



community  
involved in sustaining  
agriculture

## Senior FarmShare Program

### Background

CISA (Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture) is a non-profit based in South Deerfield, MA and working in Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden Counties to strengthen farms and engage the community to build the local food economy. Since 2004, CISA has been working to address hunger and food access issues for low-income seniors, while also providing a reliable market for local farmers, through Senior FarmShare.

### Program Details

Eligible seniors sign up in the spring to receive produce, delivered weekly over the course of ten weeks, through senior service agencies throughout Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden Counties. Seniors commit to the program for the duration, and pay a ten dollar costshare towards the total share value of \$125.

Senior FarmShare functions through CISA's partnerships with local farms, which provide the food, and senior service agencies, which manage participant outreach and food distributions. CISA secures funding to pay participating farms for the food provided, manages relationships between farms and distribution sites, and conducts program evaluation.



*Mason Square Senior Center*

### Scope

In 2016, Senior FarmShare served 500 low-income seniors through 15 distribution sites and 11 farms. Since its inception, Senior FarmShare has distributed over 4,050 season-long shares and paid \$464,250 to local farms for their produce.

### Funding

Senior FarmShare is supported by individual contributions, Local Hero farm members, The Executive Office for Elder Affairs, and by grants from church communities





## Partnerships

Many of CISA's partnerships with farms and senior service agencies have been in place since the launch of the program in 2004. Others developed with a program expansion in 2006, or changed as partner farms and organizations have cycled out for various reasons.

Long-term relationships have allowed us to work out kinks in the program and in individual partnerships, and to build awareness of the program in the communities we serve.

Distribution sites must have the administrative capacity to promote the program, accept and process program applications, and communicate to participants. They must also have the physical space to host the distribution on a weekly basis, and either the volunteer or staff time to manage distribution.

Partner farms must be a good match in scale for their partner distribution site – site numbers range from 12 seniors to 60 depending on the site, so we work to find farms that have the capacity to provide enough food and for which the distribution will be financially viable. Farms must be able to plan for appropriately-sized weekly shares, and pack and deliver those shares in a timely manner.

CISA has also partnered with the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance to offer program participants the option to pay their \$10 costshare using SNAP. This option increases the accessibility of the program and allows us to test systems that could allow us to expand the reach of the program in future years.

## Outcomes

Data collected from end-of-season participant surveys allows CISA to gauge the impact of the program from year to year. At the end of the 2015 season, 98% of seniors who responded reported that they were satisfied with the program, with 82% reporting that they were very satisfied. 90% of those surveyed said they ate more vegetables as a result of the program than they would ordinarily, while 53% reported trying a vegetable that they had never had before. 23% of respondents reported having health-related dietary restrictions.

"The CISA program is awesome and brought many healthy choices of vegetables to our seniors who would not be able to afford the purchase... Thank you for a great year of veggies!"

- Athol Council on Aging

"The most valuable part of the program is enabling these folks to have access to healthy, fresh, organic food while providing a local market for us"

- Riverland Farm



Riverland Farm

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