After We've grown a crop, how do we know what to charge for it? The laws of supply and demand can hurt or hinder us. Many a farmer has lost money because of bumper crops and the consequently lower prices. Community supported agriculture seeks to remedy this ironic situation. A true price for all of our crops is the amount of money I need to grow these crops again next year. The farm's annual budget is paid by folks who get last year crop's; this money must see us through until we get to this point next year. Our CSA members don't buy vegetables from us, they buy a share of the farm's production. I figure out a budget, based on our annual expenses, and the CSA covers it.

Crop failure can destroy a farm. I'd hate to guess how much labor and expense we put into the 400 tomatoes plants we watched die this summer. We spent time building cold frames, seeding and raising plants, digging holes and adding compost, setting the plants hoeing, mulching, making cages, staking them and finally harvested a few times before they withered away. They simply needed a warmer and drier July.

Did I lose money on the tomato crop? Not really. The CSA members got far fewer tomatoes this year, but the last few years have been truly bumper tomato crops. Such is life. We removed the tomato cages and now have a beautiful Kale crop there. Two years ago the sweet corn was weak, but we made up for it in the last two seasons. Every year there are both failures and bumper crops.

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In an effort to further support the farm, and the CSA movement, we grow extra winter squash and sweet potatoes. Several CSA's get these from us, as they take up a lot of space in the garden. Thus, these CSA's can focus on the other crops. What do I charge for them?

Twenty years ago I sold winter squash and sweet potatoes for 80¢ a pound, so I still change the same. A few health food store still get a few loads each year, too. They count on me, and I count on them. But here's how I like to look at it.

I give away this year's crop. It'll do me no good, except as pig food or compost, besides what I can eat.WhoeverI give it to pays me now for the next years crop. Next fall I give them their annual load of winter squash and sweet potatoes, and they in turn pay me for the following season's crop.

This is an example of associative economics, of groups of people working together to insure fair prices and high quality. These customers know me and trust in my methods and I know them and trust that they'll take our excess.

So we counted out 1200 winter squashes and loaded them, along with a ton of sweet potatoes, and sent them to a CSA in North Georgia. About a 1000 pounds also went to Savannah, a member owed Co-op in Atlanta.

The farm feels lighter. It's healthier, too, with money in the bank to grow these crops again next year. We are acting as if there is a future caring for the soil and the people whose nutrition comes from it.