

Accessible Veg:

A pilot project exploring the barriers and benefits to CSA memberships for food-insecure households



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**Dr Caroline Verfuert and
Dr Angelina Sanderson Bellamy**

Authors: Dr Caroline Verfuert¹ and Dr Angelina Sanderson Bellamy²

Contact: verfuertc@cardiff.ac.uk or angelina.sandersonbellamy@uwe.ac.uk

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Our CSA project partners and charity partners

Slade Farm Organics

Contact info: info@sladefarmorganics.com

St Brides Major

Vale of Glamorgan, CF32 0TE

Website: <https://www.sladefarmorganics.com/slade-farm-veg-bag>

Ash & Elm Horticulture

Contact info: <https://www.ashandelmhorticulture.co.uk/contact-us/>

Llanidloes, Powys, Mid Wales, SY186PW

Website: <https://www.ashandelmhorticulture.co.uk/>

Henbant

Contact info: matt@henbant.org

Henbant Bach, Tain Lon,

Clynnogfawr, Caernarfon. LL54 5DF

Website: <https://www.henbant.org/>

Glasbren

Contact info: hello@glasbren.org.uk

Bronhaul Farm

Bancyfelin, Carmarthen, SA33 5NQ

Website: <https://www.glasbren.org.uk/>

Splice Child and Family Project Ltd Charity

Contact info: splice_childandfamily@yahoo.co.uk

Community Based Centre

North Avenue, Pyle/Kenfig Hill, CF33 6ND

Website: <https://www.spliceproject.co.uk/>

Siop Griffiths Cyf

Contact info: post@yrsaf.cymru

Siop Griffiths Ltd., Muriau Stores, Heol Y Dŵr, Penygroes, Gwynedd LL54 6LP

Website: <https://www.yrsaf.cymru/en/Amdanom-Ni/>

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Cover photos: SLADE FARM ORGANICS

¹ Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformations (CAST), School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Cardiff CF10 3AT, UK

² Associate Professor of Food Systems, Dept of Applied Sciences, University of the West of England, Bristol, BS16 1QY



Picture: Heather Birnie, Glasbren CSA

1. Key Findings & Recommendations

Key barriers for food insecure households included

- **Lack of information, knowledge, and confidence about using the vegetables.** Key barriers here included vegetables that were unknown to participants and limited means to cook vegetables, for example due to a lack of appropriate kitchen utensils.
- **Lack of transport to collect veg bags as a side effect of poverty.** A major underpinning factor for food insecurity is poverty. Unsurprisingly, this meant that participants had limited access to individual transport, such as a car, and a high awareness of fuel prices.
- **Multi-layered problems around mental health and other issues** that are often related to difficulties planning and cooking meals, collecting

the veg bags and participating in this project (e.g. doing the interviews).

Key recommendations for policy makers

- **Quick funding for small projects and initiatives and best practice projects.** Small grants of up to £5000 that can be accessed quickly to help farms and/or charity partners to establish a solidarity veg bag scheme or other social innovation to circumvent barriers to participation for food insecure households. Initial funding enables CSAs to explore and implement the most productive and sustainable model of solidarity to implement for long-term provision of veg bags for food insecure households.
- **Developing Sustainable Food Partnerships that support local partnerships between actors in the food systems,** for example Sustainable

Food Places Wales¹. Support and coordination of networks across the food and agriculture sector that facilitates better connections in the food system and links to the Community Food Strategy. To achieve this, a geographically categorised **online network** of community-scale food providers could be developed to assist organisations in finding collaborators and mentors. For example, stronger links between small scale horticulture projects and pilots could be linked with findings from this project². Some examples are partnerships between schools, local growers and Big Bocs Boyd or other food aid partners and local health boards.

- **The use of Healthy Start vouchers for veg bags and further pilot projects that interlink health, community, environment, and agriculture.** Again, this can be achieved through partnership building and a potential integration into the Healthy Start³ programme.
- **Coordinating and funding links to existing Government policies.** For example, Healthy Weight Healthy Wales⁴ could be supported by providing funding for linking local Health Board Plans and Nutrition Skills for Life with CSA schemes. Another example is the opportunity to use Welsh Government funding for poverty alleviation to support community-based food solidarity models or policies related to the Welsh Government's Community Food Strategy⁵.
- **Sustainable funding commitment** to provide long-term support for community-based initiatives and build consistent and stronger links to existing Government policies. By providing **long-term grants for sustainability** to organisations

involved in community-scale supply chains, such as food hubs and CSAs, the Government can reduce administrative burden and loss of capacity and institutional knowledge owing to high turnover related to uncertainty experienced by organisations relying on small, short-term grants.

- **Support and funding accessible to people that experience multiple vulnerabilities**, often linked to poverty (e.g. food and fuel insecurity, mental health and physical health issues). Social prescribing and food vouchers that can be used towards CSA memberships can address both well-being and food insecurity.

Many of the above recommendations can be achieved through a few simple actions that make long-term, consistent funding commitments to build community-based partnerships that are capable of delivering health and well-being benefits for food insecure households, and thereby reducing the cost on the NHS for dietary- and mental health-related illnesses. As public health is a public good, community-scale supply chains could be approached using the 'public money for public goods' principle contained in the relevant Agricultural Bills across the UK and the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015).

Implementing 'public money for public goods' payments for community-scale supply chain participants can create a source of long-term and secure funding for community growers, suppliers, distributors, and other organisations involved in local food provision services that result in improved environmental sustainability as well as positive public health outcomes. This policy approach can support a more diverse range of actors engaging in community-scale supply chains, generating more resilient consumption patterns that align with health, biodiversity, zero-emission policy targets and other non-food benefits.

¹ <https://www.foodsensewales.org.uk/good-food-movement/sustainable-food-places/>

² For example, see <https://www.foodsensewales.org.uk/investment-in-a-small-scale-horticulture-grants-scheme-could-significantly-increase-the-amount-of-veg-produced-in-wales/>

³ <https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/>

⁴ Welsh Government (October 2019). Healthy weight strategy (Healthy Weight Healthy Wales) <https://gov.wales/healthy-weight-strategy-healthy-weight-healthy-wales>

⁵ Welsh Government (December 2021). Programme for Government – Update: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-01/programme-for-government-update-december-2021.pdf>



2. Summary of the project & background

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is an agroecological model that has people, the planet and the producer at the core of their value system¹. CSA is a model in which the responsibility, risks and rewards of farming are shared between the CSA farms and its members². A farm's produce goes directly to the consumer, cutting a potentially lengthy supply chain to a minimum. Members benefit from having access to fresh, fairly priced and locally grown food. CSAs directly benefit the local economy by providing local employment and money going directly into the local economy and farmers have a more stable and secure income. Other non-food benefits include a closer connection between food producers (i.e. farmers) and consumers through direct communication and activities like volunteering, farm visits and community events on the farm. According to the CSA UK charter³, many CSA farms grow above the organic standards, work with nature and biodiversity, and have fairness, solidarity

and reciprocity among their core values. That makes this hyper local and community-led movement a potential key player in addressing societal problems including climate change, loss of biodiversity, loneliness, poverty and lack of access to green spaces, just to name a few.

CSAs play a pivotal role in transforming the sector by contributing to the community and making healthy and sustainable food accessible (Matzembacher & Meira, 2018). CSAs utilise a food distribution model in which participating households pay a membership fee in return for a regular share of the harvest delivered to their homes (Wheeler, 2020). What we eat and the way we produce our food has a great impact on our climate, biodiversity, health, and communities (Willett et al., 2019) and CSAs have a great potential to address some of the issues in the current food system (Mills et al., 2021). The Covid-19 crisis further highlighted the risk factors associated with

¹Community Supported Agriculture UK: <https://communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk/about/csa-charter/>

²Community Supported Agriculture UK: <https://communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk/>

³The Food Foundation (February 2022). New data shows food insecurity major challenge to levelling up agenda <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/press-release/new-data-shows-food-insecurity-major-challenge-levelling-up-agenda>

an unhealthy diet and unsustainable food system (OECD, 2021; Sanderson Bellamy et al., 2021) and the increased risk of food insecurity in the UK (Loopstra et al., 2019). Low-income households are especially at risk of experiencing inequalities in food security and nutrition as shown in the most recent report by the Food Foundation³. CSAs in Wales create economic, environmental, and social benefits; for an overview see a recent CSA impact report for Wales (Little et al., 2020). However, CSAs often have limited resources to systematically improve their business models and, more crucially, to reach more diverse members and low-income households (Little et al., 2020).

The Accessible Veg Project: a pilot project to explore the impact of CSA memberships to food insecure households. Food insecurity and access to healthy and sustainable food is one of the key problems we are facing in Wales (Matzembacher & Meira, 2018). In their Programme for Government⁴, the Welsh Government committed to developing a Community Food Strategy to improve the production and accessibility of locally-grown food in Wales. CSAs are at the heart of producing sustainable, local, and healthy food for the community and therefore play an important role. This project addresses key issues that our CSA partners are facing, namely an increased interest in veg bag schemes and their own desire to increase the diversity of the membership, while also addressing a pressing social issue of affordability of healthy diets and increasing food insecurity due to the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing cost-of-living crisis. This pilot project explores: (1) means for CSAs to implement solidarity models to make vegetable bags accessible for all; (2) the impact of CSA vegetable bags for food insecure households; and (3) barriers to accessing and utilising vegetable bags for households.

Background and underpinning research. Data collected during the UKRI-funded TGRAINS⁵ project has demonstrated the role that CSA vegetable bag schemes have in improving both the health and sustainability of household diets. 'CSA diets', compared to control group diets, are higher in vegetables and legumes and lower in meats, sugar and saturated fats, with 28% lower CO₂ emissions (CSAs n=46, control group n=67). The data also confirm previous results that show that CSA households tend to have higher income than the national average, with higher socio-economic class (indicated by type of occupation) (Galt et al., 2017). These results indicate that

a sector of British society is willing and able to make dietary changes that are necessary to improve health, environmental outcomes, and reach the UK's 2050 carbon emission targets (Committee for Climate Change, 2020), but that income and socio-economic status are a barrier to participation. In addition, we have a limited understanding of both the barriers experienced by food insecure households in accessing healthy and sustainable food, as well as the impact of increasing accessibility on food insecure households.

Multilevel impact of the Accessible Veg Project.

This project aims to create multilevel impact for the collaborating CSA farms, involved households, and the sector as a whole. By addressing issues around sustainable food production, food security & poverty, and health & well-being, learnings from this pilot project can be used to inform the community food strategy and wider efforts to address these challenges.

Farm level impact: *The project enables CSA farms to identify opportunities for expanding their membership demographic to food insecure households, to increase the number of households consuming healthy and sustainable diets. This project helps the collaborating CSAs to understand better how they can engage with food-insecure households and, more widely, supports learning between CSAs in this project and beyond.*

Household level impact: *For participating households there is an opportunity to learn about vegetables and local food, and potentially reduce food insecurity. Households also benefit from the closer links to the CSA community created by their membership.*

Sector level impact: *Legislative pressure to meet net zero carbon and biodiversity targets, combined with COVID-19, the Well-being of Future Generations Act⁶, and the need for new agricultural and food system policies, creates a unique moment of change, culminating in a window of opportunity for transforming the Welsh (and UK) food system and developing a community food strategy⁷. This pilot project illustrates how CSA memberships can be made available to food-insecure households and potential for upscaling across the UK.*

⁴ Welsh Government (December 2021). Programme for Government – Update: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-01/programme-for-government-update-december-2021.pdf>

⁵ <https://tgrains.com/>

⁶ Future Generations Commissioner for Wales (2015). <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/>

⁷ Food Sense Wales (May 2022). <https://www.foodsensewales.org.uk/have-your-say-on-the-development-of-a-community-food-strategy-for-wales/>

The Accessible Veg Project: Overview

The Accessible Veg project was set up to help food-insecure households get fresh vegetables by becoming members of their local community-supported agriculture (CSA) veg bag scheme. The project was developed together with the research team and four CSA farms and two food aid partners to identify ways to improve healthy eating among food-insecure households. Fresh vegetables can be some of the most expensive foods to buy in terms of calories. However, rarely do food aid parcels include fresh vegetables. As a result, food-insecure households often find it very difficult to include fresh vegetables in their diet.

Weekly veg bags for food-insecure households. Participants in the project became members of their local CSA veg bag scheme. This was free of cost to participants, who received a veg bag every week during the harvest season (July- November/December). Participants also received information from the CSA about the foods that they were growing, recipes for how to use the vegetables, opportunities to visit the farm and volunteer or attend other events that the CSAs held during the season. The Accessible Veg team encouraged participants to get involved as much as they wished. While the cost of the veg bags was covered by research funding, CSA partners were encouraged to explore different ways to generate funding to sustainably cover the cost of veg bags for food-insecure households once the project period ended.

Pre- and post- veg bag interviews with participants to evaluate the impact of CSA membership.

The team also conducted research to understand how becoming members of the CSA and receiving fresh vegetables every week for the growing season impacted the diets, food security and well-being of participating households. To do this, they conducted a pre- and post-interview with each participant via telephone. The interview asked questions about food purchasing, food preparation and food consumption. In total, 15 participants completed both pre- and post-veg bag interviews. Initially, 44 households took part, of which 38 took part in the first interview before receiving the veg bag. This means that the dropout rate was relatively high reflecting some of the barriers we identified throughout the project regarding accessibility to CSA memberships (for more details see appendix).

Workshop with CSA and charity partners. In March 2022, the CSA farms and food charity partners came together to talk about their experiences with the project. The farms discussed their various activities and efforts to build a sustainable solidarity model for continuing to provide veg bags for food-insecure households going forwards. The research team gave a brief overview of some initial findings on (a) how participants experienced the veg bags and their impact and (b) on perceptions of different accessibility models. These insights were the basis for further discussions.



3. Barriers to participation

Barriers to participating in research projects and accessing CSA memberships are multi-faceted and go beyond financial means. A more nuanced understanding of the barriers to accessing CSA memberships and potential issues around preparing meals from veg bags will help CSA farms, charities and policy makers to develop strategies to make healthy and sustainable food and non-food benefits (e.g. community connection) more accessible, especially to food-insecure households. In this section we outline barriers we identified from the data collected in this project, including the workshop with our CSA partners and food aid organisations and with the participating households.

Lack of capabilities to cook vegetables

Lack of information/knowledge/confidence about using the vegetables. Some participants did not want to or know how to deal with fresh and sometimes unknown

vegetables. A common theme was a preference for cans, frozen and ready meals (e.g. oven chips) over having a bag of fresh vegetables that needed preparation and multiple steps to turn into a meal. Many were insecure about cooking vegetables, especially unknown ones. Participants appreciated having a variety of new, unusual vegetables, but this was also often experienced as an extra burden. Limited cooking utensils and space as well as energy costs constituted another burden to preparing food and limited refrigerator and freezer space reduced pre- and post-cooking storage options.

“We have an issue in our county with low income families not engaging with any cooking or vegetables at all. So I think more work is required in our area to engage people with how veg is grown and how to cook with it.”

(Glasbern CSA)

Lack of means to collect veg bags

Lack of transport to collect veg bags. Some participants reported not having the means to collect the veg bags. This tended to be due to a lack of transport modes, costs of petrol and not having the time to collect the bags. A lack of resources and means including transport were,

“We have provided delivery to each family, many do not have transport and would find it hard to access the farm to collect their veg boxes.”

(Splice Child and Family Project Ltd Charity)

unsurprisingly, a common theme among the participants. Especially in rural areas, a lack of transport can be linked to very limited access to healthy and fresh food.

Multi-layered problems around mental health and other issues

Chaotic lives and many daily issues. Families were often disorganised and needed the bags delivered. Often, participants had multiple jobs, caring responsibilities and other issues, such as poor physical or mental health, that made organising their daily activities difficult. For example, children in and out of schools due to COVID-19, Christmas season and other things often got in the way. Participating in an interview or picking up veg bags and cooking meals from it was sometimes too much.

Mental health and other health problems. Additional barriers to participation and access to the veg bags included mental health issues such as severe anxiety and depression. These made it difficult for participants to take part in the project, for example difficulty coordinating the collection of the veg bags, preparing food and linked feelings of being overwhelmed with this task, organising a visit to the CSA farm, and coordinating an interview with the research team to talk about their experiences with the veg bags.

Stigma around being “needy” or “poor”. Many participants were grateful for the support but did not want to be seen as ‘poor’ or ‘needy’. Receiving ‘charity’ was by some associated with a loss of dignity, which constituted a barrier to taking part in the project.

“Many, although grateful for the support, do not want to be seen as “poor” or “needy”.

(Splice Child and Family Project Ltd Charity)

Policy recommendations

- **Funding to support CSAs to develop, pilot and implement best practice projects.** Accessible and unbureaucratic funding to help support social innovation initiatives as shown by the CSA farms and to test best practice pilot projects.

Best practice examples from our CSA & charity partners

Farms delivered veg bags to participants. Some farms implemented procedures for delivering the veg bags to the participants. This often resulted in weekly chats with families, forming a regular positive point of contact. Particularly during the pandemic, this was very important as loneliness had a great impact on some people.

Well-being centre with community freezer. One CSA is running a well-being centre which, among other things, installed a community freezer. Surplus vegetables are cooked into meals and made available in the community freezer. That way, people have access to fresh vegetables but are not facing the barrier of learning how to cook them or having limited cooking utensils.

Regular cooking workshops. Another CSA is doing regular (weekly) cooking demonstrations and workshops to encourage people to cook and engage them with the vegetables. They make the cooking demonstrations publicly available online.

Recipe cards and sharing recipes on social media and in chat groups. Some farms are sharing recipes to provide support for cooking with the vegetables; one of the charity partners started a Facebook group for participating food-insecure households to support recipe ideas and stimulate enthusiasm for cooking unusual vegetables in child-friendly recipes.

- **Quick funding for small projects and initiatives.** Small grants of up to £5000 that can be accessed quickly to help farms and/or charity partners to establish a solidarity veg bag scheme or other social innovation to circumvent barriers to participation for food-insecure households. This type of funding especially would help CSAs and charities to respond to barriers they identified locally with the potential to develop best practices.
- **Funding and support for healthy start promotion** and take-up and the possibility for pilots to identify means for scaling up successful schemes that take a more holistic approach and tackle confounding problems of food poverty and mental health issues.
- **Developing Sustainable Food Partnerships.** Support and coordination of networks beyond the food and agriculture sector that facilitates better connections in the food system and links to the Community Food Strategy. For example, stronger links between small-scale horticulture projects and pilots could be linked with findings from this project.
- **Healthy start promotion and take-up and the possibility for further pilot projects the interlink health, community, environment, and agriculture.** There could be possible partnerships between schools, local growers and Big Bocs Boyd. For example, councils could subsidise partnerships (given the funding centrally) or these could be further linked to the local school supply chain; this could make a good next phase pilot.



Picture: Heather Birnie, Glasbren CSA

4. Building relationships and impact of veg bags

Beyond providing access to healthy and sustainable food, CSA memberships have a sense of community at their core. Loneliness has become one of the confounding factors for ill-health and mental health problems (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2018), which has been further catalysed through the Covid-19 pandemic. Food poverty and poverty more generally are often linked to loneliness (Rotenberg et al., 2021), compounding the suffering of people affected by it.

Sense of community

One aspect we were interested in was how participants interacted with the CSA community. We were interested in how building a relationship with the CSA farm and the CSA community has additional value to people receiving the veg bags.

Participants felt connected to the CSA farm and cause even when they did not visit the farm. The type

of contact with the farms varied. Most participants tended to have brief chats with the people who delivered the veg bags; other forms included whatsapp groups and social media platforms to exchange recipes and learn more about what was going on at the farm and how vegetables are grown. Through these forms of communication, many participants reported feeling connected to the cause of the farm, which was seen as very positive, and felt like they were part of the community. This was still the case even when participants were unable to visit the farm.

“Yeah, feels like I’m supporting the local farm. If I haven’t used all of the veg I give it to family and tell them where it comes from.”

(female participant, 37 years old)

Well-being and food security

The households that participated in this project were chosen by our CSA and food charity partners because they experienced various degrees of food insecurity and the majority had household incomes below the UK poverty line (see appendix for details). Among other things we asked participants about their experience

of food security and well-being both before and while receiving the veg bags.

Receiving the veg bags improved the food insecurity of participants. Fewer participants experienced difficulty affording their weekly shop, went hungry, or skipped meals (see Figure 1 below). While somewhat expected, this is an important finding and indicates the potential large-scale

Question:

In the last month have you or anyone else in your household done any of the following because you couldn't afford or access food?

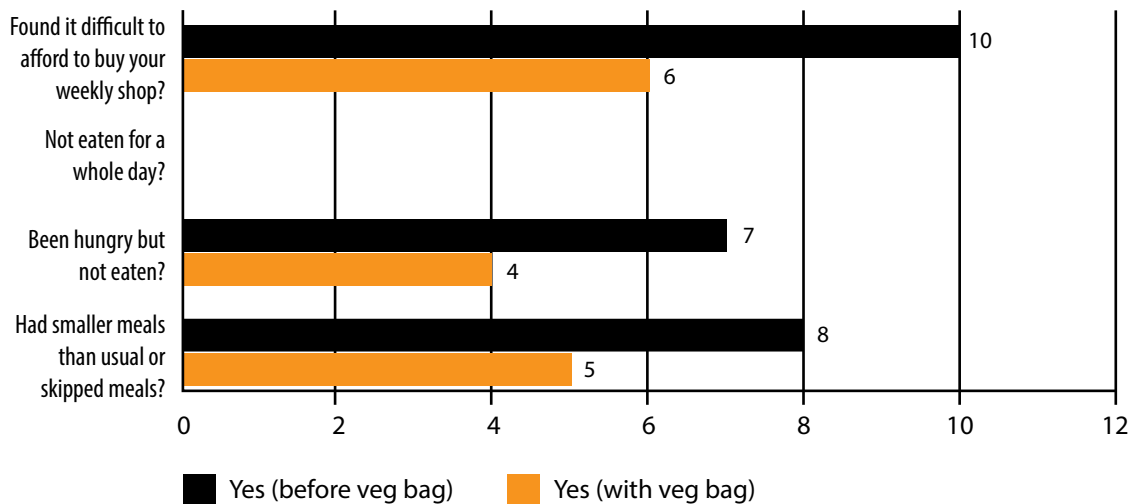


Figure 1: Food insecurity. Comparing before and during receiving the veg bags.

impact that improved accessibility to CSA veg bags could have for food-insecure households.

Receiving the veg bag significantly improved the well-being of participants. In the pre and post interviews, participants were asked a short well-being questionnaire.¹ On average, participants reported higher well-being after

receiving the veg bags, which was statistically significant (see Figure 2 below). This highlights the non-food related benefits that improved accessibility can have on its members. At scale, increased accessibility to CSA memberships, especially for food-insecure households, would help address some of the key issues that underpin poverty (e.g. social isolation, loneliness and lower well-being).

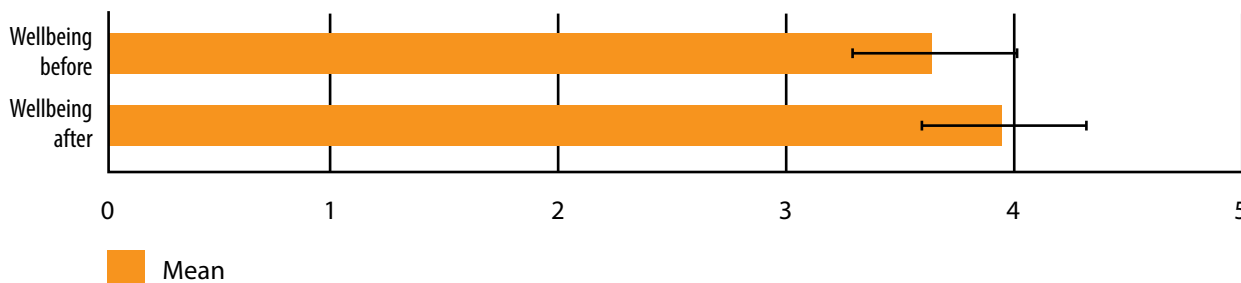


Figure 2: Results of Warwick-Edinburgh well-being scale. Example questions included: "I've been feeling optimistic about the future" and "I've been thinking clearly". 1 = None of the time, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Some of the time, 4 = Often, 5 = All of the time.

Statistical test: The difference, (.29 mean difference, 95% CI [.458; .122]) was statistically significant, $t(15) = -3.677, p < .05$, with participants reporting on average reporting lower well-being scores before receiving the veg bag ($M = 3.64, SD = .359$) compared to after receiving the veg bag ($M = 3.938, SD = .406$).

¹ We used the Warwick-Edinburgh mental well-being scale containing 14 items. Reference: Stewart-Brown, S., & Janmohamed, K. (2008).

Warwick-Edinburgh mental well-being scale. User guide. Version, 1.

Community food partnerships

Successful delivery of the project was also dependent on building community food partnerships. Two CSA partners worked together with a charity partner within their region. The charity partners were able to identify

food-insecure households and facilitate participation in the veg bag scheme. This facilitation role was critical to circumventing barriers to participation and benefited from the positive relationships of trust that existed between the veg bag participants and the charity partner.

Best practice examples from our CSA & charity partners

Community Farm fun day. One farm partnered with its members and the charity partner to plan fundraising activities to cover the cost of veg bags. The CSA members brought different ideas, skills and capacity to eventually decide on organising a Community farm fun day. The event attracted 200+ visitors and raised £1300 and gave the CSA members agency within the community food partnerships. In addition, it shared the burden of fundraising across all partners.

Social media platforms. One farm used a WhatsApp group for all CSA members to foster the sharing of information regarding the veg bag pickups, contents, recipes and other food-related ideas. A charity partner created a Facebook page for the food-insecure participants to share recipes and generate enthusiasm about the vegetables.

Volunteer farm days. Farm partners often had volunteer days when CSA members could come to the farm and help with different growing activities. Although the rate of participation is not often high, participants appreciated the opportunity to participate, contributing to the sense of belonging within the community.

Policy recommendations

- **Strategies need to focus on supporting local partnerships between actors in the food systems:** farmers/growers, charitable organisations, schools, consumers, etc. Farms can often act as a convening space in these partnerships.
- **Coordinating and funding links to Healthy Weight Healthy Wales²** – potentially through local Health Board Plans and Nutrition Skills for Life – to support grassroots initiatives long-term and build stronger links to existing Government policies.
- **Coordination of efforts and oversight in the sector to facilitate collaboration for more efficient use of resources and knowledge.** Cross Government collaboration and stakeholder involvement to address the interrelated crises of household food insecurity, cost of living and sustainability, which need to be addressed urgently; see also Food Sense Wales Round table³.
- **Support and funding accessible to people that experience multiple vulnerabilities,** often linked to poverty (e.g. food and fuel insecurity, mental health and physical health issues). Social prescribing and food vouchers to include use towards CSA memberships to address well-being and food insecurity.

²Welsh Government (October 2019). Healthy weight strategy (Healthy Weight Healthy Wales) <https://gov.wales/healthy-weight-strategy-healthy-weight-healthy-wales>

³Food Sense Wales (May 2022). Food Poverty Round Table. <https://www.foodsensewales.org.uk/app/uploads/2022/05/Food-Poverty-roundtable-KP01.pdf>



Picture: Heather Birnie, Glasbren CSA

5. How can CSA membership be more accessible?

One of the key questions of this project was to better understand how CSA veg bags and memberships could be made more accessible to low-income and food-insecure households. We asked our CSA farm partners and participants about their opinions of three types of accessibility models.

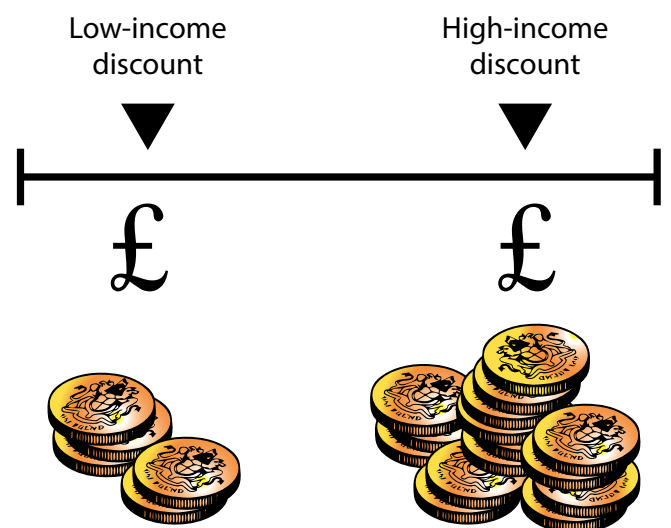
Approach 1: SLIDING MODEL

Most participants tended to like this approach. However, there are some concerns about stigma for lower-

income households and how higher-earning households would feel. The practicality of this approach is seen as mixed, which is reflected in participants' response to how likely they would be to purchase a veg bag with this approach.

“Works for lower income houses. Potential stigma around low income.”

(Female participant, 40 year old)



How it works. Based on your income you would receive a discount on the veg box. For example, if it normally cost £12 per week, you would pay £10. To balance the cost for the farm, higher earning households pay more, for example £20 per week.

“We have tried a few approaches in this field. Our current approach is a donation based system where members and other people in the community can donate throughout the year to our solidarity fund, which pays for our current solidarity veg boxes that we give out”

(Glasbren)

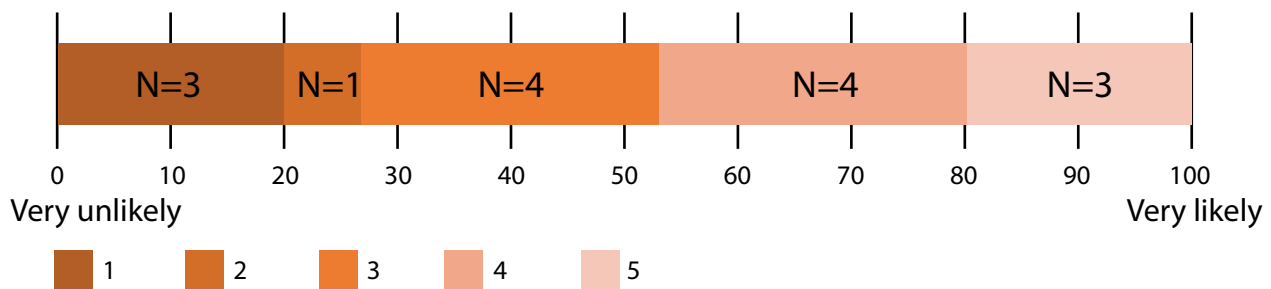
We also asked our CSA partners about the sliding model. Most farms could somewhat imagine using this approach, but so far only one farm was already using it. Both our CSA and charity partners shared concerns about the approach that categorising households into income groups could be difficult and would stigmatise food-insecure households.

“It’s a nice idea. But people don’t like to talk about what they earn.”

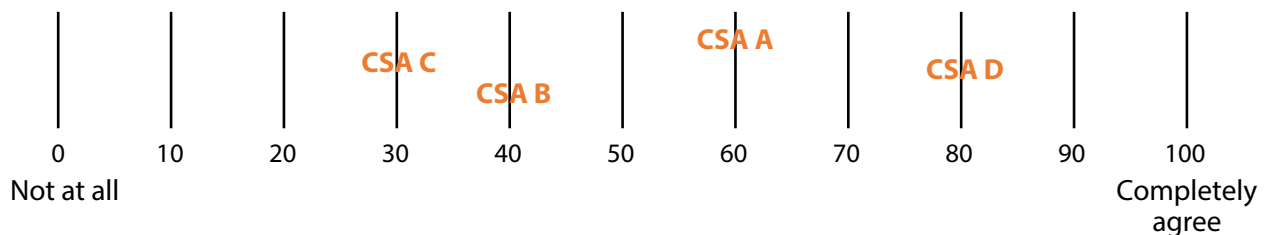
(Ash & Elm CSA)

We asked our participants (N=15):

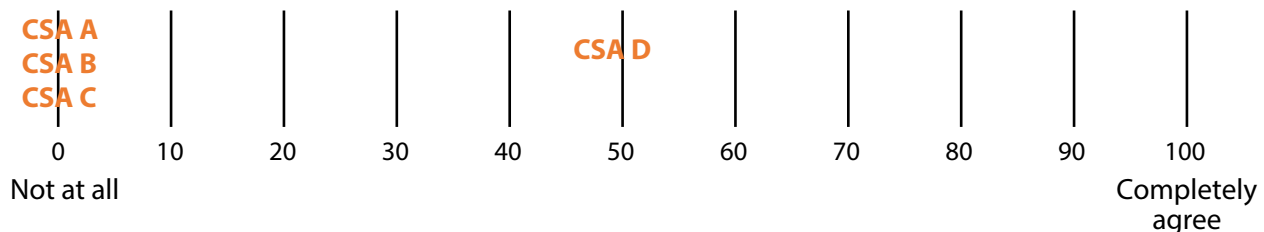
How likely is it that you would purchase a veg box with the Sliding Model approach?



We can imagine using this approach



We are already using this approach

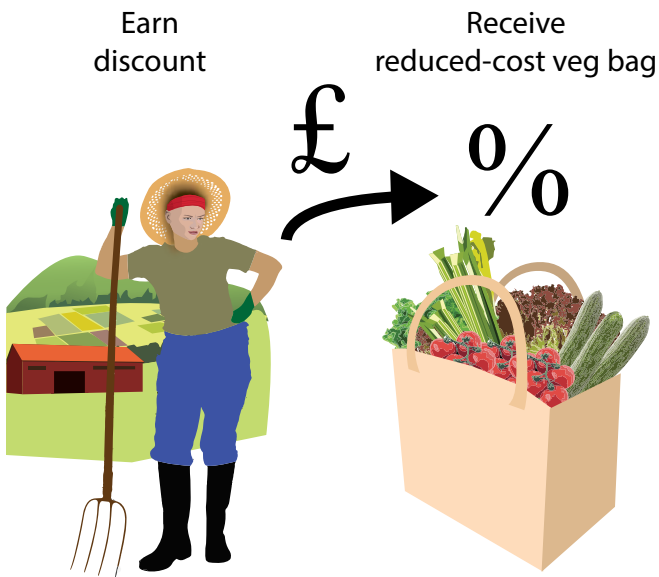


Approach 2: WORKING ON FARM FOR DISCOUNT

Some participants really liked this approach. Concerns for this approach were around time constraints, for example caring responsibilities, that might affect and therefore disadvantage some households more than others. Those who liked this approach were very positive about it and liked the idea of helping at the farm. Hence, this approach seems very feasible for some while others would not buy a veg bag with this approach.

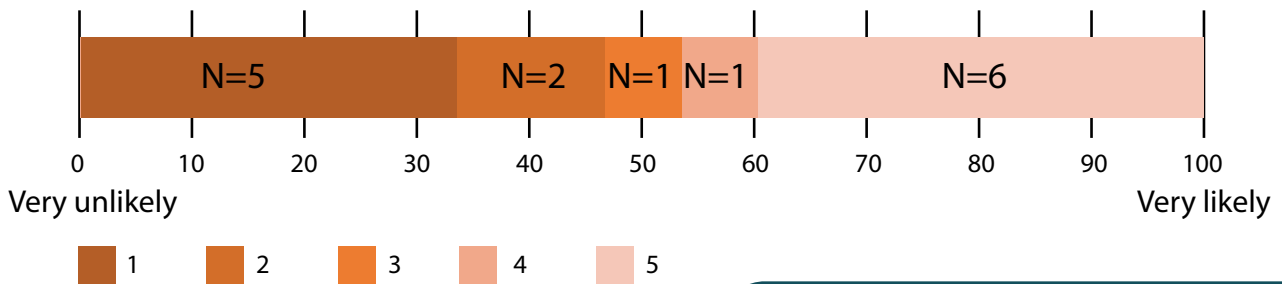
“Some people might have a low income because they might be caring for somebody – may not have been lucky enough to have certain opportunities that would involve them getting a higher wage and it might also be difficult to make them work.”

(Female participant, 32 years old)



How it works. Low-income households can 'earn' a discount by working on the farm. (Example: Contributing to veg box membership of e.g. £X per hour worked on farm). Alternatively, any member could volunteer on the farm and 'donate' their time to help cover the cost of a veg box.

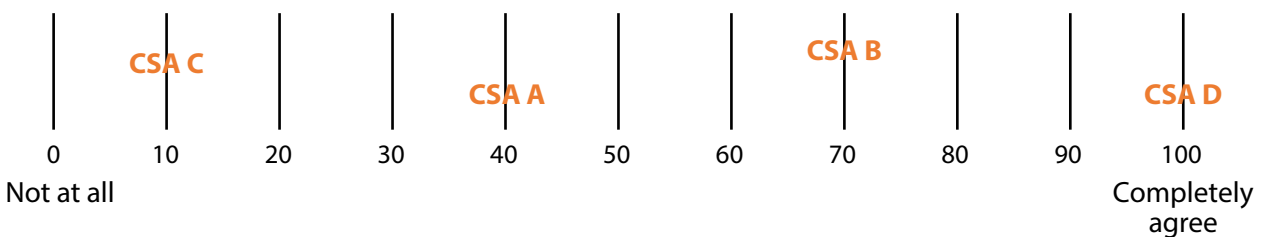
We asked our participants (N=15):
How likely is it that you would purchase a veg box with the 'working on the farm' approach?



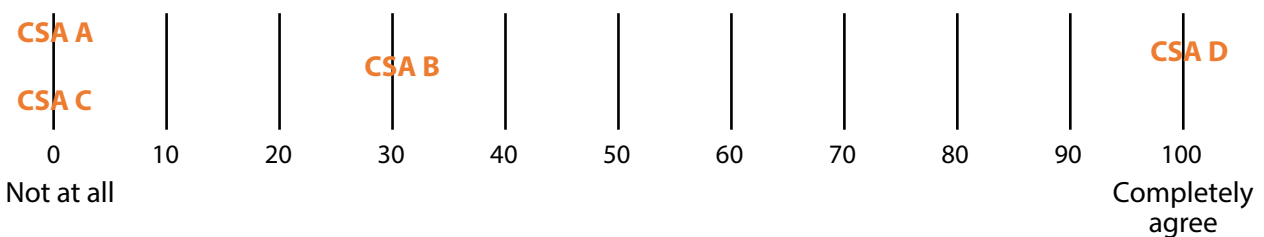
The CSA farms had a mixed response to this approach with one farm already using the approach (Glasbren) and another (Ash & Elm) giving volunteers excess vegetables for helping out on the farm.

"We have been offering free veg boxes to any volunteers that come to the farm, and it has been working great so far, however we need to keep better records of how much this actually costs us as a business. On average we have six volunteers each week that receive a veg box for their time on the farm."
(Glasbren)

We can imagine using this approach



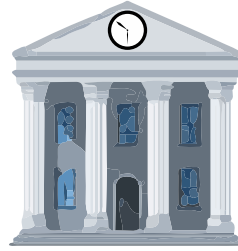
We are already using this approach



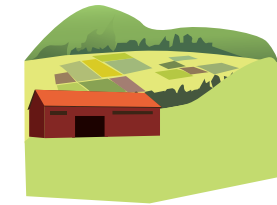
Approach 3: SUBSIDY BASED (CHARITY/ FUNDING DEPENDENT)

This approach was seen most favourably and fair. Some concerns were raised around distrust and no faith in local councils to provide funding. Another concern was around the bureaucracy of it that could constitute a barrier to accessing veg bags this way. Participants were most likely to continue receiving a veg bag with this approach.

Local council/ charity, health care provider



How it works. In this case, the cost for veg bags are covered by the local council, food charity or health care providers. It could be in the form of: Food stamps that can only be used for veg bags; veg bags that are distributed as part of food parcels; or reduced fees for veg bags.



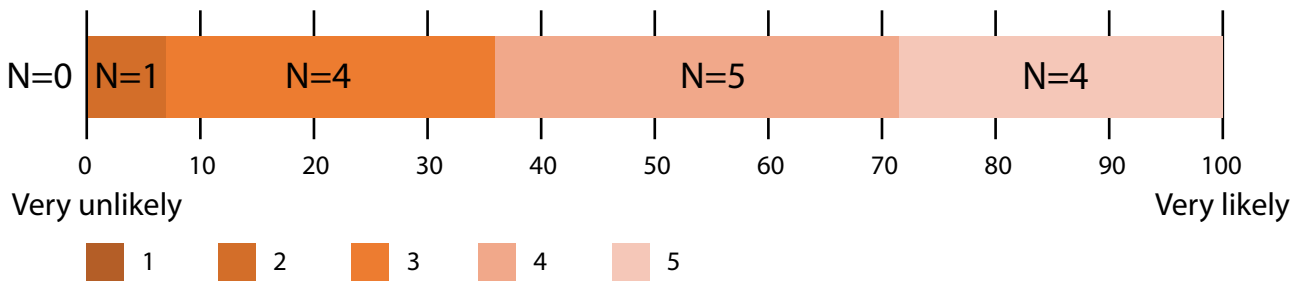
Community-supported Agriculture

Subsidised veg bag



"A bit fairer – I imagine that the people would be eligible for food stamps via certain avenues – at least they could use them for the veg box, not for anything else"
 (Female participant, 32 years old)

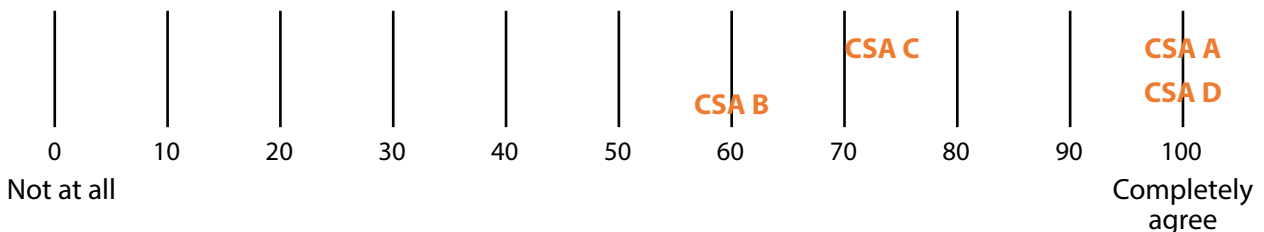
We asked our participants (N=14):
 How likely is it that you would purchase a veg box with the subsidy approach?



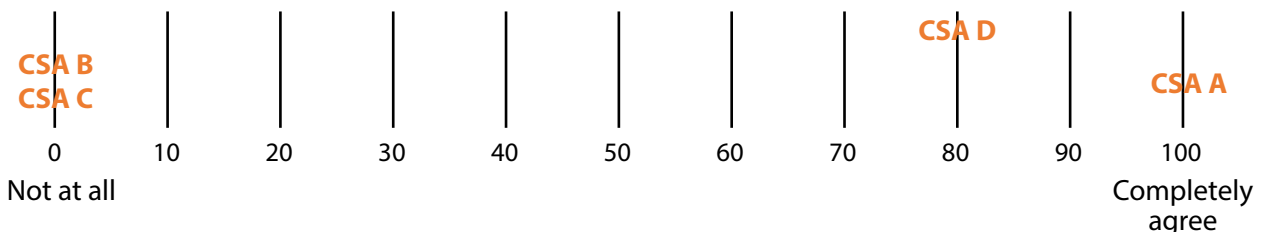
The CSA farms were all in favour of this approach and two were already implementing it (Ash & Elm and Slade Farm).

"We have achieved funding through grant applications from our charity partner."
 (Slade Farm)

We can imagine using this approach



We are already using this approach



6. Conclusion

This project provided useful insights into the multiple barriers for food-insecure households to CSA memberships. A lot of the barriers are linked to **underlying poverty and health issues** that were often linked to limited access to transport and kitchen tools, and a general sense of capability to prepare the vegetables received in the veg bags. While money is a key issue to accessing veg bags in the first place, this project

uncovered that there are further barriers to consider when upscaling. CSA membership provides not just a veg bag, but a sense of community and opportunities for outdoor physical and social activities. These opportunities result in co-benefits of improved well-being, health and environmental sustainability. Importantly, successful implementation is dependent on partnerships between farms and food charity organisations and illustrates the importance of community-scale partnerships in driving change critical for transforming our food systems.

APPENDIX

Notes on participants and participation

High dropout of participants is a problem for interpreting the findings. It also points to the multi-layered barriers to accessing veg bags.

In total, 16 participants representing 16 households took part in both the pre- and post- veg-bag interviews. For an overview, see table below.

Initially, 44 households took part, of which 38 took part in the initial interview before receiving the veg bag. This means that the dropout rate was relatively high. In the workshop we reflected on potential barriers these households may have experienced that led to a drop out.

| ID | Start veg box | End veg box | Age | Gender | Number of household members | Income | Farm |
|----------|---------------|-------------|-----|--------|-----------------------------|---|------------|
| J01_WT | 24-June-2021 | 03-Dec-2021 | 39 | Female | 6 | 10,000 – 20,000 per year after taxes | Slade Farm |
| AD1_WT | 24-June-2021 | 29-Nov-2021 | 34 | Female | 3 | 10,000 – 20,000 per year after taxes | Slade Farm |
| CP1_ASB | 04-June-2021 | 08-Nov-2021 | 37 | Female | 3 | 10,000 – 20,000 per year after taxes | Henbant |
| CP3_WT | 04-June-2021 | 17-Dec-2021 | 40 | Female | 4 | <10,000 per year after taxes | Henbant |
| J03_JO | 02-June-2021 | 19-Nov-2021 | 32 | Female | 4 | 30,000 – 40,000 per year after taxes | Henbant |
| J02_JO | 02-June-2021 | 18-Nov-2021 | 33 | Female | 5 | >50,000 per year after taxes | Henbant |
| ASB4_ASB | 05-June-2021 | 09-Nov-2021 | 22 | Female | 3 | 10,000 – 20,000 per year after taxes | Henbant |
| CV3_WT | 23-Sep-2021 | 16-Dec-2021 | 58 | Female | 4 | 20,000 – 30,000 per year after taxes | Ash & Elm |
| AD7_WT | 10-Aug-2021 | 15-Dec-2021 | 33 | Female | 4 | 10,000 – 20,000 per year after taxes | Ash & Elm |
| J05_WT | | 13-Dec-2021 | 36 | Female | 2 | <10,000 per year after taxes | Ash & Elm |
| J09_WT | 30-Sep-2021 | 15-Dec-2021 | 59 | Female | 2 | <10,000 per year after taxes | Ash & Elm |
| CV4_WT | 30-Sep-2021 | 01-Dec-2021 | 21 | Female | 5 | 10,000 – 20,000 per year after taxes | Ash & Elm |
| ASB6_ASB | 13-Aug-2021 | 16-Nov-2021 | 37 | Male | 3 | <10,000 per year after taxes | Glasbren |
| J011_WT | 08-Oct-2021 | 26-Nov-2021 | 44 | Female | 2 | 10,000 – 20,000 per year after taxes | Glasbren |
| CV5_CV5 | 07-Oct-2021 | 29-Oct-2021 | 25 | Female | 3 | Doesn't know, her husband manages money | Glasbren |
| CV7_WT | 11-Oct-2021 | 22-Nov-2021 | 62 | Female | 1 | <10,000 per year after taxes | Glasbren |

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