

Saugeen River CSA

September 2012 Newsletter

Hello everyone,

First a couple of announcements: **The harvest season is half over...** Yes, we will continue having weekly pick-ups until the middle of November. In the next weeks you will also receive a reminder of how much you still owe on this year's CSA share (if anything). Please try to make sure this is paid up before the end of the season. And for those of you who still want to do a half day of work for a \$50 reduction in the share price, the month of October is filled with harvesting that you are welcome to join in on. Keep in touch as to our schedule, and watch the notices on the website for specific days we need help.

Also, **now is the time to sign up for Winter Shares.** This year I will only be providing winter shares for those who are able to come to the farm to pick-up. The pick-up will be every other Friday from 2-6pm starting the beginning of December to whenever we run out of produce (which has been end of March or early April the past few years). There are two share sizes available: the small is \$200 and the large is \$350. Payment for the share is due before December 31st.

Now I would like to say a big "Thank you" to those of you who came out to the Farm Fundraiser on September 8, as well as those of you who did not come out, but still wanted to make a donation. Special thanks to Mark, Beth, Connie, and Ron who brought their amazing musical talent and made for such a great evening.

People asked what the fundraiser was for. It was originally called "Raise the Roof" since it was going to help with the costs of putting a permanent roof on our vegetable washing space. But as I spoke to people about how to go about doing this, and considered all that was involved, it was clear that the challenge of resolving the issue of snow load, made the project much more involved and may not have ended up serving the best need. So in posting the event, I also called it "Fill the Floor" in reference to a needed barn repair where the floor had been removed by a previous owner and makes it much harder to clean the manure out each year. I had priced it out last year, but was not able to afford to have it done, so put it off for later. I realized this was not the best use of money from a fundraiser (I'll explain this shortly), so decided to put the money towards constructing a new seedling starting greenhouse space (which will involve a roof, so the original name can still apply!). This space will be connected to our house, which will allow the heat from our wood stove (which is always on at the time we need the seedlings) to also heat the seedlings. This has been a project that we have thought of for several years, but again had put off for lack of funds. We have always started the seedlings in our current heated greenhouse. We started with a propane furnace, which only runs from early March to mid May, but sometimes used up to \$2000 in propane in that short amount of time! In 2006, I installed a woodstove in the greenhouse to try to offset the use of propane. This helped, but we were still using quite a bit of propane, as we would let the furnace kick on during the night. And without any sun, even with a double walled greenhouse that we have, there is very little insulating, and the furnace is just burning away. I've had the idea for this new greenhouse that could have

insulating panels that can be easily inserted over night to keep any heat in. Now we will try to make this a reality.

So, this brings up a question for discussion: Why does the farm need a fundraiser? Why not just charge for the produce what is needed to carry out these projects? This brings up the question of healthy economics. This is my 20th season involved in a CSA. Over this time I've really tried to understand the concepts of associative economics that gave rise to the CSA movement. Associative economics comes out of the Threefolding ideas that are looking for healthy social relationships (see my article on Threefolding on the farm website). Out of these ideas come some pretty radical ways of looking at money and capital. I feel like there is a need to thoroughly revisit our whole economic system. A system that resigns itself to the need to destroy the environment in order to satisfy its ideal of endless growth, seems to me very unhealthy and obviously unsustainable. And I feel the only way we can change the system is to work within our own communities with our own direct economic relationships. I would love it if some of you were interested in meeting to look at these ideas in detail... so this is an open invitation to contact me about meeting this winter!

Food is one of the basic needs every human has. Having access to healthy, quality food should be one of those basic human rights. Many CSA farmers (myself included) struggle with finding the balance between making the food financially accessible to everyone, while at the same time keeping the farm financially viable. Many CSA's (again, myself included) find this balance by not having enough money for capital investment. This has been a thoroughly talked about shortcoming of the CSA model within the farming community. There are many ways CSA's have tried to overcome this problem. At the Kimberton CSA, where I apprenticed for two years, they provided an annual budget to the members, including a certain amount for capital, and had a suggested average share price. They then had a pledging system that allowed each member to anonymously pledge what they thought they could afford, they tallied it up, and if it didn't meet the budget, asked for a bit more from each member. This was trying to balance the financial needs of the farm with the needs of the community. In 1998, we had established a "core group" of Saugeen River CSA members, and proposed this pledging idea. There was a strong desire to keep the share price the same for everyone.

I respect that impulse to keep the share price equal, but have another idea I would like to explore which seems to have been developing on its own over the past few years, and includes this fundraiser.

In the associative economic model there are three types of money, each of which has a healthy place in our economic relationships. These are: Purchase money, Loan money, and Gift money. I wrote about this in a newsletter a few years ago and am still trying to wrap my head around what it all means.

Purchase money is the strictly economic money and involves the exchange of money for a product. This is meant to express the true value of something. This true value is defined as: the price of a product that allows the producer to fulfill all his or her financial responsibilities and produce that thing again. This would be simply an on-going cycle if something else weren't introduced...

Loan money is most healthily used to make improvements to efficiency, to go towards the means of production. In the associative economic model, cooperation is the ideal that is worked for. But the cooperatives that are healthiest are vertical co-ops. This means a cooperation of producer (including the natural base), distributor, and consumer. In this model, exploitation is avoided at any possible level through transparency, so seeking the most efficient, harmonious way to do something makes sense. This way, the interest on a loan can be a driving force for improvement. Historically, interest on loans is a formal abstraction from the original loan principle of helping each other out within a community. In teaching apprentices about the efficiency of labour, I explain it not as a way to make more profit, but as a way to keep costs down, so food can be affordable for the community. What is interesting is that the CSA share model actually works on this loan principle, since there is no direct exchange of money for food. Loan money, in the form of the CSA share, reflects the people to people relationships, and not purely economic relationships, as there is more emphasis on the agreement between the farmer and customer. Equality is the ideal that our human to human relationships call out for, and “trust” is a key word in this agreement, and is an important aspect of Loan money.

Gift money is the third type of money, and is connected to our cultural/spiritual relationships. This is what is unique about us as individuals, and relates to our individual abilities and inclinations. This is the sphere of arts, religion/spirituality, education, science... and ideally is enshrined in freedom. Gift money has a great role to play in the development of culture, and is essential for the arts, sciences, education, and our spiritual life in general. Economic enterprises have a spiritual/cultural side as well, and believe it or not, this is where capital comes in. Capital for an enterprise is connected to our individual abilities and inclinations. Capital is needed to develop, to create something new that comes out of someone’s vision and abilities. This should be distinguished from an expense that improves something that already exists (like repairing the hole in a barn floor). In a healthy economic system, capital, which is connected to the cultural life through a vision of developing something new, would be better if it was not tied to the purely economic relationships of buying and selling, or the human to human relationships that call for equality, but related more to the ideal of freedom. So gift money is best exchanged in freedom. So it comes from an individual in freedom, and goes to an individual in freedom. The impulse for gift money is a shared vision, and a recognition of an ability that needs to be enabled.

So, back to the discussion: why does the farm need a fundraiser? There is a desire to keep food cheap. I face this at the market every week as some people ask how much I am selling an item for, and sometimes refuse to buy it because of cost. In general this trend has kept food too cheap with direct and indirect subsidies and exploitation of land or labour. CSA’s are the best way I know to try to identify the true cost of food. But, as I mentioned before, there is a tendency to not allow for capital in the share price. And maybe this is a good thing. Perhaps it is better not to include capital in the share price, which would allow the food to be cheaper, and keep capital out of the purely economic realm.

Over the past few years, the farm has received several gifts. This has really made a huge difference in how the farm functions and my sense of providing for this community, which has been so nourishing back. I haven’t raised the share price for a number of years. There is, in our modern economic model, the expectation that prices will continue to rise. Some of my costs sure are rising. But where does this end? Inflation is tied to this economic model of endless

growth. In thinking of next year, I've decided not to raise the share price, but to make a more conscious plan to create some kind of system to allow capital needs to be met in the form of Gift money. Again, this Gift money would not be part of the share price, but would be up to each individual to decide if it is possible or desirable to give in freedom, without any pressure.

I think this experiment may begin to provide a healthy way for capital to work in the world. I'm not sure of the best way to go about this, so, here again is another invitation to those of you who would like to look at this in more detail, please contact me.