

# ***The story of Community Supported Agriculture in Stroud***



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# 1 *Introduction*

In 2001 a group of people came together to find a better way to feed themselves. Within 3 months they were renting an acre of land and employing a vegetable grower. Within 2 years they had set up Stroud Community Agriculture (SCA) as an Industrial and Provident Society, were renting 23 acres of land, providing vegetables and meat to 60 families and making a profit.

Six years on SCA is;

- renting 50 acres,
- employing 2 full time farmer/growers,
- providing vegetables and meat to 189 households,
- making enough profit to pay a bonus to its farmers/growers,
- paying for a part-time treasurer and membership administrator,
- buying in citrus fruit and olive oil from a sister CSA in Spain,
- maintaining a regular programme of social and working events

*There is now a second Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) project in Stroud. Stroud Slad Farm Community (SSFC) rents land from an existing 100-acre mixed farm. To make it clear which sections of this story relate to SSFC we have made these sections blue and italicised.*

SSFC and SCA co-operate closely and are both growing steadily.

Several founder members of Stroud Community Agriculture wrote this story of CSA in Stroud using the Soil Association's CSA action manual as a template. This story provides examples in practice to illustrate some of the theory in the manual. The chapters of this story roughly follow the chapter headings of the action manual.

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For information on other CSA publications including the Action Manual see:  
[www.soilassociation.org/csa](http://www.soilassociation.org/csa)

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## 2 *Stroud before CSA*

**Vital statistics:**

Stroud town population: 24,000.

Stroud District population: 104,000.

Supermarkets within 2 miles of Stroud in 2008: 5

CSA projects within 2 miles of Stroud in 2008: 2

Stroud was one of the first UK towns to be industrialised, the main activity being textile production. On the decline of the wool industry a workforce and infrastructure remained that has continued to make Stroud a centre of independent enterprise and innovation. This and the picturesque local landscape has also attracted a large 'alternative' and artistic community.

Stroud has a thriving, weekly farmers' market, a communal allotment group, several food co-ops and a Food Hub (a co-op made up of producer members and consumer members who trade food and drink using a school hall for regular food drops). Stroud was also one of the first towns to adopt a LETS system (although this is currently dormant) and has more recently developed a thriving 'Transition' group. The Food Group of Transition Stroud has been very helpful in supporting the set-up of Stroud's second CSA project.

The four people who came together in 2001 to set up Stroud Community Agriculture (SCA) came with different motivations. One was involved with non-violent direct action against local supermarkets – encouraging supermarket shoppers to find more local sources of food. Others were keen to try out Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) based on second-hand experience of CSA elsewhere. Another was keen to support a small, local farm that was struggling to survive. All four were keen to have more control over where their food came from and increase food security for themselves and their local community.

# ***3 How we started CSA in Stroud***

## **Getting organised**

Very early on we realised that none of us had enough time to set up a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) project without a lot of help. We also didn't want to set up a CSA if there was no demand for it. A public meeting was held to discuss the idea and see what came out of it, in particular how we might support a local struggling farm. In retrospect, holding this public meeting at a very early stage was one of the most important steps in building a strong support community. From the beginning Stroud Community Agriculture (SCA) has been planned, managed and owned by a large group of people.

## **Getting expert guidance**

We invited Jade Bashford and Greg Pilley from the Soil Association local food team to help us plan the public meeting and make a presentation about the state of farming and the need for CSA. We asked the local farmer whose farm we hoped to support to talk about the difficulties of running a small farm. We planned for the rest of the meeting to be left clear for whoever turned up to discuss what needed to happen.

## **Publicity**

To publicise the meeting we put up posters around the town, contacted people through the networks around the small, local biodynamic farm that was owned by the neighbouring Steiner school and put an article in the local paper.

## **The first meeting**

More than eighty people came to that initial meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2001. At the meeting we put up big blank posters with headings such as 'What would you want from a farm project?' and 'What can you offer?'. Other posters invited people to get involved in planning a CSA project. People were given contact forms to fill in if people they wanted to be put on a CSA mailing list, suggest ideas for the project, or donate

money to help with costs. We had pledges for over £200 by the end of the meeting.

This first meeting was pretty chaotic and wide-ranging, but there was obviously plenty of enthusiasm for a project that would support the struggling farm and give us more of a connection with the source of our food. We fixed a date for a planning meeting to take the project forward.

### **Setting up working groups**

The second meeting, a fortnight later was held in a café in Stroud. More than 40 people came along. Again we had very enthusiastic conversations about what we would like to achieve, but it was difficult to get to any concrete decisions with so many people especially as it was already decided that we would aim for consensus. So smaller working groups were established to concentrate on areas such as finance, events, promotion and farming issues. Each of these working groups elected a representative to sit on a 'core group' that would make decisions on the overall development/management of the project.

### **The core group**

Gradually the developmental working groups achieved their aims and stopped meeting and the core group (8 people) took over most of the decision-making. They arranged regular public meetings to present progress reports to the supporters and ask for guidance on future decisions/direction. Core group meetings happened once or twice per month; public meetings every 3 to 6 months.

Some of the important work that was done in these early days was;

- deciding what our aims and objectives were
- deciding on our working principles (this has been a vital step which has been the basis of SCA's development and a reference point that has helped to reduce conflict and maintain focus)
- writing a 'joining pack'
- writing a 'membership pack' explaining the details of how the project works
- setting up membership administration systems to manage members joining, choosing where they pick up their vegetables, paying by standing order, leaving the project, etc
- setting up an accounting system.

### **Getting started**

By March 2002 the core group made their first big decision. The original farm that the group set out to support, took on a new and independent tenant who wasn't very interested in CSA. As a result, the group decided to create its own farming enterprise and rented a one acre

walled garden from the same farm. In addition, we committed to start paying our veg grower (who had been at the initial open meeting and every meeting since). This felt like a key step in the development of SCA. It was a big risk. We had some money in the bank as some people had started to pay a regular standing order into the bank before there was any sign of vegetables in return! But we had not yet set up a legal structure (see chapter 5) so the core group were personally liable for anything that went wrong and we didn't have any insurance (we made a decision to minimise insurance because we don't like the ethics (or lack of them) of the insurance industry). We have since started paying for insurance (see section 5 below).

We took some comfort and inspiration from this quote:

**Until one is committed,  
there is hesitancy,  
the chance to draw back,  
always ineffectiveness concerning all acts of initiative (and  
creation).**

**There is one elemental truth,  
the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid  
plans**

**that the moment one definitely commits oneself,  
then Providence moves all.**

**All sorts of things occur to help one that would never  
otherwise have occurred.**

**A whole stream of events issue from the decision,  
raising in one's favour**

**all manner of incidents and meetings and material  
assistance**

**which no one could have dreamed  
would come his or her way.**

**Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it.**

**Boldness has a genius, power and magic in it.**

**Begin it now.**

**Goethe**

### **The launch party**

In Spring 2002 we had a launch party in the walled garden. We did some weeding and we put up a tunnel of bean poles. We also chatted about the future of the project over a picnic. Some members feel that this launch party was a particularly significant event in the life of SCA. It had many of the elements of a family gathering – physically being together, doing something practical together, sharing food, having photos that later trigger fond memories (the bean pole tunnel being planted by 30 people is regularly used in our presentations). This sense of family has been reinforced many times since but, for some people, the launch party was its beginning.

The CSA project grew slowly. By the end of 2002 we had 30 members. A larger piece of land (23 acres) came up for rent much closer to Stroud at Hawkwood adult education college - (the original farm was 5 miles from Stroud with no natural connection to the town). As it was now obvious that the new tenant of the original farm was disinterested in CSA, we moved the whole project to Hawkwood. This new site helped to boost our membership numbers as the steady flow of visitors to the college had to drive right past our new vegetable fields.. We also set up 'Hog Hands' – a pig production project (see chapter 8) and soon realised how attractive animals can be to a membership project – we housed the pigs in a field next to the college car park. We put notices up in the veg patch and on the fence of the pig field explaining how the CSA worked.

Soon after SCA moved to Hawkwood we made two more big steps;

- we took on a second farmer responsible for overall farm management and the livestock; our new beef herd and the pigs from the Hog Hands project. This allowed our grower to concentrate on veg production.
- we received a £20,000 Lottery SEED grant to buy polytunnels, other capital equipment and pay a part-time membership development worker; more about this in chapter 4.

In 2006 the farm that had been our original focus, become vacant again and SCA was invited to apply for the tenancy. We took on the whole farm (25 acres) in addition to the land at Hawkwood, giving us a total land area of 48 acres.

*In 2007 another farm close to Stroud decided to host a second CSA project. A farm between Stroud and the nearby village of Slad, Stroud Slad Farm, was leasing 3 acres of land to a vegetable grower running a*

*small box scheme. The grower decided to wind up his business partly because it was struggling financially.*

*Two of the founder members of SCA applied for and received grant funding to work with a small community group to explore the possibility of taking over the box scheme and turning it into a new CSA project. The community group set up Stroud Slad Farm Community (SSFC) and spent some time drawing up clear agreements between the farm owners, the vegetable grower and the new community group to clarify how SSFC would fit with the existing arrangements on the farm. SSFC also developed a detailed CSA proposal and a joining pack based on SCA documents.*

*The SSFC public launch meeting (in March 2007) was much more structured than the SCA one in 2001. Over 50 people came to the meeting and were presented with a clear proposal and invitations to get involved with the CSA project in various ways. There was a lot of enthusiasm for the project but (compared to SCA's experience) fewer people got involved in managing the project – It could be that they felt that the project had already been set up and that there was less chance to 'take ownership' of it.*

*SSFC supporters were also invited to make loans to the project to help contribute to the significant start-up costs, including buying the existing veg box business from the grower. These loan agreements offered the lender interest payable in vegetables. Some of the loans included an agreement to repay capital at the end of the loan. Some were an agreement to pay for a year's worth of vegetables up front. SSFC raised more than £4,000 in loans from the community. The SSFC core group also made a decision not to depend on external grant funding to start off the project.*

*SSFC has hosted several large events at the farm, which is in a very picturesque position on the south side of the Slad valley. The first of these was an open day, which was organised by the Transition Stroud Food Group. This full day in June 2007 involved an opportunity to work in the veg field, a talk on CSA and a series of workshops on;*

- Food bottling and preserving,*
- Composting,*
- Building a compost toilet,*
- Food drying,*
- Nutrition and health,*

*Other activities included face painting, storytelling, horse riding and wild food walks in the woods.*

*All the food for sale during the day and evening was locally produced including wood-fired pizzas, beer, fresh vegetable juice and burgers. In the evening there was a ceilidh and a bonfire.*

*A more recent event was a winter play with several core group members in the cast, again refreshed with locally-made soup, juice, mulled wine and mince pies. This event raised over £700 for SSFC.*

At the time of writing (January 2008) SSFC has 78 members and SCA has 189 members. Both projects aim to cap membership at 200. Both projects are committed to supporting new CSA projects to set up.

Who knows, maybe CSA projects will outnumber supermarkets around Stroud in the not too distant future!

# **4 Stroud CSA membership**

Our experience in Stroud is that CSA seems to offer people something that is very important to them. In some cases they hadn't realised that they were missing it until they got it! This 'something' is often a connection to the land; an opportunity to take more responsibility for their own food production. This increased responsibility involves making a regular financial commitment (often along with other contributions). The average family pays a standing order of about £35 per month into the CSA bank account. In return they get a weekly veg share. When they join they make a commitment to give three month's notice if they want to cancel their subscription.

This financial commitment does two things;

- it gives the CSA member a sense of ownership of the farm and a connection to a piece of land.
- the guaranteed CSA income gives the farmers a sense of security so that they can focus on the farm work. They know that there is a community of people who are now sharing the risks as well as the rewards of farming.

However, after the initial surge of enthusiasm following the first public meeting in 2001 (see section 3 above) SCA grew slowly. It was a new idea to Stroud. Most of the early members were the 'hard core greens' who were very committed to the environmental principles of local food. It wasn't until later that SCA developed a more mainstream appeal and even now, most members would probably describe themselves as relatively 'green'.

As mentioned previously, once SCA moved to Hawkwood and therefore closer to Stroud with lots of passing traffic, membership really took off. The benefits of the Hawkwood land included;

- accessibility to Stroud (within 1.5 miles of the town centre, crossed by several footpaths from the town)
- the college access road runs right through the veg fields
- the college (our landlords) are very supportive of CSA and help to publicise SCA.

At the same time as moving to Hawkwood we received funding to pay a part-time membership development worker for a year. She helped to produce a leaflet promoting the project, she made presentations to local interest groups including the WI, parent and toddler groups and old people's homes.

Our regular public meetings were a good source of new members. Each meeting started with a brief summary of the project and its aims. Each meeting also included an update on information such as;

- how many members had signed up,
- how many people had asked to be kept updated on progress,
- how much money was in the bank,
- how much money had been pledged by supporters.

A communications sub-group set up a quarterly newsletter that kept everyone up-to-date with our plans and publicised a series of (mainly land-based) social events (see section 10 below).

Within one year of moving to Hawkwood SCA membership had grown from 30 to 100 and we realised that we had hit the limit of veg which could be grown on the cultivatable land available at Hawkwood (only 3 acres was available for veg growing – the rest was too steep). We therefore started a waiting list which quickly grew to 30 families. An important learning point from this was that once you set up a waiting list and word gets out that there are no more veg shares available, it is very hard to shift that perception. Even months after SCA took on more land and started to recruit more members, there was still a general understanding around Stroud that 'SCA was full'. In retrospect emphasis should have been placed on communicating that the waiting list was going to be a temporary solution until we found more land.

Another reason for limiting membership size was a clear message from the existing members (via public meetings) about their concern that the community might become too large. They wanted to be able to feel a connection with all the other members and thought that 100 might be big enough. After keeping the membership fixed at 100 veg shares for a couple of years, we have since decided that 200 veg shares will be the final maximum – making the extended farm viable. This will probably equate to about 230 member households because some members choose not to take veg at all (they pay their membership purely to support the farm and have access to the packing shed service such as meat and eggs). Other members take a half-share of veg.

## 4.1 The core group

Section 3 above describes how the core group came into being. For the first few years it was a group of eight people including the veg grower. We had decided early on that we would aim to make decisions by consensus and in almost every case we achieved this.

These are some of the things we learned about consensus:

- Consensus does not mean finding a solution that everyone agrees with. Rather it is finding a solution that everyone is comfortable is in the best interests of the group as a whole.
- Everyone needs to learn to use the power of veto carefully. Because any one person has the power to block any decision, everyone needs to be very clear about what their reasons are if they choose to go against the flow.
- It sometimes makes sense, if the group is getting stuck, to move on and leave a decision to the next meeting. All sorts of things can shift between meetings; there are the possibilities of one-to-one chats; positions can soften and change with the benefit of hindsight and subconscious processing.
- It is a great way to make strong, effective decisions that everyone feels ownership of..... and it can be bloody frustrating!

The sense of community ownership of SCA has remained strong enough to ensure that there is always a regular supply of new people willing to join the core group (I'm not sure that I agree with this. I think that it is a bit more difficult than this implies). To try and build in succession and long term stability, at each AGM two or three of the longest-standing members are required to stand down and are replaced by new people. We decided that the maximum size of the core group should be 9 people. At one AGM we had too many new people wanting to stand and had to have an election.

In the months leading up to the AGM, members are encouraged to consider joining the core group. They are invited to come along to a few meetings before the AGM to see what the meetings are like. Once they are elected they are offered an existing core group member as a mentor or guide to help them get settled in.

In the early days of SCA, the core group made all the decisions about the direction of the project. Over time as the veg grower (and then the veg grower and the farmer together) became more established, more and more of the decisions were taken by the grower and farmer. There was a time when this caused some tensions within the core group, but we then realised that this was a natural progression and made changes to accept this new order (I

don't think that this is resolved yet). Over time it may be that the farmers take over the day-to-day decision-making and that the core group become more like a board of trustees with responsibility for long-term guidance rather than practical decision-making. This may need re-establishment of working groups...

Other sources of conflict have been partly due to the different motivations of core group members. Some of us see the project primarily as a step towards a more sustainable, environmentally sensitive, community-led system of sourcing our food that is less dependent on fossil fuels. Others appreciate Rudolph Steiner's ideas of CSA and take guidance from this. There are other motivations. Most of the time these motivations are in harmony with the overall aim of the project. However, because the core group works so closely together, it is inevitable that these differences surface occasionally. We see conflict as a natural part of communities working closely together to find consensus and that if the conflict is acknowledged and worked through, stronger working relationships can be established and the project as a whole benefits. If conflicts are buried or ignored they can cause problems for the core group and even for the project as a whole. It is sometimes necessary to get outside help to work through these conflicts.

Having said all that – our abiding memory of our time on the core group is a sense of excitement of working with a group of inspired, inspiring, committed people who had a lot of fun together, building a working community and making the world a better place.

## **4.2 Other key roles**

As well as the core group, there are two roles that are vital to the success of SCA. These are the treasurer and the membership administrator.

The treasurer:

- checks that members are making their payments
- pays the farmers' wages
- draws up the end of year accounts
- keeps an overview of the accounts
- liaises with the farmers about the accounts

The administrator:

- processes new membership applications,
- keeps the grower up-to-date with numbers of veg shares,
- liaises with the treasurer to make sure that all the members are paying the correct standing orders,
- sends out a quarterly newsletter (produced by a coregroup member)
- sends out reminders about farm days and other get-togethers,

- manages the waiting list,
- processes any members who cancel – including sending an ‘exit questionnaire’ (see CSA action manual section 11).

SCA decided that because these 2 roles were so vital to the viability of SCA it should budget to pay the people who do the roles at the same hourly rate as the farmers.

Other roles that are currently done by volunteers (but may be paid in future):

- core group members (see section 4.1 above)
- newsletter production (which has in the past sometimes been done by someone outside the core group)
- information contact (receiving phone calls and emails from new enquirers and potential new members)

One of the implications of paying people to do this work is that the cost of membership would need to rise. Despite concerns about affordability, this increase may be necessary in order to ensure the long-term success of the project. Some of us believe that it is dangerous to rely on the goodwill of volunteers for the long-term success of the project. Others fear that paying for some work may dilute the volunteering ethic. Work done on a voluntary basis is considered a bonus. However, many projects experience a reduction in volunteer enthusiasm as a project matures after the initial excitement of being a new venture.

It may be possible that, as more CSA projects (and other local food ventures) set up around Stroud, the cost of some of the administration work could be spread across several projects.

### **4.3 Communication**

One of the benefits of CSA is that members learn a lot about how their food is produced. Our newsletters always include information from the farmers about how the farm is getting on. If a crop has failed we find out why.

If more help is needed to get the hay in before rain, an email is sent out to anyone who might be able to help. Email is also used to remind people about forthcoming events and farm days. We made a decision early on that we should only send emails to members about SCA events and information. This was because we were being asked to send out increasing volumes of information about other (vaguely related) events, etc and we were concerned that there was a risk of irritating members with too many emails.

Another key communication channel is the membership pack that is sent to all new members. A copy of this is in the CSA action manual – section 11.

Our website [www.stroudcommunityagriculture.org](http://www.stroudcommunityagriculture.org) is a good source of new members but it is not yet the on-line community forum that it could be for existing members.

On a less formal level, there is a whiteboard in the packing shed, which the growers use to describe the weekly veg share (see section 11 below for examples). The whiteboard also includes notes about where the veg has come from (if it has not been grown on our farm) and any notes about events that are coming up. There is also a noticeboard in the packing shed for members to put up notices. The pick-up points have noticeboards too.

Another form of communication we use is an archive of photos taken by members at various events, farm activities and farm days over the years. We use these as background to presentations about SCA. They are sometimes reproduced in our newsletters and other publications have used them too.

#### **4.4 Community involvement**

One of the ongoing issues for both SCA and SSFC is how to encourage more people to get involved, take some responsibility and make the farm their own. The majority of members seem happy to pay their money, receive their veg and maybe turn up to the occasional event that other people have organised.

From a financial point of view this works fine – we need that critical mass of members to make the project work. But from the point of view of energy, it is not sustainable for a small minority of members to volunteer to carry the responsibility for making the ‘community thing’ work.

SCA is currently applying for some funding to have an external facilitator work with existing, current and potential core group members to review;

- what the core want to happen in terms of community involvement
- what works needs to be done to make these things happen
- how much of this work they feel able to commit to themselves
- what other options there are in terms of getting this work done.

These might include;

- o paying someone to take on some of the work
- o finding ways to involve more volunteers
- o other ideas we haven't thought of yet!

# ***5 Organisation and legal issues***

SCA spent several months as an unincorporated association. This meant that the members of the core group were 'individually and severally liable' – in other words, if anything had gone wrong we would all have been personally liable for sorting it out. This could have meant being sued for damages if anyone had been injured during any of our 'farm days'. For this reason several members of the core group were very relieved when we set up SCA as an Industrial and Provident Society (IPS) Community Co-op in 2002. Setting up SCA with a co-operative structure (which is written into the IPS agreement) gives the project a basis of democracy and community involvement.

Setting up a company seemed a daunting prospect. In reality, the process of incorporation was not difficult, and was very helpful in forcing us as a group to consider some crucial questions to do with setting up our project – see the CSA action manual section 5.

Early in its development, SCA made a decision to minimise insurance because we didn't like the ethics (or lack of them) of the insurance industry. We have since set up public liability insurance, employee insurance and general farm insurance using NIG Farmweb

SCA has a written agreement with its veg grower and farmer – see section 11 below. It has also written lease agreements with the landowners of its two pieces of land.

# 6 *The finances of Stroud's CSAs*

NB: The contents of this box aren't very clear – can it be improved at the design stage – maybe make two columns

## **Vital statistics for SCA:**

Number of members (January 2008): 189....  
.....of which 32 are non-veg members (see section 4)  
Number of veg shares (January 2008): 158.5  
Turnover for year 2006: £60,400  
Total meat sales for year 2006: £6,810  
Profit for year 2006: £12  
Cash in bank at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2006: £13,400  
Fixed assets 31<sup>st</sup> December 2006: £7,080  
Cost of land rent: £45/acre

For sample budgets see appendix in chapter 11

Both SCA and SSFC started up without any outside funding. This was a deliberate decision based on the core group's desire for the projects to be self-sufficient to start with. For us there appeared to be something of an initiation process, which was linked to proving that we could 'stand on our own two (or in our case sixty!) feet'. Once the group was established and had proved itself to be viable, we felt confident enough to accept outside help to grow it.

*Early in its development SSFC supporters were invited to make loans to the project. This was necessary to cover the significant start-up costs, including buying the existing veg box business from the grower. These loan agreements offered the lender interest payable in vegetables. Some of the loans included an agreement to repay capital at the end of the loan. Some were an agreement to pay for a year's worth of vegetables up front. SSFC raised more than £4,000 in loans from the community.*

In 2003 SCA successfully applied for a £20,000 SEED grant that paid for 2 large polytunnels and other capital equipment. It also funded a part-time membership development worker for a year. This loan was crucial in allowing

us to grow the business and membership. We were very careful though to ensure that we did not become reliant on any grants for the running costs of the farm. All the money went towards capital and membership development.

Other financial help has included members donating money for specific purposes such as purchasing a particular piece of equipment. There is a box that new members can tick on the joining form if they want to help with a loan or gift to the project.

Over the years SCA has built up a financial surplus (even though we budget to at least break even with enough allowance for depreciation) and we now have about £8,000 in the bank for a rainy day. On years where we made a large profit we have given most of it to the farmers as a bonus. The farmers are self-employed and are paid £9.75 per hour (£19,000 per annum full time equivalent). We have increased this rate over the years and we would like to continue to do so. But in the meantime, the bonus system feels like a safer way to acknowledge their amazing work, rather than offering a higher hourly rate that might cause us to make a loss in a bad year. From January 2008 both the veg grower and the farmer will be working full-time at SCA (this commitment has grown gradually with the project from our start in March 2002 when one grower was working one day per week).

When considered alone, all the meat production runs at a financial loss, which is covered by the surplus we make on the vegetables (more detail on this in section 8.1 below). However the SCA farmers see stock as essential to best manage the land, and provide valuable quantities of manure to veg production.

One of the problems of using outside funding is that it can become an end in itself and you end up changing what you plan to do in order to win the funding. SCA hit this problem when it applied for the People's Million Lottery funding to build a community building at Hawkwood. Rather than the small structure that we started to plan in one of our public meetings, we ended up with a group of members working very hard to make plans for a large straw-bale building. Our bid failed and we still don't have the modest building that we had originally planned.

# 7 Land

Both SCA and SSFC are renting the land they are farming. Although both have very supportive landlords, both would like to own land in the long-term. Community Farm Land Trusts seem to be the most likely option to make this happen.

SCA has a one-year rolling tenancy on the Hawkwood site. The lease will automatically run from year to year. Either party must give a year's notice to break the tenancy or make any changes to the lease. The rent (£1050 per annum in 2008) is paid in 6 monthly instalments. We want to make more of a commitment to Hawkwood and are currently negotiating with the landlord for a 10-year lease. We have a three-year lease at our Brookthorpe site with the same break-out clause and rental periods as above. We hope to be able to sign a 10-year lease on completion of this one. For both leases we shared the land agent's fees with the landlords.

Twice SCA attempted to take on the tenancy of a county farm. The first time we were surprised with how little notice we were given of the tenancy and we were unable to get a business plan and proposal together in time to meet the County deadline. We therefore prepared a five-year business plan in readiness for another suitable tenancy coming up. We were unsuccessful a second time partly because the County decided that it wanted to offer the tenancy to a farmer rather than to a community group employing a farmer. We are still in discussion with the County who claim to be very supportive of the concept of CSA.

When the small farm that SCA was set up to support went bankrupt within a few months of us starting work in the rented walled garden, it seemed like a tragedy. In retrospect some members think it was a healthy step in the development of the project. If SCA had still been tied in with a farm that had spent years struggling to survive it may not have been the vibrant, successful project that it is now.

A struggling farm can be a powerful focus for a lot of people and is likely to help in motivating people to find a better way but, in the long run, it may be healthier for a CSA project to form its own identity; separate from that of any farm that has historically managed that land.

# 8 *Production for CSA*

SCA is very lucky to have two great farmers who are not only good at producing amazing food, but also have the people-skills necessary to manage 300 opinionated novices who have been told by Tesco that they can eat fresh tomatoes all year round!

We have also had 2 biodynamic apprentices working for SCA. Each of them came for one year and were paid a small wage plus living expenses. We would like to find a way of making farm apprenticeships more financially attractive to apprentices.

Lots of volunteers get involved in work on the farm. The monthly farm days are based around jobs on the farm that benefit from having lots of hands available to help. Other volunteers commit to take on more regular specific jobs on the farm such as feeding the animals every Wednesday morning to give the farmer a day off. Some volunteers come regularly on a week day and join in with whatever jobs need doing. We have also had older school children working on the farm as a summer placement – usually unpaid. In total the volunteer input accounts for about 10% of the productive work on the farm (once you have deducted the time it takes the paid farmers to manage the volunteers).

## **8.1 Vegetables**

We use questionnaires to check what members want more and less of in terms of veg production (see example in the CSA Action Manual section 11). We get suggestions at the public meetings (harvest suppers, AGMs, etc) about what else we could grow. The farmers then go away and make sense of what is possible. SCA now offers flowers to its members on a pick-your-own basis as a direct result of membership suggestions.

Our SEED funding paid for 2 large polytunnels, which have made a big increase in both the length of growing season and quantity of veg that we grow.

An early SCA public meeting discussed the pros and cons of buying in veg when we could not grow enough of our own to make up a decent veg box – especially during the hungry gap (between the end of the winter veg in April and the beginning of the next season's veg in June). We decided that until

we were able to grow enough veg to feed all our members, we would buy in veg and aim to provide a balanced veg share every week throughout the year. We specified that it must be organic and it must be as local as possible with a maximum limit of Europe for sourcing bought-in veg. We are lucky in Stroud to have a wholesaler who buys some of our surpluses and supplies most of what we buy in. They also give us their grade-outs and veg scraps for our pigs.

Although we have some of our own veg in the veg share for every week of the year, in reality there are still only a few weeks in the year when the share includes 100% of our own veg. Until recently we haven't had enough land to grow sufficient quantity of the staples such as potatoes, onions and carrots, so most of these are bought in. Over the year as a whole we produce about 60% of the veg that goes out to members. In the long term as we get the new land into full production, we hope to grow a greater proportion of our veg. And start to meet more of our members' other needs such as woodfuel, grain, eggs, fruit, etc.

Although SCA's original plan was to produce enough food and woodfuel to meet all the needs of 100 families, we soon realised that it made more sense for us to support other small, local producers. We now have arrangements with local small-holders who produce our cheese, eggs and some of our lamb. A sub-group of members is hoping to set up a similar arrangement with a milk producer.

## **8.2 Meat**

For the first couple of years, SCA only produced vegetables. When we decided to start keeping animals for meat we lost a few members who objected to the idea of killing animals. There are still some members who are interested in setting up a veg-only CSA using permaculture principles to maintain fertility rather than animal manure.

Our first step into meat production was 'Hog Hands'. This was set up by a group of early members who committed to raising 8 piglets for meat. We got permission from the landowner to use a small field with a shelter for the pigs. Ten families then committed to putting in enough money to cover the costs of buying, rearing, slaughtering and butchering the pigs. We also committed to participating in a rota to look after the pigs. Our plans were based on the way Tumblers Patch ran their pig programme.

We slaughtered the pigs one or two at a time over a period of six months and shared the meat between the 'Hands'. This meant we had a range of meat (older pigs are better for certain meat e.g. bacon) supplied over a longer time period so that having to find freezer space for almost a whole pig all at the

same time wasn't necessary. The last two pigs were butchered and processed by the Hog Hands under the direction of a professional charcutier. This gave us a wonderful supply of salami, bacon, and pates, and an insight into the world of meat processing.

Our second farmer joined us towards the end of the Hog Hands project, so rather than repeating the Hogs Hands project with our next batch of piglets, we agreed that he would do the work with volunteer support and that SCA would sell the meat to members.

SCA now produces beef and lamb as well as pork for its members. All the meat production runs at a financial loss, which is covered by the surplus we make on the vegetables (see SCA sample budgets in section 11). We decided that this was an acceptable situation for several reasons;

- we like the biodynamic principle that a farm should be as self-sufficient as possible in terms of inputs – the manure from the animals is an important fertiliser for the veg
- the animals provide a real interest for the members – especially families with children.
- much of our land is difficult or impossible to cultivate for veg because it is so steep. The animals help to manage this land by grazing it.

SCA offers all its members access to the packing shed where they can buy cuts of meat, sausages, bacon, etc. This produce is sold on a trust basis. Members help themselves from a freezer, record the cost of what they have taken in a book, and leave a cheque in payment. Although we have had meat stolen, as far as we can tell this system has not been abused by the members

### **8.3 Fruit**

In the future, SCA would like to grow fruit as a core part of the farm. Currently we have an orchard group that has built a relationship with a local old people's home, which has an orchard that was not being managed. The orchard group organises regular events throughout the year;

- wassailing parties
- pruning sessions
- blossom celebrations
- apple juicing parties (see CSA Action Manual chapter 11 for details of how we set up our juicing parties)

The orchard group is also interested in planting new orchards and has links with other local groups who are doing new planting. It also would like to help existing orchard owners make better use of their resource. It seems tragic to many of us that thousands of tonnes of fruit fall and rot in Gloucestershire orchards every year while consumers drive to supermarkets to buy plastic bags of fruit that has been air-freighted from New Zealand.

In addition to processing local fruit, SCA has set up a 'fruitshare' agreement with a citrus and olive farmer in Spain. Once a year, SCA members (about 50 of us in 2007) put together an order for oranges, lemons, nuts, olives and olive oil. In February each year Mathis (the farmer) loads our order alongside orders from several other UK-based CSAs and drives it north on his annual migration to work at Earthshare (a CSA near Inverness). We are hoping to make this arrangement more of an ongoing commitment (rather than just a yearly order) so that Mathis can start making long-term plans based on our commitment.

### **8.4 The effect on the landscape and the environment**

Before we started farming at Hawkwood, the land was grazed by a tenant farmer. There were no polytunnels and there were lots of wild flowers in the meadows including one area that was particularly rich in cowslips. It was (and still is) very beautiful with views over Stroud and the surrounding hills.

To extend our growing season and the quantity of veg we could produce we put up 3 big polytunnels and a small seed tunnel. We ploughed up the very limited level areas of land which included the field with the cowslips in order to grow sufficient veg.

There has been some bad feeling about the damaging effect the CSA has had on the landscape and environment. One local resident complained to the

Council about our tunnels and forced us to get retrospective planning permission (which was easily granted).

To some of us this feels a bit like the complaints made against wind farms by people who want unlimited energy but want it to be generated in a way that is out of their sight. If we accept that, to create food security and reduce the effects of climate change, we need to grow our food closer to where it is consumed, we need to learn about and accept the practicalities of producing food in a temperate climate.

The SCA farmers are both very focussed on environmental issues and farm our land very sensitively. However, we must plough up land to grow veg and we must use polytunnels unless we carry on using limited fossil fuels to transport food.

# 9 *Managing the shares*

One of the early proposals when setting up SCA was that we should work out a total budget for the farm, then invite supporters to commit to taking on a share of that budget. If the budget wasn't met, then everyone would be asked to contribute more, until the budget was met. It was decided that this was too cumbersome a process given that the Stroud support community was fairly diverse and the chances of getting us all in the same room at the same time were pretty slim.

In the end, we decided that we needed to fix a price for a veg share that would make the project financially viable based on our target membership. We also considered market prices when fixing the share price. SCA decided to charge £2 per month for membership. This pays for the administrative costs of running the co-operative. Members can then choose to buy a veg share. The first £10 of a member's first veg share goes to support the farm as a whole. The remaining £23 goes towards the cost of producing the veg. If a member wants more than one veg share, subsequent shares cost £22 each. This means that a household taking one veg share will pay a standing order of £35 per month. Two share costs £48 per month.

SCA members can also choose to pay to receive eggs in their share every week. Members can also buy meat from SCA. Each meat item is individually priced. Due to several thefts (unlikely to be our own members) of meat and eggs only a limited supply of meat is available in the packing shed. Members can contact the farmers to ask for other meat. Our cheese, eggs and meat are sold from the packing shed using an honesty system based on members writing their purchases in a book and leaving a cheque to keep their 'account' topped up. Since the thefts, the packing shed has a combination lock on it. For details on how the shares work see the SCA membership pack in section 11 of the CSA Action Manual.

The thefts were a shock to many members but particularly to the farmers who had put so much work and care into the raising of the animals whose meat was stolen. We had all (naively) assumed that the spirit of community that SCA is built on would prevent anyone stealing from us. It felt like a backwards step to resort to putting a combination lock on the packing shed.

Members on a low income can choose to ask for a bursary when they join. There is no 'means testing' for this. If they ask for it, they can get a reduction of the membership fee to £1 per month and the veg share can be discounted

by up to 20% on request. Any larger reduction has to be approved by the core group. Bursaries are paid for by members who choose to pay more than the standard charges per month. SCA also donates 1% of its turnover every year into the bursary fund.

Another option for members on a low income is to apply for a 'work-share'. The member needs to fill in a special work-share application form that is a bit like a job application. They are then interviewed and if the farmers can find suitable productive work during hours that are acceptable to the new member then a work-share agreement (a bit like a job contract) is signed. If the member defaults on the agreement, the work-share is terminated. SCA currently has 2 work-share agreements that are working well. The plan is to increase this number as farming practices allow.

*SSFC was keen to involve people as much as possible with the work of the farm. For this reason it set up its joining pack to require members to do 6 hours of work per year per member household (SCA's membership agreement is that work on the farm is purely voluntary – apart from work-shares). However, several potential new SSFC members refused to join because they didn't want to be committed to work on the farm. SSFC has now relaxed this requirement and is seeing a steady increase in membership.*

This can be a tricky decision about whether people should be required to support the farm with time as well as money. One option is to give new members the choice to pay more for their membership if they choose not to commit to a certain number of volunteer hours.

Most SCA members go to one of either of the farms to collect their veg shares. The week's harvest and bought-in produce is set out in boxes in the packing sheds. A list of the weeks veg share is written up on a blackboard (see section 11 for a typical week's share) and the members weigh out their own share. If there is anything that they don't want to take home, they put it in the gift box. The gift box is also used for any other produce that members want to offer from their own gardens and allotments (it gets a lot of garden fruit in the autumn). Members can also take anything that is offered in the gift box.

The blackboard gives members information about where the produce is from (if it has been bought in) and gives details of any produce that is available on a pick-your-own basis.

There are several benefits of members visiting the farm every week;

- members feel more of a connection with the farm and see how it is changing week by week,

- veg collection times are an opportunity to look at the animals and meet up with other members,
- there is a big labour saving in terms of the farmers not having to weigh, bag and deliver 200 veg shares

Rather than going up to the farm to collect their veg, SCA members can choose to have their share delivered to one of 2 drop-off points. Only about 15 % of members take this choice.

*SSFC has made a decision to deliver all veg shares either direct to members or to a drop-off point local to members' homes. This was partly for access reasons – Stroud Slad Farm is down a single-track lane. However there is a significant cost to the delivery system. SSFC estimates that it costs £1.50 per share per week to cover all the costs of weighing, packing and delivering all the shares.*

Advantages of the delivery system are;

- environmental – it is a lot more fuel-efficient for one van to do all the deliveries than have 180 cars all drive out to the farm every week.
- the farmers can keep control of how the veg is shared out. With the SCA system there are occasions when some of the veg runs out because people have taken too much.
- there is an opportunity to set up mini-communities around the drop-off points with each drop-off point having its own gift box.

With the SCA system of weighing and collecting veg from the farm much of the responsibility is given to the members. As noted above this means that sometimes people take too much and the veg runs out. SCA also has the opposite problem sometimes; members forget to tell us that they are going on holiday or they forget to collect their veg and we end up at the end of the week with lots of wilting lettuces or over-ripe tomatoes that end up as pig food. We have tried several ways of explaining to members that if we know in advance that fewer shares will be collected on a particular week then everyone who is collecting can have that bit more – but still we end up with wasted food (but at least we don't waste as much as the supermarkets, eh!)

To minimise the environmental impact of all the members driving out to the farm every week and to improve the sense of community, we send all new members a list of the names of all existing members, their phone numbers, email addresses and which area of town they live in. We ask them to consider collecting veg for each other. We recently realised that all the members who joined early on would not have seen an up-to-date member list for up to six years! So we sent out the list to all members. We got two responses. One was the intended response of people saying they wanted to set up mini-communities to collect for each other. The other response was

from people who didn't want their details to be given out to other members because of a fear of data security and identity theft. It sometimes feels like there is a long way to go in building the 'community' bit of Community Supported Agriculture!

Some SCA members have asked if they can cancel their membership when they go on holiday. We explain that this is not a box scheme and that their CSA membership is paying to support the farm which needs supporting whether they are on holiday or not. In line with the consumers taking their share of responsibility for the farm we ask members to try to find someone else to collect their share while they are on holiday (this has proved to be a good source of new members who get a taste of how fantastic the SCA veg is). If they can't find anyone to collect their share we ask them to let us know that they won't be collecting so we can increase everyone else's share slightly. We also point out to people that the pricing of the shares assumes that all members will collect veg for 48 weeks of the year – so 4 weeks' of holiday are built into the cost of their share.

As the number of SCA veg shares increased we realised that it was becoming more and more unworkable for everyone to collect their veg on the same day. We now have 2 veg collection days – Wednesday and Saturday. This means that the work of harvesting is spread more evenly through the week. It also makes the packing shed less busy. The downside is that the membership administrator has another complication to juggle when signing up new members. Another difficulty is that if a member is late collecting their share, the new veg is ready to be put out before all the previous harvest has been collected. We therefore have to ask Wednesday members to collect by midday Friday and Saturday members to collect by midday Tuesday.

# 10 *Farm activities*

Regular SCA events include:

- Monthly farm days with an opportunity to work and play on the farm in the morning with a picnic at lunchtime. In line with our decision to minimise insurance and the CSA concept of sharing risk, SCA encourages members to take responsibility for the safety of everyone on the farm. This includes a certain amount of communal parenting when children are running amok!
- Apple pruning and wassailing parties in January.
- Our annual celebration and General Meeting in February.
- Apple blossom celebrations in the orchard in May.
- A harvest supper conversation café (see action manual chapter 11) to cook and share farm produce and discuss questions raised by the core group about future plans for SCA.
- A bonfire night party on the farm.
- Celebrations loosely based on the Celtic fire festivals of Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. For example we have a 'candlemass' celebration around the first of February where we pour wax around tapers in holes in the ground to make candles around the perimeter of the farm and light them at dusk.
- A communal camping weekend on the farm.
- Haymaking in August.
- Apple juicing, bobbing and other games in the orchard in October
- Singing to the cows in the barn on Christmas Eve.

## 10.1 Participatory planning

In the early days of setting up SCA there were regular public meetings where everyone was invited to contribute to the decision-making process of the core group. As SCA has become more established, these meetings are less frequent. One particularly significant public meeting was held at the point where we had just realised that membership was about to get too large for

the amount of land we had available for veg growing. We were also considering applying for more grant funding for new capital projects and we wanted to review our short, medium and long-term priorities. We hired a big room and invited all our members to discuss these issues. This meeting started with very brief presentations of the various issues followed by a tightly chaired session to clarify any questions. There always seems to be plenty of scope for discussions to get horribly sidetracked if the chairperson is not careful (see guidelines for effective meetings in the CSA action manual).

Following these presentations we asked everyone to gather around a board on which we had drawn 6 concentric circles. Each of the possible priorities had been written on a piece of paper and laid out around the third of the 6 circles. Everyone was then invited to move any of the pieces of paper inwards or outwards by one circle. They moved it inwards if they thought it was a high priority and outwards if they thought it was a low priority. Each person could move as many pieces of paper as they chose, but they could only move each piece by one circle. When everyone had finished, they all had another go.

When we had finished we had 5 clear priorities. We spent a bit of time discussing how we should move these 5 forward. The core group then had a much clearer idea of what we needed to do on behalf of the community.

## **10.2 Visitors to the farm**

As SCA became established it started to attract media interest. It has featured in the Guardian, The Times, The Independent, The Farmers' Guardian, BBC TV's Countryfile, Radio 4's Food Programme and others. SCA has also been visited by several researchers who are interested in new and better ways of farming. As well as all these visitors, there have been several other community groups interested in setting up a CSA project, the National Trust has sent several delegations to explore the possibility of setting up a CSA on a NT farm and several schools and colleges have sent parties to see the project.

Until recently all these visits have been hosted by volunteer members (mainly core group or ex-core group members) or the farmers taking time out from their work. SCA is now applying for funding to set up a proper hosting programme for this steady stream of visitors. This will involve preparing for the visit by making sure that the appropriate people are on hand for the visit, producing information packs for visitors to take away and following up any unanswered questions by email or phone. SCA also hopes to pull together all the presentations made about SCA by various people over the years to make a co-ordinated conference presentation that can be given on request,

produce an updated DVD (the current one is 3 years old) and produce an updated exhibition display.

### **10.3 Other stuff that happens around the farm**

As well as the core group, there are several sub-groups of members. These include;

- A children's group, which organises activities of farm days to free up parents to get involved on the farm. The children often get involved in the farm day jobs but we have found that the parents get a lot more done if there are a couple of volunteers who have committed to providing some structure for the children.
- A festivals group, who plan and set up celebrations, parties and events around the farm (see chapter 10)
- An education group, who meet to learn more about the farm, its vegetables, animals, landscape and environment.

There is plenty of scope for members to get involved in other ways too. Recently a member who felt strongly about reducing SCA's reliance on plastic bags put an article in the newsletter asking for help in producing cloth bags that we could re-use to bring our veg home. The number of (often very inventive) cloth bags in circulation is steadily increasing.

Many members bring visiting friends to the farm to see what we are doing, scratch the animals, pick some flowers or have a picnic.

Some Stroud families choose not to send their children to school and some those who are SCA members use the farm as a part of their children's education. In some cases this involves a regular work commitment. In other cases the farm is a base for land-based festivals and celebrations.

# 11 Appendices

## 11.1 Price comparison between SCA veg and supermarket veg

Carried out by Sam Judd age 7 (with Dad's help) 24th February 2007

Stroud Community Agriculture share	Tesco	Waitrose	Sainsbury's	Co-op
500 g potatoes	£0.40	£0.50	£0.36	£0.57
500 g carrots	£0.48	£0.66	£0.47	£0.36 (not organic)
400 g onions	£0.32	£0.73	£0.51	£0.84
400 g leeks	£1.73	£2.00	£1.85	£0.80 (not organic)
400 g brussels sprouts	£0.40 (not organic)	£0.56 (not organic)	£0.71	£0.62 (not organic)
1 kohlrabi	£0.79 substitute swede (not organic)	£0.87 substitute swede	£0.98 substitute swede	£0.59 substitute swede (not organic)
150 g - 1 salad pack	£2.40	£2.82	£2.99	£1.86 (not organic)
PYO parsley	£0.99 Small bunch (not organic)	£1.69 Small bunch (not organic)	£0.79 Small bunch (not organic)	No parsley. Substitute Tesco's price £0.99
<b>£7.38</b>	<b>£7.50</b>	<b>£9.83</b>	<b>£8.67</b>	<b>£6.62</b>

### Notes:

SCA price based on one full veg share at £32 per month (including standard membership of £2 per month).  $£32 \times 12$  (months) divided by 52 weeks = £7.38.

All SCA veg is organic and/or biodynamic. None of the supermarkets could supply all these vegetables organic (this week).

No supermarkets stocked kohlrabi, so we substituted swede.

All prices were calculated accurately relative to weight.

This price comparison was done in February when the veg share is relatively small. See appendix 11.2 below for a typical September share (for the same price)

## 11.2 Example veg share contents

Example veg share. September 18<sup>th</sup> 2007

Potato	500g
Carrot	500g
Onion	400g
Courgette	300g
Tomatoes	500g
Cucumber, mini	1nr
Runner beans	250g
Sweetcorn	2nr
Lettuce or salad pack	1nr
Pepper, small	1nr
Coriander	50g
Leaf beet	PYO
Parsley	PYO
Flowers	PYO

### 11.3 Sample budgets based on SCA's experience

	5 ACRE (including polytunnels)		1 ACRE (including polytunnels)	
<b>INCOME</b>				
Subscriptions	100 shares x £35/month	42000	100 shares x £35/month	42000
sales of surplus		5000		
	<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>£47,000</b>		<b>£42,000</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>				
seed		1300		900
potting mix		400		200
fuel		400		200
irrigation water		1000		800
electricity		200		200
fertility inputs		600		200
sundries		1000		600
bought in produce		1000		8000
contractor costs		800		400
seasonal labour	10 months x £12000/yr	10000	5 months x £12000/yr	5000
packing labour	8hrs/wk x £6/hr	2400	8hrs/wk x £6/hr	2400
	<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>£19,100</b>		<b>£18,900</b>
<b>OVERHEADS</b>				
accountants fee		400		400
admin/promotion		500		500
certification cost		500		500
insurance		1200		1200
rent		300		200
repairs/renewals		800		400
depreciation		2000		2000
farm manager	full time salary	18000	part time salary	15000
administrator	1 day/week x £15000	3000	1 day/week x £15000	3000
	<b>TOTAL O/HEAD</b>	<b>£26,700</b>		<b>£23,200</b>
	<b>NET PROFIT</b>	<b>£1,200</b>		<b>£-100</b>

## 11.4 Plan for a SCA conversation cafe

There is more general information on conversation cafes in the CSA Action Manual section 11. The outline below is a structure that worked well for SCA at a recent harvest supper to which members had brought food cooked using ingredients from the farm. Other members organised children's activities in a separate room.

6.10pm Introduction from a core group member to cover:

- basis of conversation cafes
- SCA is managed by its members. Last year's conversation café led to some significant improvements to SCA. Tonight we would like your thoughts on additional exciting possibilities.
- reminder that we don't aim to make decisions tonight, but rather to collect ideas, suggestions and understand more about what's important to people about SCA
- encourage people to stick to the principles on the table cards
- remind people to write down ideas & suggestions on the blank paper on the tables
- ask for a volunteer to type up cards at the end so that the core group can read them all.
- ask everyone to do a bit of washing up before they go.

6.20pm Opening round

Option for everyone to say their name and something about their thoughts for the future of SCA (max 2 mins each)

6.45pm Carole (core group) – 2 minutes about funding

Simon (core group) – 2 minutes about Community Farm Land Trusts

Nick – ask people to collect some food then move to a table (ideal # per table where # is the total number of people divided by the number of tables)

6.50pm Collect food and find a table

7.10pm Table discussions (max 10 people per table with one core group person on each table to steer and time keep):

- a) What is the best thing we can do together as Stroud Community Agriculture?
- b) Do we need a community building?
- c) Should we rely on grant funding for capital projects?
- d) Should we aim to set up a Community Farm Land Trust to buy a farm or would this be too big a project for SCA? Who could take on the work?
- e) What is the ideal relationship between the core group and the membership as a whole? How close are we to that ideal?
- f) What else would you like to discuss?

8.10pm Ending (chaired by someone on the core group):

Each table reads out 1 or 2 cards that have been written during the evening  
Does anybody want to say anything before we break up for an informal chat?  
Ask for a volunteer to type up cards  
Ask everyone to do a bit of washing up before they go.

### 8.30pm Informal chat

Guidelines to be given to table hosts (one member of the core group on each table to steer the conversation):

- Stick to the conversation café guidelines (see below) and remind people of them if necessary
- Make sure you get to all 6 questions within the hour (average of 10 minutes on each question).
- These questions are a bit restrictive – it is fine for the conversation to broaden from this starting point.
- Remind people to write down their ideas and suggestions on the blank paper
- Choose one or two comments or ideas from your table to be read out at the end
- Discussion topics:
  - a) What is the best thing we can do together as Stroud Community Agriculture?
  - b) Do we need a community building?
  - c) Should we rely on grant funding for capital projects?
  - d) Should we aim to set up a Community Farm Land Trust to buy a farm or would this be too big a project for SCA? Who could take on the work?
  - e) What is the ideal relationship between the core group and the membership as a whole? How close are we to that ideal?
  - f) What else would you like to discuss?

### **Conversation Café guidelines (printed on tent cards displayed on each table)**

listen... with respect  
try not to judge what you are hearing  
try to understand rather than persuade  
invite and value different opinions  
say what has meaning for you personally  
go for honesty and depth ... but keep it brief!

### **11.5 Agreement between SCA and our veg grower (last updated October 2005)**

This agreement is made between Mark Harrison (Mark) and Stroud Community Agriculture Ltd (SCA), made with reference to Laurence Dungworth (Laurence) SCA's farmer. This agreement replaces any previous agreement between Mark and SCA.

1. SCA agrees to pay Mark at £8.50 per hour.
2. Payment will be altered in line with inflation annually.
3. Mark will be self- employed and will raise monthly invoices. He will record the days worked and the work done.
4. Initially Mark will work an average of 2 days a week which may be increased by agreement with SCA as need arises and funds allow.
5. In partnership with Laurence, all the aspects of care for the land and the growing harvesting and distribution of crops is within the remit of Mark's work. In addition it may include arranging work parties and managing volunteers, managing other paid land workers, liaising with farms growing produce on behalf of SCA and other work approved of by the SCA Core Group.
6. Agreed expenses incurred on behalf of SCA will be reimbursed. Mark will submit to the SCA treasurer itemised expenses with receipts. Mileage may be charged at a rate of 40p per mile (or 50p if towing a trailer) for journeys under 100 miles and 25p per mile over 100 miles.
7. Mark, in partnership with Laurence, will be responsible for taking on casual labour if volunteers cannot meet the work requirements. The SCA will pay £5 per hour up to £72 per week for any one person.
8. Mark will be responsible for finding people to cover necessary work while he is away. These people will be paid at a rate up to £7 per hour.
9. SCA is responsible for finding volunteers.
10. Either Mark or Laurence will attend the SCA core group and public meetings to report on the state of the land he is managing and his plans. Mark will accommodate suggestions from the core group and public meetings when these are feasible and practical. He will uphold the principles and aims of the Project. He will work within a business plan and budget approved by the core group.
11. Either Mark or SCA will give 3 months notice to terminate this agreement.

Signed by (print name)

(Signature)

(Date)

Signed on behalf of SCA by (print name)

(Signature)

(Date)