

## PlacerGROWN Collaborative Community Supported Agriculture Project

PlacerGROWN piloted a collaborative Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) project to deliver produce from a group of local farms to Placer County residents. Placer County residents have expressed their support for fresh and local produce; individually, producers have had a hard time meeting this demand. PlacerGROWN found that the major problems producers face are a lack of crop diversity required to fill CSA orders, a lack of storage space and the proper storage equipment, and a disinterest in acquiring and cultivating relationships with CSA customers. PlacerGROWN assisted farmers by organizing and marketing a new CSA. Produce was pooled from sixteen to twenty local farmers to serve CSA members recruited from local institutions and government offices. The project also piloted the inclusion of an optional meat delivery along with the vegetable and fruit CSA.

### Project Highlights:

- The CSA continued for two years, increasing its membership from 25 members to 49 in the second year.
- Producer participation increased from 16 to 20 local farmers in the second year.
- During the first year of the project PlacerGROWN purchased over \$3,000 of local produce. This grew to \$15,000 in the second year.

### Project Impacts:

- The project incorporated new customers who do not normally shop at farmers markets.
- The pilot program created and documented a cost, quantity and delivery tracking system for organizing collaborative CSAs for future projects.
- CSA subscribers were given the opportunity to explore local agriculture with a free ticket to the annual *Placer Farm and Barn Tour* included in their baskets.
- In an email survey of CSA members during the second season, 65% of respondents checked “I love it!” as their opinion of the CSA.



Dan Macon, Highland Farms Grassfed Lamb, at the first Sierra Foothills Meat Buyers Club delivery at Sinclair Concrete. Customers were treated to BBQ samples of beef, pork, and lamb.

## Next Steps:

- The project was discontinued for the following season because of disagreements surrounding the price of the box and the difficulties farmers faced in meeting the supply demands of the CSA. The project had trouble reaching profitability, and it was determined that scaling up to a larger member base for an extended season would have allowed the project to maximize both project staff and producers' time. The price of the box also needed to be slightly raised and the diversity of the produce offered modified.
- The meat ordering program has continued with great success. Approximately \$1,000 worth of local meat is purchased with each order and distributed to ten customers. Three local producers continue to be regular contributors to the program.

## More Information:

To find out more about the Meat Buying CSA, visit the website at [http://ceplacer.ucdavis.edu/Meat\\_Buyers\\_Club/](http://ceplacer.ucdavis.edu/Meat_Buyers_Club/)



Karin Sinclair, Sinclair Farms; Jenny Brown, High Sierra Beef; Joe Kleinsmith, Meat Buyers Club customer; and Dan Macon, Highland Farms Grassfed Lamb at the first Sierra Foothills Meat Buyers Club delivery.

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