

Community Supported Agriculture Membership Policy

*Florida West Coast Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc.
(Florida West Coast RC&D)*

This policy was approved by the Florida West Coast RC&D Board of Directors on ___8/16/2007___.

The Board of Directors of the Florida West Coast RC&D, a nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) corporation has approved the following policies regarding the community supported agriculture membership program for Geraldson Community Farm. These policies were also approved by the Manatee County Board of County Commissioners for use on County-owned land on 8/21/2007. The purpose of these policies is to ensure operational compliance with applicable laws and regulations, and create transparency within the organization such that both members and staff understand each other's expectations.

Section I – General

A. Authority

The approval of these community supported agriculture membership policies and procedures are in accordance with the Florida West Coast Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc. Corporation bylaws.

B. Duties/Responsibility

The RC&D coordinator will monitor and evaluate compliance with these policies for the RC&D Board of Directors. As the Geraldson Community Farm is on County-owned land, the Manatee County Board of County Commissioners has approval authority. The President of the Board, directly and/or through his or her designee(s), will administer those policies not otherwise assigned.

C. Definition of Community Supported Agriculture

The term "Community Support Agriculture" refers to an innovative business structure that supports local diversified farming operations through a membership program. The membership is a way of investing financially in the farm and obtaining a share of the harvest.

D. Codes of Conduct

No board member or employee of the Florida West Coast RC&D shall be given reduced membership cost. No board member or employee of the Florida West Coast RC&D shall solicit or accept gratuities, favors, or anything of monetary value from parties for reduced membership cost. Such solicitation or acceptance will result in disciplinary action to be determined as seen fit by the Florida West Coast RC&D

Board of Directors. Acceptance of unsolicited items of nominal value will not warrant disciplinary action.

E. Policy Development and Review

These policies and procedures will be reviewed annually by the Florida West Coast RC&D Board of Directors as necessary.

These policies were approved on _____. Dates of amendments will be documented as they occur.

Section II – Community Supported Agriculture Membership Priorities

A. Value

In providing local produce to the community, Florida West Coast RC&D staff is accountable for growing the best crops possible in regards to quality, taste and durability. Commitment to quality and sustainable standards is required. The CSA business model also returns a higher proportion of the proceeds to the grower than many other agricultural models for small-scale agriculture as many of the intermediaries are eliminated. That means that it is a good value for the members and for the farm.

B. Commitment to Community

The value of Geraldson Community Farm is rooted in its connection to the community. Florida West Coast RC&D will ensure through its membership program that the community becomes involved in local agriculture and learns more about the growing process. The operational farm will also serve as greenspace for the community, enhancing its beauty. Additionally, as the program develops Florida West Coast RC&D will provide avenues for all the community to enjoy the farm. Florida West Coast RC&D will also seek means to support other local farmers in the area.

C. Locally-Focused

The Florida West Coast RC&D promotes strong communities and sustainable agriculture by bringing people together to create local community food systems. The RC&D has committed to the following values as the foundation of the organization: service to the community, action, excellence, openness/inclusiveness, integrity, beauty/harmony.

D. Non-discrimination Policy

Florida West Coast Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc. prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or

family status. Florida West Coast RC&D Council, Inc. and the United States Department of Agriculture are equal opportunity providers and employers.

Section III – Community Supported Agriculture Membership Procedures

A. Membership Details

Membership is acquired through purchasing a share. “Share” refers to the portion of the harvest a member receives that specific season. Shares are an investment in the farm and the harvest is the return on that investment.

1. Membership Availability

The total memberships available each season is based on the number of shares that can be sold. The number of shares is determined by number of acres in production that specific season, as each acre can only support a finite number of shares. All efforts will be made to allow all interested parties to acquire a membership, although membership is not guaranteed due to the limited number of acres of production each year. The share purchase happens before or at the beginning of the Florida growing season. A member can purchase more than one share, but no more than four.

2. Eligibility

A CSA membership is open to all on a first come, first serve basis. Access to the memberships is open to everyone at the same time. The opening of the memberships will be announced through a public notice. In the event all shares are sold, Florida West Coast RC&D will begin a waitlist. Placement on the waitlist will be determined by time of contact through phone, message, email or date of postmark with the Florida West Coast RC&D employee named in the public notice. An individual must expressly state their desire to be put on the waitlist in the event that his request cannot be included in that season to the RC&D employee. The waitlist entitles the named individual the right to purchase a share should one become available. If a share becomes available, the individual will be contacted through the means requested by him during the waitlist signup. He will have one week to respond. If RC&D does not hear from the individual during the allotted time, his/her right to the share will be forfeited. The RC&D will then offer the share to the next person on the waitlist. The waitlist will be valid only for the current season and will not carry any rights into following seasons.

3. Duration

A membership is valid for the annual growing season, or approximately 28 weeks. Extension or reductions of the available dates is subject to local growing season conditions. A membership does not carry over from one season to the next, but must be purchased anew every single season. The RC&D may also provide opportunities for shorter membership durations if there is community interest.

4. Annual Membership Announcement

The membership details and share information for the current season will be available by September 1st of every year, and will be widely advertised. Members of a current season do not get early access to available memberships for the next season.

5. Membership Limitations

Membership shall not include any right, interest or partnership in the use of Manatee County real property. Additionally, membership includes a share of the harvest only during designated pickup times and days and no other rights or benefits.

B. Shares

1. Price

The price of the shares is determined by actual costs and market conditions. Actual costs are the costs of production of the harvest, development and operation of Geraldson Community Farm. The market value is determined by price comparison with other CSAs and the local cost of food. The price is determined annually and will be announced in the annual membership announcement.

2. Location

Geraldson Community Farm will be the only permanent available location. Each year Florida West Coast RC&D will evaluate demand to determine if other pickup locations are needed. Additional pickup locations can help to increase accessibility. Locations will be announced during the annual membership announcement and the member must choose their location and day for pick-up upon membership sign-up.

3. Days of Pickup

The pickup days will be determined before the start of the season by Florida West Coast RC&D based on our harvesting schedule.

3. Share Size

Each member will receive the same size of share, which is determined by Florida West Coast RC&D staff. The staff will look at market preferences, operational requirements, and amount of harvest to set the size. Because the share is an investment and return is not guaranteed, share size is not guaranteed.

4. Crop Loss

In the event of crop loss or reduced harvest availability of one or more crops, members do not receive a refund. They bare the burden of the financial loss alongside the farm.

5. Donating Shares

In the event the member cannot pick up a share during a week or more of the harvest, the member may designate a person to receive the share during that time.

If the member prefers, the RC&D will also make arrangements for the donation of shares that cannot be picked up to local food banks or other community organizations. Refunds will not be given for shares that cannot be picked up. Unclaimed shares that are not designated to a person or organization become the property of the RC&D.

C. Financial Accountability

All revenues from the selling of shares for memberships will be used solely for expenses of the Geraldson Community Farm program. The RC&D will maintain records of receipts and fund integrity through the organization's financial bookkeeping procedures.

G. Member Acknowledgment

This policy will be posted on the Geraldson Community Farm website and provided to members as part of the sign-up for membership. A member acknowledges and accepts all of the above policies by the act of purchasing a share.