

# CSA Survival Guide

**7<sup>th</sup> Organic Producers' Conference**

**22-23 January 2013**

**Making producer-led innovation a reality**

- This work was commissioned by BOBL
- Background
- Main report
- Survival Guide

## Better Organic Business Links (BOBL)

- Develop new, emerging and existing markets for organic produce.
- Innovate in farming, processing and product development.
- Promote sustainable practices on farms, in abattoirs, in cutting rooms and kitchens and along the food chain.
- Raise market awareness among producers and increase sales across the range of outlets
- <http://www.organiccentrewales.org.uk/business-bobl.php>

## The Brief

- Produce a survival guide for CSAs in Wales to help them secure a long term future
- Provide guidance for funding bodies to ensure best use of the money

## The Approach

- Literature review to examine potential causes of failure
- Visit Welsh CSAs to assess longer term viability
- Draw together for guide

## What is a CSA scheme?

- “Community Supported Agriculture means any food, fuel or fibre producing initiative where the community shares the risks and rewards of production, whether through ownership, investment, sharing the costs of production, or provision of labour” (Soil Association, 2011)
- Producer-led (subscription) initiatives
- Community-led (co-operative) initiatives
- Producer-community partnerships
- Community-owned farm enterprises

# Global development

- Japanese Teikei movement started in the 1960s
  - ◆ Producer-consumer partnerships, millions involved
- French AMAP (Association pour le Maintien d'une Agriculture Paysanne)
  - ◆ Proximity partnerships between consumers & a producer
- US – more diverse range of models & types but producer led now dominant
  - ◆ Steiner not Teikei initial stimulus
- UK – similar to US – great variety

## Causes of failure

- Very few concrete references – more coverage of crop failure than scheme failure
  - ◆ Poor pricing in both farmer and community-led schemes
  - ◆ Poor growing skills
  - ◆ Poor security of land tenure
  - ◆ Lack of cohesion in community structures
  - ◆ PLUS the usual stuff like weather, the market or lack of it, competition, natural disasters, etc.

## Welsh schemes

- Rhos Market Garden – producer-led
- Flintshare – community-led
- Banc Organics – producer/community-led but initiated by 2 producers
- COCA (Caerhys Organic Community Agriculture) – producer/community-led initiated by one farmer
- + about 4 others



## Lessons from the review

- Teikei and AMAP models can only work where there is
  - ◆ A fairly significant population centre
  - ◆ A pre-existing producer producing what the consumers want
- US/UK experience suggests all models are possible
  - ◆ Majority of US schemes now producer-led
  - ◆ Greatest longevity in those schemes run or managed by a charity or non-profit company

## Survival Guide

- Develop a realistic pricing policy – do not underprice
- Make sure the right people are doing the right work
- Do not become over-reliant on WWOOFERs and volunteers – the supply can dry up
- Be clear about land entitlement and for how long
- Be realistic about site suitability
- Communications must be clear
- Be very clear about structure and how it works