

CSA Quick Start Instructions

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This guide is a simple overview of how to use the CSA Quick Start Plan of the Fantastic Farm and Garden Calculator (FFGC) to quickly create a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) production plan for the summer production season (approximately May to October). After you have used this guide it is strongly recommended that you download, print out and read the entire Calculator Instructions.

Fantastic Farm Enterprises is providing this Quick Start option because farmers who are new to the CSA marketing model may not know what to include in the weekly CSA Box content. The amount of produce included in this CSA Quick Start Plan is based upon the four years that our pilot study farm has been providing CSA boxes. These amounts are not only achievable by new farmers but the quantity and variety reflected have been considered by our CSA members to be plentiful. When you are providing for CSA members you are generally not trying to meet all of their nutritional needs. Doing so would produce an incredibly expensive CSA box and, at this time at least, it doesn't appear that the CSA consumer market is willing to bear such a price. What you are doing as a CSA host is supplementing the diet of your members. The amounts in this plan do just that.

The CSA Quick Start has two components; an FFGC plan and a Box Value template. For both of these, the tedious task of filling in the amount of each crop that will be provided to each CSA shareholder has already been done for you. Once you input other basic information into the CSA Quick Start Plan your plan will be complete. Keep in mind that it is possible to change any of the pre-filled fields in order to customize the plan.

It should be noted that farm yields are dependent on many variables that will cause divergences from information generated by the FFGC. Those variables include, but are not limited to, soil conditions, sun exposure and other weather variables, growing methods, seed age or seedling health, and the experience level of the grower. For this reason, **the FFGC should only be used as a guide to help plan your garden or farm**, and the calculations generated should be considered *approximations*. Using the FFGC is not a guarantee of success.

CSA Quick Start FFGC plan

Download and open your FFGC CSA QuickStart plan. Please save it with a new name.

The amounts of each crop that you will be providing and how often you will provide them have already been pre-filled in the CSA Quick Start Plan. In the **Basic Information** section of the FFGC you will need to input the:

persons to feed

Total number of rows**Row width (in)** (The width of your planting rows in inches)**Last Frost Date****Season End Date** (annual yields generated will most closely approach the amounts listed in the CSA Share Box Value Template when using a 17 week interval between Last Frost Date and Season End Date)**Row Lengths** (The lengths of each of your planting rows in feet. You may also input the total length of all rows in the first cell)

You may not know how many people you are able to feed given the amount of cultivatable space you have. Or, you may not know how much cultivable space you need to feed a specific number of people.

If you do not know how many people you can feed given the amount of space you have, simply input the **Basic Information** you do have, including **Row width** and **Row Lengths**, **Last Frost Date** and **Season End Date**. Note the **Row ft unused** value at the bottom of the orange box. Now input into the **# persons to feed** cell any number that you think might work. If the value in the **Row ft unused** cell is a negative number, this indicates that you do not have sufficient space to feed the number of people you have input in the **# persons to feed** cell, and you must decrease this number. A positive number in the **Row ft unused cell** indicates that you have more than enough space to feed the number of people you have input. A zero in the **Row ft unused** cell indicates that you have enough space to feed the number of people you have input and that you are using all of the space you have available.

If you do know the number of people you want to feed but do not know how much space you need, simply input the **Basic Information** you do have, including the **# persons to feed**, **Row width**, **Last Frost Date**, and **Season End Date**. Note the **Row ft unused** value at the bottom of the orange box, it should be a negative number. This number reflects the number of **Row Lengths** you will need. If you do not have this much space available you will need to decrease the **# of persons to feed**. If you do have this much space available, input this number into the first **Row Lengths** cell. The **Row ft unused** cell should now read 0.

In the **Cold Weather Crop Inputs** and the **Hot Weather Crop Inputs** sections of the FFGC most of the cells have been filled in for you.¹ The amount in the **# lbs/wk per person** cells were also used to pre-fill the **CSA Share Box Value** template so if you make any changes to these cells you will need to make corresponding changes on the **CSA Share Box Value** template as well. This is a little tricky and instructions on how to do this can be found at the end of this quick start guide.

You may want to make changes in the **Cold Weather Crop Inputs** to the **2nd planting date** cells for any crops that are being produced in the later part of the season

¹ Please note that because garlic and shallots must be planted in the fall prior to the summer growing season none have been included in this quick start plan. It is assumed the Quick Start user is creating a plan for a new farm after the opportunity to sow these crops for the first growing season has passed.

so that they are appropriate to climatic conditions in your region. More information on this can be found on page 5 of the Calculator Instructions. You may also want to make changes in both the **Cold Weather** and **Hot Weather Crop Inputs** sections to the **Ave # of days to harvest** cells based on the specific varieties of each crop that you will be producing. The default values in these cells for the **Hot Weather Crops** are from starting these plants from seed not from when you transplant plants out. More information on this can also be found on pages 5 and 6 of the Calculator Instructions.

CSA Share Box Value Template

The **CSA Share Box Value** template serves two purposes. First, if regional produce price lists are unavailable from your county agriculture extension, the template will help you establish how much each crop is worth based on prices charged by neighboring farms or farms selling at your local farmers market. This template will also give you an idea of how much the contents of your CSA box is worth if your CSA members were to have purchased the contents from other farms.

If produce price lists are available from your county agricultural extension, use them to fill in the price per lb per crop in the column labeled "Farm 1" and skip to the following paragraph. Otherwise, you will need to fill in the prices per lb that other farms in your area charge for each crop. You can input prices from up to 9 farms. The average price per lb for each crop will automatically be generated in the orange column.

The number of lbs of each crop that you will provide to each CSA member over the entire season has already been filled in for you. These amounts were also used to pre-fill the **CSA Quick Start Plan** so if you make any changes to these amounts you will need to make the corresponding change in the **CSA Quick Start Plan**. This is a little tricky and instructions on how to do this can be found at the end of this quick start guide.

The average value for the number of lbs of each crop received by each CSA member is given in the far right green column. The value of the number of lbs of all crops received by each member is given in the lower right cell at the bottom of the green column. Use this amount to set the price of the CSA box by simply multiplying it by the number of people each box is intended to feed. You may want to include some amount of buffer, e.g. if the value in the lower right cell is \$256 per person, you may want to charge \$225 per person. At our pilot study farm we charge \$225 for a half-share that will feed one CSA member and \$450 for a full-share that will feed two CSA members.

Making Changes to Crop Amounts Provided to CSA Members

If you would like to change the amount of produce that you are planning to give your CSA members, you will need to make the changes in both the **CSA Quick Start Plan** and in the **CSA Share Box Value** template. The amounts that are pre-filled in the **Quick Start Plan** in the **Cold and Hot Weather Crop Inputs** sections are the number of lbs given to each member weekly. The amounts that are pre-filled in the **CSA Share**

Box Value template are the number of lbs given to each member annually over the entire growing season. To make changes, you will need to manually convert these weekly or annual amounts, depending on the type of change you will be making. Please also keep in mind that if you make changes you will need to check the **Row ft unused** cell in the **Basic Information** section of the **CSA Quick Start Plan** to make sure you have not used more space than you have.

Let us say that you want to change the amount of beets given weekly from 1 lb per week to 2 lbs per week. Make the change in the **# lbs/wk per person** column of the **Cold Weather Crop Inputs** section. Note the corresponding change in the **Annual Yield** column of the **Cold Weather Crop Row Planting Info** section for beets. Divide this yield amount by the total **# of person to feed**. This will give you the new number of lbs of beets given to each member over the course of the growing season. You will then input this number into the corresponding cell for beets in the **CSA Share Box Value** template. In this example you will change the number of lbs of beets in the original template from 5 lbs to 10 lbs.

On the other hand, let us say that you want to change the annual number of lbs of carrots given to each member over the course of the growing season from 3 lbs to 4 lbs. In the **CSA Share Box Value** template simply make the change. To make the change in the **CSA Quick Start Plan** you will need to first make a manual calculation. In the **Cold Weather Planting and Harvest Date Info** section, divide the number of days of harvest for carrots by 7 to get the number of weeks of harvest. In this case it is 6 weeks. Next divide 4 lbs by 6 weeks to get the number of lbs per week, in this case .667 lbs/wk. Input this number into the **# lbs/wk per person** cell for carrots in the **Cold Weather Crop Inputs** section. Now to confirm, when you divide the total Annual Yield for carrots by the **# of persons to feed** you should get 4lbs. At this point you will need to check the **Row ft unused** cell in the **Basic Information** section of the **CSA Quick Start Plan** to make sure you have not used more space than you have.

You may also want to change the **# of weeks of harvest**. If you do, note the corresponding change in the **Annual Yield** column of the **Cold Weather Crop Row Planting Info** section of the **CSA Quick Start Plan** for the crop in question. As above you will then divide this yield amount by the total **# of person to feed**. This will give you the number of lbs given to each member over the course of the growing season for the changed crop and you will then make this change in the **CSA Share Box Value** template.

What's Next

Your CSA Quick Start plan is now complete! Next you may want to review pages 1 – 7 of the Calculator instructions for more information on the plan you have created. You will also want to view pages 7 - 15 of the Calculator Instructions to learn how to implement your plan or to learn how to integrate market sales into your plan. It is also recommended that you review the Template Protocol and use the Templates to generate documents that will help you translate your plan to on-the-ground production activities.