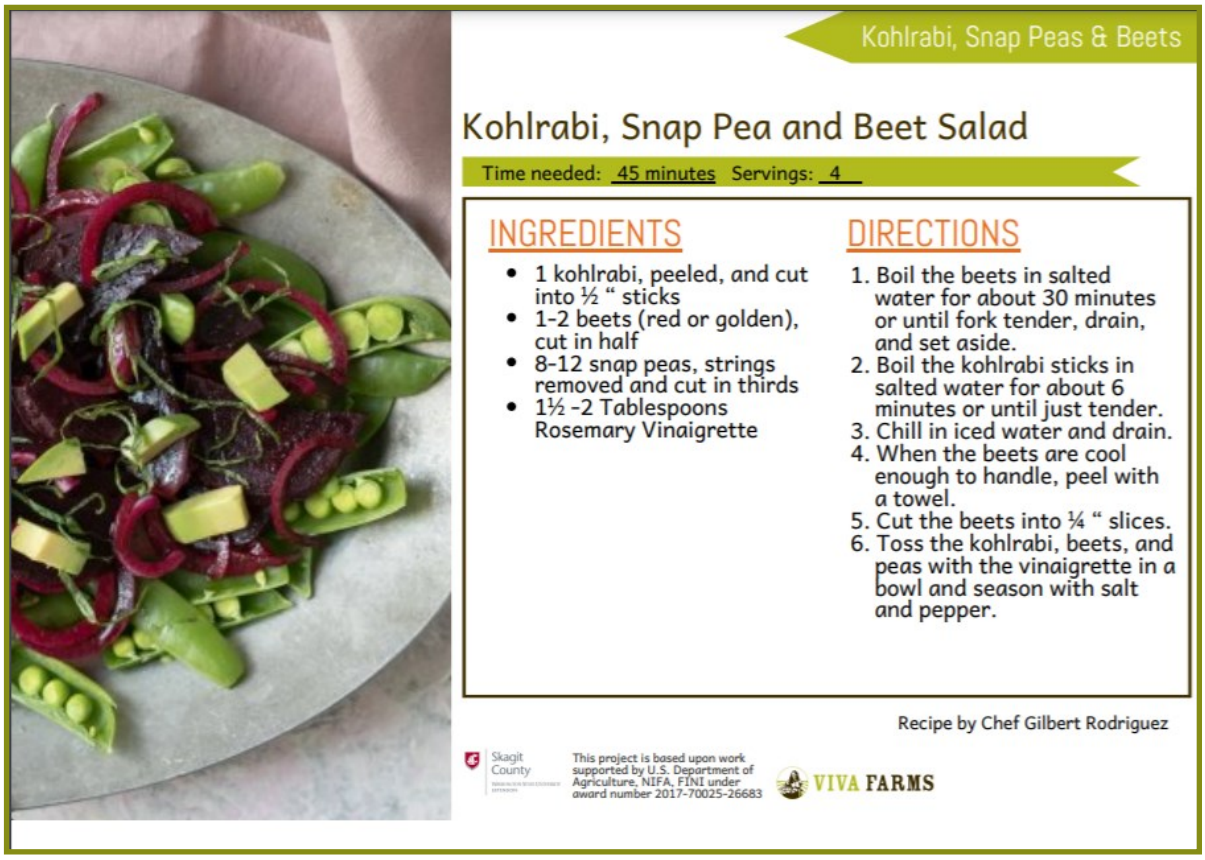
Print recipes can be downloaded and short recipe videos featuring Viva Farms Harvest can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLraj_bxVa_9k82vGUD3gza3C2utpg6_LN





Sample Recipe Card from Cooking Class

Cooing class videos can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/playlist?



Kohlrabi, Snap Peas & Beets

Kohlrabi, Snap Pea and Beet Salad

Time needed: 45 minutes Servings: 4

INGREDIENTS

- 1 kohlrabi, peeled, and cut into ½ " sticks
- 1-2 beets (red or golden), cut in half
- 8-12 snap peas, strings removed and cut in thirds
- 1½ -2 Tablespoons Rosemary Vinaigrette

DIRECTIONS

1. Boil the beets in salted water for about 30 minutes or until fork tender, drain, and set aside.
2. Boil the kohlrabi sticks in salted water for about 6 minutes or until just tender.
3. Chill in iced water and drain.
4. When the beets are cool enough to handle, peel with a towel.
5. Cut the beets into ¼ " slices.
6. Toss the kohlrabi, beets, and peas with the vinaigrette in a bowl and season with salt and pepper.

Recipe by Chef Gilbert Rodriguez

Skagit County Extension
This project is based upon work supported by U.S. Department of Agriculture, NIFA, FINI under award number 2017-70025-26683
VIVA FARMS



Colinado, chiciro y betabel

Ensalada de colinado, chichiro y betabel

Tiempo Necesario: 45 minutos Porciones: 4

INGREDIENTES

- 1 Colinado, Pelado, y cortado en palitos de ½ pulgada
- 1-2 betabeles (rojo o dorado), cortado a la mitad
- 8-12 chicharos, con en ilo removido y cortado en tercios
- 1½ -2 Cucharadas de Vinagreta de Romero

DIRECCIONES

1. Hierve los betabeles en agua salada aproximadamente 30 minutos o hasta que esté suave al contacto de un tenedor, escurrir y hacer a un lado.
2. Hierve los palitos de colinado en agua salada aproximadamente 6 minutos o hasta que estén medio suaves. Sacar y remojar en agua helada y escurrir.
3. Cuando los betabeles están suficientemente fríos para poder trabajarlos, pelar con una toallita.
4. Cortar la betabel en rebanadas de ¼ de pulgada
5. En un recipiente mezcla el colinado, betabel, y el chicharo con la vinagreta y sazona con sal y pimienta.

Receta por Chef Gilbert Rodriguez

Skagit County Extension
Este material fue financiado por el Programa de asistencia de nutrición complementaria de la USDA. 2017-70025-26683.
VIVA FARMS

Meeting the Needs of Families with Limited Resources

The SNAP program was implemented in 1939, initially designed to address protein/calorie insufficiency as well as reduce agricultural surpluses. More recently, nutrition-related health challenges have shifted to the food insecurity–obesity paradox, where many individuals suffer from both conditions simultaneously. CSAs, like other direct-to-consumer markets, play an important role in providing a healthy, nutritious options to consumers that can contribute to improved health outcomes. Recent studies have shown positive changes in attitudes and consumer behavior toward fruits and vegetables among CSA members.

Research findings on the willingness of limited income households and SNAP customers to participate in a CSA Box program can help farms design a program that best serves this customer base. Interviews with customers suggest that once the SNAP household better understands the nature of the CSA program, they saw several advantages to participating, such as less worry going to retailers to buy vegetables, supporting local farmers, and having organic produce at an affordable price. A primary barrier to prepay for a box, particularly while on a fixed income, was not knowing exactly what would be in it. Given SNAP consumers have limited food income each month, it was important to them to know exactly what they were purchasing ahead of time to avoid potential waste of money. Another concern was the amount of produce in each box and the time needed to prepare it.

Partnerships with programs and agencies that serve SNAP recipients can help you promote your CSA and recruit new customers. When creating outreach material and education resources for your intended audience it is not only important to keep your audience in mind, taking into consideration demographics such as



age, race, ethnicity, income, etc., but to include your intended audience in the decision-making process. Throughout the project *Farm to Family SNAP CSA* sought the input of the intended audience through surveys and focus groups.

Possible partners:

⇒ Women, Infant and Children Supplemental Food Program (WIC)
⇒ Cooperative Extension
⇒ SNAP- Ed programs and EFNEP programs
⇒ Department of Health and Social Service agencies
⇒ Work Training Programs

Web-based food education resources are available that are designed with the SNAP customers in mind:

- WSU Live Well https://wasnap-ed.org/live-well/
- Oregon State University Food Hero https://www.foodhero.org/recipes/healthy-recipes
- USDA SNAP-Ed Connection https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/nutrition-education/recipes

COVID - 19

Within the last year of the pilot project, the COVID-19 pandemic introduced challenges and adjustments to the CSA delivery process and outreach activities. The disruption in market sectors, including institutional and restaurant businesses no longer in operation, shifted the produce market distribution to the CSA, which saw an increase in customer base.

A well-established marketing channel and partnerships made it possible to reach out to SNAP shoppers to promote the program. To maintain safety protocols at the pick-up sites, specific instructions for CSA box pick-up at locations was shared in the reminder email that was sent out weekly as well as written instructions posted at each site.



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A special thanks to the Viva Farmers and SNAP shoppers who participated in this CSA cost-offset project. The instructional materials developed, lessons learned, and practices established will help us to continue the work of expanding the availability of local food to all community members.

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For additional information and resources developed as part of this project, please contact Diane Smith, WSU Skagit Extension at diane.smith@wsu.edu

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