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## **Declaration**

I, Elin Rømo Grande, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature.....

Date.....

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## Abstract

This case study explores Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) in a Norwegian agricultural context. CSA is an approach to agriculture, which is based on the partnership between producers and consumers of food. While the consumers buy shares in the production of a farm, usually on an annual basis, the producer is committed to produce food throughout the year to these consumers. The concept is popular, especially in Japan, in the USA, and increasingly in Western Europe. It was introduced to Norway through a pilot project led by Norges Vel from 2004-2008. The project has resulted in two CSAs: One at Øverland Farm in the municipality of Bærum and the other at Ommang Søndre Farm in the municipality of Løten. The pilot project and the two CSAs constitute the case of this thesis. Furthermore the conditions for CSA in a Norwegian agricultural context are assessed.

A qualitative research strategy has been used to approach the case by analysing data and information obtained through interviews, observation, documents and literature. Characteristics of the concept on the international basis have been identified through the study of the international literature on CSA. These characteristics have served as a reference framework when describing and analysing the Norwegian CSAs and the context they exist within.

The study concludes that consumer demand for local and organic food, and closeness to farm resources, represent a potential for the arrangement in Norway. Likewise does CSA represent an optional direct marketing strategy, especially for farmers who want closer contact and dialogue with, and involvement from consumers. Furthermore have CSA-arrangements the capacity to create a social space in an otherwise individualised sector. Finally, the concept meets several political goals within agriculture, food and environment, which might represent a potential for recognition from the authorities.

Long distances between farms and their consumer bases, limited product variety on Norwegian farms, and to mobilise interest among consumers and farmers to commit themselves to each other, are the main challenges identified in this study. A continuation of the role of a consultant body, today covered by Norges Vel, is regarded as important for further development of CSA in Norway.

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# 1. Introduction

This case study is intended to be a contribution to the understanding of *Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)* in a Norwegian context. In Norway CSA is a new approach to the sharing of responsibility of food production between producers and consumers of food. The concept is increasingly applied in other Western European countries, but has first and foremost become popular in the USA and Japan. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) definition of CSA is the following:

In basic terms, CSA consists of a community of individuals who pledge support to a farm operation so that the farmland becomes, either legally or spiritually, the community's farm, with the growers and consumers providing mutual support and sharing the risks and benefits of food production. Members or shareholders of the farm or garden pledge in advance to cover the anticipated costs of the farm operation and farmer's salary. In return, they receive shares in the farm's bounty throughout the growing season, as well as satisfaction gained from reconnecting to the land. Members also share in risks, including poor harvest due to unfavourable weather or pests (DeMuth 1993).

The approach is used by farmers to create a new space for local and environmentally sound food and contact with consumers, but also to meet the problems of hard competition with industrialised agriculture. For many farmers it is a way to create interest and understanding in society for where food comes from and what farming actually requires from nature, work and finances. For consumers it has been an opportunity to get a closer relation to the source of food, to increase the influence on the production and get access to fresh local, often organic, food, all of which is not a matter of course in an increasingly globalised food system.

The concept of CSA was introduced to Norway through a pilot project led by the Royal Norwegian Society for Development (Norges Vel)<sup>1</sup> in cooperation with The National Institute for Consumer Research (SIFO). The two organisations Oikos<sup>2</sup> and Grønn hverdag ("Green Consumption")<sup>3</sup> have also been part of the project. The project was initiated in 2004 to look at the possibilities for the adaptation of CSA to Norwegian conditions and with the aim of developing pilot CSA farms in Norway. The project has resulted in two pilot CSAs, one at Norges Vel's farm Øverland in the municipality of Bærum, Akerhus, and which has got

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<sup>1</sup> *Norges Vel* is an organisation that promotes living local communities <http://www.norgesvel.no/>

<sup>2</sup> *Oikos* is Norway's national movement of organic producers and consumers (<http://www.oikos.no>)

<sup>3</sup> *Grønn hverdag* is an environmental organisation <http://www.gronnhverdag.no/>

the short term *ØverlAndel*<sup>4</sup>, and one at Ommang Søndre Farm in the municipality of Løten, Hedmark.

The pilot project on CSA serves as the cases in this thesis. My focus is especially on the characteristics of and experiences made by the two pilot CSA farms and the conditions for the arrangement in the framework of Norwegian agriculture.

The conditions for agriculture in Norway is changing as competition gets harder both within Norway and with international agriculture as international trade on agricultural goods is slowly being liberalised. In this situation many farmers extend and modernise their operations to become more competitive. Others choose to involve in local food production, direct sales and to market their environmentally friendly profiles or traditions for instance through farm tourism, while others again choose to close down their farm operations. This development explains – at least in part - why farms in Norway are becoming fewer and bigger.

CSA is a newcomer in Norway and little is known about its suitability as an option for Norwegian farmers and consumers. The studies that exist on the arrangement in this country are mostly related to the pilot project concerning the existing agricultural and political conditions and the consumer perspective related to CSA (Bjune 2003; Bjune & Torjusen 2005; Bjune & Torjusen 2008). Most of them have been done before it was possible to get any empirical knowledge on the currently existing Norwegian CSAs. I therefore found it relevant to proceed with further investigation of these experiences in order to get more insight into the conditions for the adaption of CSA in this country.

The data on these experiences have been collected through interviews of central actors in the pilot project and on the farms, participatory observation at the farms, document analysis and existing literature. The data is seen in the light of characteristics of CSA on the international arena presented in the background chapter as a reference framework. These characteristics are derived from empirically based literature on CSA from other countries, which includes understandings of the additional values to agriculture and food associated with the concept by proponents of CSA. These are for instance the understanding of food as something more than an item sold and bought, and that agriculture is the responsibility of all human beings, not only farmers, as we all eat food.

Most literature on CSA is from the USA. In addition to the USA and to some extent some Western European countries, Japan has a considerable number of CSA-experiences. But

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<sup>4</sup> Note the difference between *Øverland* and *ØverlAndel*. When I use *Øverland* I refer to *Øverland Farm*. When I use *ØverlAndel* I refer to the CSA based at *Øverland Farm*.

my language skills limit the extent of literature searched and found from non-English speaking countries. This means that the literature available to me does not reflect the whole picture of CSA worldwide. For the assessment of the conditions for the adaption of the arrangement in Norway, I use the experiences from the cases and existing literature on Norwegian agriculture, organic farming and agricultural and food politics.

The concept of CSA caught my interest due to my concern about the conditions for small scale environmentally and ethically sound farming both in Norway and in general. I find it interesting that it has become an option for respectively several million people in Japan and thousands of people in the USA, and that it is spreading in Europe, too and I would like to know the preconditions for it also in my own country. My interest for small scale and sustainable farming actually stems from Brazil and Kenya where I have worked with landless and organic farmers, or should I say peasants, who struggle against large agricultural corporations for land and market shares. They are interested in finding alternatives for their livelihoods based on the environment they live in. Their challenges are different, but still have similarities with challenges faced by farmers in Norway, a relation that I want to investigate further. This is partly why I have chosen to study CSA in a *Norwegian* context. Another reason is that I want to find out what potential CSA might have to reduce the ecological footprint<sup>5</sup> of the people in my home country. Moreover the topic chosen is about acting locally whilst thinking globally, which I find relevant for my masters' degree in Management of Natural Resources and Sustainable Agriculture (MNRSA) at the Department of International Environment and Development Studies (Noragric).

## **1.1 Objectives and Research Questions**

### **Problem Statement:**

In this case study I will describe the experiences with Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) in Norway and assess the conditions for the arrangement in a Norwegian agricultural context.

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<sup>5</sup> "A measure of how much biologically productive land and water an individual, population or activity requires to produce all the resources it consumes and to absorb the waste it generates using prevailing technology and resource management practices" <http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/glossary/>.

## **Objective 1: To describe the characteristics of the CSAs in Norway**

### **Research Question:**

1. What are the characteristics of the CSAs in Norway seen in the light of the characteristics of CSA on the international arena?

## **Objective 2: To assess the conditions for the adaption of CSA in a Norwegian agricultural context**

### **Research Questions:**

1. What does CSA represent in the Norwegian agricultural context?
2. What are the potentials and challenges for CSA in Norway?

## ***1.2 Outline of the Thesis***

The background chapter, Chapter 2, is a presentation of CSA, its position within the alternative food system, ways of organising it, as well as the characteristic and history of this kind of arrangement. It also contains a brief introduction to the limited experiences with CSA in Scandinavia and to relevant issues concerning Norwegian agriculture. The characteristics are presented in Chapter 2.3 and serve as a reference framework for the case study, whilst the whole chapter is intended to support my later analyses and discussion. Chapter 3 covers the methods applied for the study, and some considerations and limitations related to them. Chapter 4 is devoted to a description of the pilot project in Norway and the two established CSA farms with the characteristics from international cases presented in the background chapter as the point of reference. Subsequently the experiences from these farms are used in the discussion on the conditions for the adaption of the arrangement in the Norwegian agricultural context in Chapter 5. My conclusions and final remarks are summarised in Chapter 6.

## 2. Background on CSA

According to the agrarian philosopher Wendell Berry “Eating is an agricultural act” (Berry 1990, 145). He wanted to show that all our choices about food indirectly influence how land is used, how animals are treated and how the food comes to our tables. In his eyes we are all responsible for farming and the food economy. Yet it is often in a passive way and we might not be concerned about what kind of agriculture we are supporting. According to his argument the participation in CSA would in contrast be an active agricultural act.

CSA is basically an arrangement where farmers and consumers are united through a mutual commitment to each other and where they share the responsibility of local food production. According to its proponents the arrangement has the capacity to enhance the social meaning of farming and to change the attitude towards food and agriculture of the people involved in it. To show that CSA has commonalities with other arrangements including farmers, consumers and food, I start this chapter by placing it among other *alternative food networks* in the *alternative food system*. I go on presenting different ways of organising CSA, before I continue with characteristics of CSA concerning *shared responsibility and financing, production, distribution, community and (re)connection with the land, and communication*. These are characteristics that I use as my point of reference when presenting the experiences of the Norwegian CSAs in Chapter 4 and 5. Furthermore I give an overview of the history of CSA. This leads me to the experiences with CSA in Scandinavia, and to relevant issues in Norwegian agriculture. I end the chapter winding up the key points in a summary.

### 2.1 CSA in the Alternative Food System

In CSA the idea is that people, rather than being mere consumers, also share the responsibility of the production of food with the farmers. Hence CSA is an approach to agriculture that shortens the distance between producers and consumers of farm products. For many proponents of CSA this is a reaction to a food regime where the food travels more and further than ever before and where people have lost the contact with the source of their food: the land. They want to take back the control of their own food, reunite and establish mutual commitments between consumers and producers of food (Groh & McFadden 2009; Hawkins et al. 2002).

Seen in a broader perspective CSA can be placed among several other alternative food networks within the alternative food system that have developed in the last decades. While a food system consists of all inputs, outputs and processes involved from the production to the consumption of food, the food networks consist of the actors who trade food, which are the producers and consumers, sometimes with intermediaries in between them, such as “processors, manufacturers, distributors, and retailers” (Follet 2008, 2). The alternative food system is supposed to be an alternative to the conventional, industrialised and increasingly globalised food system (hereafter called the *conventional food system*) which is characterised by using economies of scale and maximizing production and economic efficiency in order to lower consumer costs. In this system the distance between producers and consumers has increased dramatically (Bergflødt 2007).

Follet divides between two categories of alternative food networks. The first one is the “local, strong alternative food networks” (Follet 2008, 1). In these networks concerns are related to environmental protection, animal welfare, labour standards, human health, rural communities and small-scale farmers. One important aspect is to limit the distance between producers and consumers by reducing the number of or avoiding intermediaries and to regain local control of the food system from production to consumption (Bergflødt 2007). CSA belongs to this category. The other one is the “weak corporate version” (Follet 2008, 1) of alternative food networks, where there is concern about the environmental aspect of agriculture, but the other issues that the local and strong one address are neglected. In this thesis I will refer to the first category when I talk about alternative food networks if nothing else is specified.

The consumers make up an important driving force in the alternative food networks. Consumers increasingly require environmental and ethical standards of production, food safety and transparency in the food chains. They also get more aware of who and what they support when buying food. Additionally more people demand products with local characteristics and ask for a wider product spectre (Roos et al. 2007). Centralization and standardization in the conventional food system has resulted in the loss of the local characteristics of food and traditional varieties in many countries and regions (Follet 2008).

Examples of alternative food networks that have been created and become popular are Farmers’ Markets, subscription/box-schemes on farm products, farm shops and CSA. At Farmers’ Markets the food producers sell their products directly to the consumers at market places in urban areas, creating a space for the direct communication between the two parts. With subscription- or box-schemes consumers can subscribe directly to a farm or a central

where products from different producers are collected, to regularly get box-deliveries, usually of organic produce, or to the door or to a pick-up point. Farm shops are shops established at the farm sites and are also an arena for the direct communication between producers and consumers.

There have also been created purchasing groups among consumers that purchase products directly from farmers. The “Gruppi di Acquisto Solidali” in Italy is an example of this. Other food networks are the Slow Food movement, which is an eco-gastronomic member organisation that works for authenticity of regional food traditions, quality and taste; and the Fair Trade movement, which works for fair prices and support to local producer communities in developing countries (Roos et al. 2007). The latter does not have the *local trade* aspect that actually belongs to the category of “local, strong alternative food networks”.

This shows that CSA is in good company with other initiatives promoting many of the same values. What makes CSA different from them is generally the committed partnership between the farmers and the consumers for a longer period, the more direct involvement of consumers in the farm operations and in some cases the connection with the land and the natural processes involved in food production.

## **2.2 Ways of organising CSA**

CSAs are based on grass-roots initiatives mostly taken by farmers, but sometimes also by local communities, consumer groups or church groups. The participants develop locally adapted arrangements that suit their needs and the nature of the farm, so there are many ways of organising them (Groh & McFadden 2009).

According to Adam (2006) it is possible to distinguish between two types of CSA that have emerged over time in the USA: *subscription-* and *shareholder CSA*. Subscription CSAs are organised by farmers; they are *farmer-driven*. The subscribers are required to commit themselves by paying their share for a longer term, often for a season, but are not required to do any work. The decisions are mainly made by the farmers. Sometimes farms co-operate to be able to have a broader production base from which they can supply food to the subscribers. 75 percent of CSAs in the USA belong to this category.

What distinguishes a CSA subscription scheme from other subscription schemes is according to Pilley (2001, 6) the “*understanding of mutual support*” between farmers and subscribers to the scheme. This means that there is a commitment from both the subscribers’

and the farmers' side: the subscribers pay in advance and guarantee the farmer's income, and the farmer is directly accountable to producing food to the subscribers throughout the season. This distinction is however not clear cut and different actors in different countries have different definitions of CSA. For instance the Soil Association, an organisation that promotes local food arrangements, including CSA, in the United Kingdom, used to apply the term CSA for all subscription schemes before, but has changed into using the distinction described here (Ibid.). In this thesis I use this delimitation as a guiding reference.

The *shareholder CSAs* usually have a leading committee, commonly named '*core group*', which makes the key decisions and takes care of the recruiting of consumers, or shareholders as they become through buying shares in the CSA. The farmer is generally hired, and the land usually hired, leased or purchased. Hence the shareholder CSAs are *consumer-driven* (Adam 2006). In the summary of Chapter 4, I show how the Norwegian CSAs fit into these categories of CSA.

Beyond these categories there is considerable variety to how the CSAs operate and what the arrangements between the farmers and the consumers contain. Actually what a CSA is, and what it can become, is mainly limited by the participants' imagination and the resources available. As Robyn Van En, pioneer within CSA in the USA, said:

Food producers + food consumers + annual commitment to one another = CSA and untold possibilities (Bjune 2003, 6).

## **2.3 Characteristics of CSA**

If there is a common understanding among people who have been involved with CSAs, it is that there is no formula (Groh & McFadden 1990, 107).

If Groh and McFadden are right, the formula made by Robyn Van En is maybe the closest one can get. These statements reflect the fact that all CSAs are unique; they are adapted to their local conditions and the actual people involved. However, it is possible to trace some common characteristics of the different arrangements, although they do not apply to all CSAs. In this sub-chapter I give an overview of characteristics related to CSA concerning *shared responsibility and financing, production, distribution, community and (re)connection with the*

*land, and communication.* These are the elements that I use as point of reference when describing the nature and the experiences of the Norwegian CSAs and for the following discussion on the conditions for the adaption of CSA in Norway.

### **2.3.1 Shared Responsibility and Financing**

The basic element of CSA is that consumers and farmers assume a mutual responsibility for farming. This means that consumers take direct responsibility for taking care of the local agrarian resources, and for providing food to the community together with the farmers through buying shares in or subscribe to the production of a specific farm. Consequently they also share the rewards of good harvests and access to the farm, as well as the risks of agriculture related to variations in the production. They might for instance get a little less of some of the products in a bad season. This serves as a security for the farmers who will not have to compensate for all losses themselves. “Trouble shared is trouble halved”, as Hawkins et.al. (2002) describe it. This kind of partnership therefore make farmers independent from fluctuations of demand and prices in the market economy (Pilley 2001). In CSA consumers and farmers are united through common interests, in contrast to in a normal market situation (Bjune 2003).

As mentioned above shareholders<sup>6</sup> usually pay their shares on an annual basis and in advance of the season (Hawkins et al. 2002). The shares are supposed to cover the real costs of the production including the salary to the farmer. What the goal of the financial arrangement is varies from CSA to CSA. The first CSAs, especially those inspired by Rudolf Steiner’s ideas of the associative economy<sup>7</sup>, would have an altruistic approach to the finances having profits as secondary values to the environment and well being of the people involved. This is also the way the Japan Organisation for Alternative Agriculture (JOAA) promotes *Teikei* (the Japanese version of CSA) as they emphasise the importance of consumers and producers supporting each other in a mutual relationship based on understanding and without commercial interests (*“Teikei”system, the ...* 1993). Yet many CSAs today tend to focus more on the market arrangement between the farmers and the shareholders (DeMuth 1993).

It is common that the financial management is transparent to the shareholders, so that they are fully informed about what the production requires of finances (Pilley 2001). In some CSAs, usually, but not exclusively those that are consumer-driven, the shareholders are

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<sup>6</sup> For simplicity reasons I will hereafter use the term “shareholders” for both *shareholders* and *subscribers* of CSA

<sup>7</sup> Further elaborated in chapter 2.4

directly involved in the making of the budget, including making decisions on the production for the coming season (e.g. *"Teikei" system, the ...* 1993).

How the prices are set on the shares varies from CSA to CSA. Some share the costs of the whole production equally on all the shareholders. In other CSAs the shareholders pay according to ability, as long as the costs are covered. Some may then contribute more than others in absolute monetary terms. For example at Buschberghof in Germany, one of the first CSAs established in Europe, the "hat" is sent around among the shareholders until the budget is covered (Bjune & Torjusen 2005). Some CSAs also allow their shareholders to pay their share, or at least some of it, through work on the farm (Pilley 2001). Finally in the USA there are examples of CSAs operated by non-profit organisations that provide shares with reduced price or even free shares to disadvantaged people (Adam 2006). A study from North-eastern USA shows that the prices paid in CSA were lower than in stores that sell natural foods<sup>8</sup> (Lass et al. 2001b). I have not found any other price estimates.

Not much has been published on the economics in CSA, but a US survey made in 2001 shows that CSA farms are better off financially than most other farms. 63 percent of CSA farms had a gross farm income of more than \$ 20 000. The equivalent for other farms was 38,5 percent. A larger part from the CSA farm income did, however, come from other marketing strategies than CSA. The same survey reveals that CSA farmers are not as dependent on non-farm income as other farmers. But although this survey shows that the farm income situation is relatively good, it does also reveal dissatisfaction regarding financial security and compensation (Lass et al. 2001a). This might sound contradictory, but may be related to that there are more people who work for and live from the income on CSA farms compared to on other farms. Dissatisfaction is also expressed in another reference which states that many CSA farmers do not have a satisfactory health care situation and have no retirement security (*Managing a CSA ...* 1999). Yet another study concludes that higher share prices are needed to secure the farmers a better return for their work (Adam 2006).

Hence there are financial challenges with CSA, but the US survey does also show that the farmers who were dissatisfied with their compensation and financial security meant that CSA actually had a positive effect on their economic situation (Lass et al. 2001a). Interestingly a report from the UK shows that CSA gives economic security to the farmers, but the large profits are failing to appear. It is common that the farmers do not have much experience in agriculture and that they "are in it for the lifestyle" (Pilley 2001, 11).

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<sup>8</sup> 'Natural food' is here referred to as food free of artificial substances.

For US CSA farms it is common to combine CSA with sales of products in farm shops, on the Farmers' Market and directly to retail stores or restaurants. The challenge with this type of diversification is to separate what should be sold and what should go into the CSA scheme, especially if the crop is limited. Some would cater for the shareholders first, but this would certainly depend on the financial situation of the CSA (*Managing a CSA ...* 1999).

### **2.3.2 Production**

As shown above alternative food networks are chosen by many small-scale farmers to sustain their farming operations in the competition with large industrialised farms operating in economies of scale. Some of them choose CSA as a strategy, and it is therefore natural that CSA is found mainly on small-scale farms (Lass et al. 2001a). Bigger CSAs are however developing. "In California you have huge CSA farms on a scale that hasn't seemed feasible elsewhere" (McFadden 2004). This is an interesting phenomenon showing that CSA actually is chosen before a standardised bulk production, which one would think would give a better financial return for large farms.

Another characteristic applied by most CSA farms is the practice of organic farming (Roos et al. 2007). Organic production is no requirement, but CSA has been closely linked to the organic movement since its very beginning in Japan, Europe and in the USA and carries on to be so. This is seen as a reaction to conventional farming and its associated negative environmental consequences. For instance in Japan Teikei was established as a direct consequence of food scandals regarding food safety and poisoning, which were associated with conventional food (see Chapter 2.4). Also in the USA CSA was a reaction to the existing agricultural regime with the heavy use of inputs such as chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and the mining of soil that intensive agriculture may represent. The promoters of the arrangement wanted to establish an alternative based on the premises of nature. To become shareholder in a CSA was practically the only way to access organic food in many localities in the USA (Adam 2006).

CSA is also promoted as an alternative that can guarantee that organic food are locally produced and has low carbon footprints as compared with globally traded organic products, in what Follett (2008) refers to as weak, corporate alternative food networks. The processing, packaging and long distance travels in these networks naturally increases the total energy consumption related to organic agriculture and turns out to be less environmentally friendly (Hawkins et al. 2002).

That CSA food is organic does however not mean that all CSAs are certified organic. “As they [the farmers] are accountable to their members, lack of certification is acceptable to them [the shareholders]” (Pilley 2001, 12). This mutual trust and responsibility save farmers from the costs, which are often linked to the certification process. The Teikei system has for instance developed its own system, which is based on human relations and trust as an alternative to a public certification system (Liu et al. 2004). Interestingly most of the distribution of organic produce still happens through this system, despite the increased distribution of certified organic food. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) explains this with the Japanese people’s scepticism to conventionally distributed organic food due to food scandals also in this sector in the later years (*Japan - Country Profiles ...* 2006). This includes false labelling, GM soybean discovered in what was supposed to be organic tofu and pesticide residues found in imported organic vegetables. Japan has therefore a difficult market for industrialised organic food.

The trust-based system for organic farming can be seen as a version of a Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) for organic products. PGS is being developed among several grass-roots movements and organisations throughout the world. The motivation has generally been to avoid the costs of certification, which inhibits many farmers to sell their products as organic products. Other reasons have been disagreement with the standards of the formal certification or “a political ambition to strengthen the farmers” (Torres & de Alcântara 2004, 1). PGS has gained recognition in the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), and it will be interesting to see in the future what potential PGS will have in the setting of CSA other places than in Japan.

The product variety is important to make up an alternative for consumers to the normal market. Most CSAs base their production on vegetables (Groh & McFadden 2009; Pilley 2001). In the USA it is common to provide more than 30 types of vegetables per year (Adam 2006), but there are examples both from the USA and Japan of farms providing more than 70 types (Henderson 2002). It is common that biodynamic farms also provide animal products as animals usually are found on these farms (Groh & McFadden 2009).

Many shareholders are introduced to food that they do not usually eat through these arrangements. Consequently many CSAs distribute recipes, or even their own cookbooks especially made to suit the products provided by the farm (Groh & McFadden 2009). The motto of the Japan Organisation for Alternative Agriculture (JOAA), promoter of Teikei in Japan, is “to eat from root to leaf” (*“Teikei” system, the ...* 1993). This contributes to a very economic use of resources on these farms as almost nothing is thrown away, but also requires

knowledge to how to use the different parts of the plants that are normally not acquired in the grocery stores. Additionally CSA can make people get a feeling of the seasonal aspect of agriculture. Globalisation of trade in food has made most products available throughout the year. In CSA people get the different products when they get ready throughout the season. Many CSAs makes a point out of this by having seasonal celebrations (*Community Supported Agriculture: ...* 2008).

Some dissatisfaction has been expressed by shareholders that there is “too much produce, too much food preparation time, and lack of product choice” (Adam 2006, 6). Sometimes there are simply more products in a weekly share than the shareholders and their families can consume, or maybe they get tired of eating cabbages in periods when the cabbages get ready.

### **2.3.3 Distribution**

Another characteristic of CSA is that the distribution is organised by the farmers and the shareholders. At some CSA farms the shareholders pick their own products directly from the field. Others pick up their produce in the farm shop, or on specific delivery stations outside the farm. These systems contribute to the reduction of resource use and environmental costs related to packaging and transport compared to the standard distribution system (Hawkins et al. 2002). Little selection is required, as there are no specific standards to how the produce is supposed to look like. Products “big or small, with or without mud” (*“Teikei” system, the ...* 1993) are picked and distributed.

### **2.3.4 Community and (Re)connection with the Land**

As the term “Community Supported Agriculture” implies, CSA is about communities supporting farming operations. Yet the emphasis on community building varies. In the one end there are CSAs where the community is in focus and the social relation to other people sharing the same values about food is just as important as the economic benefits or accessing fresh vegetables. The sense of belonging to a community can be established through the shareholders’ participation in activities at the farm; for instance budget meetings, farm work and social events; but also through the experience of the shared responsibility for farming (Hawkins et al. 2002). In the other end there are CSAs that focus more on the marketing arrangement, whereas for the farmers it is a market guarantee and for the consumers a

convenient way to access fresh organic products (Follet 2008). The social element is not necessarily that important on these farms.

For many proponents of CSA the social element of the farmer-consumer partnership is of great importance. For instance Groh and McFadden (2009) emphasise that CSA has the capacity to contribute with more than food to the society, for instance educational and cultural elements. As they say: “We cannot move back to a rural society”(Groh & McFadden 1990, 13). But CSA can provide people with the opportunity to participate in various farm activities, from budgeting to weeding and harvesting, to get hands on their own food and to understand the processes involved in food production (Hawkins et al. 2002). This can contribute to making people aware of the complexity of agriculture with regard to biodiversity, management, finances and knowledge about the nature to be able to produce environmentally sound food. It is also a way of reminding people about the simple fact that there will be no harvest if nothing is planted (Groh & McFadden 1990).

Another value that is emphasised related to CSA, is the capacity the different arrangements have to give people the opportunity to get closer to, or to *reconnect* to the land - reconnect because it is not that long time ago since most people in the now industrialised countries lived in rural areas and had a direct or indirect relation to food production (Pilley 2001). Urbanisation, which has been going on since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, along with technological development in agriculture, has removed people from the source of their food. The globalised trade with food has further increased this distance. People having been disconnected from the land, maybe for their whole life or for generations if seen in a larger perspective, simple knowledge about production principles and practices are unknown for many people.

According to Pilley (2001) participation in CSA bears witness of a certain wish to come closer to the land. Many participants in CSA emphasise that the experience at the farm site through different activities are important to them. A shareholder in the UK said that:

When I go to the supermarket I will do a week’s shopping as fast as I can, but I can quite happily spend a couple of hours walking though the farm with my children to buy some sausages from the farm shop (Pilley 2001, 10).

Due to all the benefits that the farms have to the community, it has been suggested to change the term CSA into ASC (Agriculture Supported Community) (Bjune & Torjusen 2008). The reasoning is that the farms actually can provide an array of values to the community, be it food, awareness and knowledge about agricultural processes, experiences on

the farm, and contact with both other people and animals. But the social element is also important for many farmers. Many of them are happy to get social relations with the community to which they provide food, and to get more social life on the farm. Interestingly it is common that CSAs not only have more people using the farm compared to other farms, but they also have more people working per acre of land (Groh & McFadden 2009). Hence CSA farms generally include more people than other farm operations.

### **2.3.5 Communication**

The success of any type of CSA depends heavily on highly developed organisational and communication skills (Adam 2006, 3).

Dialogue is important for the mutual understanding between shareholders and farmers. This way the farmers can listen and adapt to the shareholders needs, and the shareholders can get a deeper understanding of the farmers' role and their work. The communication is also important for keeping the shareholders updated on what is going on at the farm, when there are activities or when the products are ready. The information is usually either communicated directly from the farmers to the shareholders, or through the "core group" established among the shareholders (Bjune & Torjusen 2005).

The communication often goes through personal contact, letters or through the internet. It is common to use electronic newsletters and/or to create web-pages with regular updates (Pilley 2001). The leader of ØverlAndel, who has experience from both subscription schemes and CSA from the Netherlands, describes the importance of dialogue in CSA.

The dialogue is one factor which differentiates CSA from ordinary subscription schemes. In subscription schemes the customers has to either accept or refuse what is offered. They can of course send an email or make a phone call to the organisers, but the dialogue between producers and consumers is not a fundament for the production, as it is in CSA. In CSA we produce according to the shareholders' needs (pers. comm.<sup>9</sup>).

The continuous communication is according to this statement a characteristic which helps understanding the difference between CSA and an ordinary subscription scheme.

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<sup>9</sup> Personal communication: Interview with leader of ØverlAndel, 29.04.2009.

CSA is also seen as a communication channel between agriculture and society. It is used to create understanding for what is required to maintain a viable agriculture and to gain status for sustainable agriculture in society. As shareholders often live in cities, links are created between urban and rural communities, and help promoting understanding between these groups (Pilley 2001; "*Teikei*"system, the ... 1993).

## **2.4 The History of CSA**

The term CSA stems from the USA, but CSA-kinds of partnerships were initiated in Japan, Switzerland and Germany before CSA was introduced to the USA (McFadden 2003). In Japan CSA is called *Teikei*. The term means something like "*food which carries the face of the farmer*" (Bjune & Torjusen 2005, 2). *Teikei* was established in the late 1960s. It started as a reaction to several food scandals of poisoning and diseases, which were related to chemical inputs in food. As a response to this situation consumer organisations wanted to find alternatives to the conventional food market and created direct contacts with farmers. They offered them to take the financial responsibility for their production if the farmers could produce environmental sound food for them. This was favourable also for farmers who saw increasing competition from cheap imports of food in this period, and who wanted to use organic methods of farming ("*Teikei*"system, the ... 1993).

*Teikei* has since 1971 been promoted by the Japan Organisation for Alternative Agriculture (JOAA) (*Japan Organic Agriculture ...*). According to JOAA

'*Teikei*' is not only a practical idea but also a dynamic philosophy to make people think of a better way of life either as a producer or as a consumer through their interaction ("*Teikei*"system, the ... 1993).

Embedded in this philosophy is the importance of consumers and producers supporting each other in a mutual relationship based on understanding and free from commercial interests.

Also in Germany and Switzerland the first experiences with CSA started in the 1960s and early 1970s, but independently from the Japanese experience. These arrangements were inspired by the Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner and his ideas about "mutual responsibility for land and food production between consumers and producers"(McFadden 2003) and biodynamic farming.

Central to Steiner's ideas is what has been called "*associative economy*". Associative economies are based on altruism where the main goal is to "to meet human needs, strengthen communities, and care for the planet" (Karp 2008, 3). The economy should be managed in collaboration between its stakeholders, i.e. producers, consumers, workers and traders. Profit is seen as a "natural by-product", but not as a primary goal of the economic activity.

In CSA this is applied through the shared responsibility for the farm economy, from production to distribution, between farmers and consumers. The farmers are supposed to listen to the needs of the shareholders, and the shareholders are supposed to listen to the needs of the farmers (Groh & McFadden 2009). The collective responsibility makes the farm operations independent from fluctuations on the conventional market and allows the participants to focus on other values, such as sustainability, land stewardship, to produce food with high nutrient value and to serve the community.

The first CSA in Germany was established at the biodynamic farm Buschberghof as mentioned above (*Der Buschberghof Lebensraum ...*). Today 92 families (320 people) finance, produce and benefit from a variety of vegetables, meat, dairy products and grain from the farm (Kraiss 2008). They have their own abattoir, dairy, grain mill and bakery (*Der Buschberghof Lebensraum ...*). In Switzerland producer-consumer food alliances were developed in Geneva (McFadden 2003).

The CSA concept was introduced in the USA by Traugher Groh and Jan Vander Tuin (McFadden 2003). Groh was one of the founders of Buschberghof, where he worked until the mid 1980s. He then brought his experiences with him overseas. Jan Vander Tuin worked for some time on a biodynamic farm in Switzerland and got to know several of the producer-consumer experiences in Geneva.

Together with other anthroposophists with knowledge in biodynamic farming Tuin and Groh started the two first CSAs in the USA in 1986, respectively the Indian Line Farm<sup>10</sup> in Massachusetts and Temple-Wilton Community Farm<sup>11</sup> in New Hampshire (McFadden 2003). CSA is still practiced on both farms. When the latter farm was established, "the guiding question" was not how to increase profits but rather "what are the actual needs of the land and of the people involved in this enterprise?" (McFadden 2003). This reflects Steiner's ideas on associative economy.

Although CSA in the USA was introduced on the basis of Steiner's ideas, there were also political and economic reasons for establishing CSA. It was introduced in a period of

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.indianlinefarm.com/contact.html>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.templewiltoncommunityfarm.com/>

recession for US family farms (Adam 2006). Meanwhile commodity crops, associated with large, industrialised agriculture, were stimulated through price supports and consequently overproduction and externalised costs. These are factors that still are of concern by people involved in CSA in the USA.

Since then the number of CSAs has grown substantially, as have the organisational forms of the farms; with the philosophically oriented ones in one end of the spectre and the more commercially oriented ones in the other (McFadden 2004). Jean Yeager, former editor of the American magazine *Biodynamics*, has expressed his concern about the development of CSA in a more commercial direction. Yeager was afraid it would become a marketing project rather than a community project. Groh and McFadden adds to this concern that “marketing is not a community activity and sales promotion is not community supported agriculture” (Groh & McFadden 2009, 98). There is however no doubt that CSA has become a *marketing alternative* for thousands of farms. In the USA, three quarter of the CSA operations constitute one of several *marketing channels* for individual farmers (Adam 2006).

In 2007 more than 12 500 CSA farms were identified in a census made by the US Department of Agriculture (Geographic Area 2009). In Japan there are several million people involved in Teikei (*Japan - Country Profiles ...* 2006). CSA has also become popular in Canada and in several countries in Western Europe (Pilley 2001). In Europe and recently also in Africa, North America and Asia it is for instance promoted through the Urgenci (*An Urban - Rural Network: Generating new forms of Exchange between Citizens*) (Who we are? 2008). This international network started in 2004 and brings together individuals and organisations/associations involved with *Local Solidarity Partnerships between Producers and Consumers (LSPPC)*. Among the LSPPCs are CSA, Teikei and the French equivalent to these, the *Association pour le Maintien de l'Agriculture Paysanne (AMAP)*, but other initiatives as well that search to create direct relationships between producers and consumers in associative economies based on mutual trust and involvement. In 2008 the network started a project to disseminate LSPPC to ten countries in Eastern Europe and to Morocco. Additionally it works to consolidate LSPPCs in West Africa.

CSA is therefore getting foothold in a range of countries. In recent years it has also been adopted in Australia, New Zealand and in some countries in Asia (e.g. India and Hong Kong) and South America (e.g. Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela) (McFadden 2004).

### 2.4.1 CSA in Norway and Scandinavia

CSA has only recently been adopted in Scandinavia. In each of the three Scandinavian countries it has been given different names: *Andelslandbruk* in Norway (Bjune 2003), *Fellesskapsstøttet landbrug* in Denmark (Groh & McFadden 2009), and *Konsumentstødda jordbruk* in Sweden (Krogt 2006). Literally they mean something like “shareholder agriculture”, “community supported agriculture” and “consumer supported agriculture”. What is interesting with the Norwegian denomination is that it does not say anything about community or consumers being involved. The reason for this is, according to the leader of the pilot project on CSA, that agriculture in Norway already is supported by society – or the community, as more than 50 percent (53 percent in 2007) of Norwegian farmers’ income is state support, mainly based on the population’s – the consumers’, tax money (*Country Statistical Profile ...* 2009). Community- or consumer supported agriculture would therefore not bring a clear meaning of it. Not to say that other countries do not support farming with subsidies. Japan is for instance one of the world leading countries together with Norway in this regard. But in the Norwegian case, this fact has had consequence for the name – one could maybe say at the cost of the focus on community or the consumers. Actually the Japanese denomination of the arrangement, *Teikei*, meaning “*food which carries the face of the farmer*” (Bjune & Torjusen 2005) as shown above, does not include community either. Moreover since farmer co-operatives are very common in Norway the denomination can instead easily be mixed up with these. In Sweden and Denmark this has obviously not been seen as an obstacle.

In Scandinavia CSA was first tried out at one farm in Denmark in 1988. It was called *Kragebjerg Landbrugsfællesskab*, but did not manage to survive as CSA in the long run and the products had to be marketed through other channels after some years (Groh & McFadden 2009). Apart from this experience the arrangement has only been adopted in the recent years in Scandinavia and there are only few farms that practice CSA, among them *Ramsjö Farm* in Sweden (Anderson 2006), and *Øverland* and *Ommang Søndre Farms* in Norway (Bjune & Torjusen 2008). In Denmark Brinkholm Farm, close to Copenhagen, is close to being a CSA. The farm is owned by a community called Landbrukslauget<sup>12</sup> (Groh & McFadden 2009). The 450 community members have shares in the farm, participate in budget and decision making and have social events. 150 of them buy their food from the farm. The rest of the products are

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.landbrugslauget.dk/Forside/index.php>

sold to around 50 consumers through a subscription scheme where there is no commitment involved beyond the payment for the products. There is however no sharing of the harvest in the way which would characterise a CSA and the subscribers do not have any long term commitment to support the production.

There is no doubt that the interest for alternative food networks with direct sales of organic and local food, but also the politisation of food, is growing also in Scandinavia. The politisation of food represents people's concern about the food having been produced in an environmental friendly way, that the primary producers get a fair payment (Fair Trade), labour rights are followed and animals are treated in an ethically justifiable way (Jensen 2007). For instance the Farmers' Markets have become popular, as well as subscription schemes for organic products, exemplified here by Brinkholm, and farm shops.

Norway does, however, lag a bit behind the other countries, and ethical and political shopping is still quite low. Jensen (ibid.) suggests that Norwegian consumers are still hindered by limited information and high prices. Terragni and Kjærnes (2004) point to the lack of choice in the market. There are few Fair Trade and organic products, and lack of labelling indicating that certain animal standards have been followed. This situation makes it difficult for people to act politically or ethically when they buy their food. Additionally they suggest that people are pacified in their actions as they trust the public institutions for having guaranteed the standard and quality of the food in the market.

Of what concerns the limited adoption of CSA in Norway, one explanation could maybe be that if in other countries CSA has been and is a counter reaction to food scandals, food insecurity and an agricultural model which supports large scale industrialised agriculture (agribusiness), there is not so much to react to in Norway: There has been few food scandals, most people have access to enough and healthy food and small scale agriculture and the additional values of agriculture such as scattered settlement, cultural landscapes are considered important and is supported by society through subsidies as shown above.

Yet this situation is changing. We hear more about food poisoning, the small farms are being substituted by larger, more industrialised and efficient farms at the cost of the cultural aspect of agriculture and the environment, and food travels more and more. It is not by far at the level of the USA or Japan (maybe except the travelling of food, which is extensive), but the focus on alternative food systems could be seen as counter reaction, which who knows will extend into CSA in the future?

The last two decades agriculture has changed from being strongly regulated by the state through political guidelines and price regulations to be much more market oriented. In

this situation farmers are being seen as self-employed persons; persons who run their own businesses. There are still quite some political demands, but there is more space for farmers making their own choices; farming depends to a larger extent on the farmers' own initiatives (Melberg 2002). In this situation many farmers modernise their farm operations and get more specialised and economically efficient. Others try to exploit the new demands in the market for instance by producing local specialities or other niche products. Depending more on the market, farmers depend more on consumers as well.

This is reflected in national agricultural politics, which during the last decade has become more consumer-oriented. The farmers are adapting for instance by creating arenas where they can meet the consumers as mentioned above, but also by creating space for people to experience their farms, commonly known as farm tourism. Seen in the light of this development, it will be interesting to see if farmers and consumers also would embrace the idea of CSA. The idea of including consumers, make the farm economy transparent and to market a production instead of single products might nevertheless take time to mature, especially where the roots into the old system and farm traditions are strong. As Bjune and Torjusen (Bjune & Torjusen 2008)(page 7) say: "It takes some time to change the thinking from 'price pr. kg or litre' to 'costs for one share'". But according to Melberg (2002) the increased possibility for personal choice in agriculture might consequently lead to farmers being less bound up of family traditions when planning the future of their farm activities. Maybe this could represent a potential for CSA after all? In this thesis I have a closer look at the characteristics of CSA and the conditions for the adaption of the arrangement in a Norwegian agricultural context.

## **2.5 Summary**

As this chapter shows, CSA is an arrangement where farmers and consumers are brought together and have mutual commitments to each other and take control over local food production. It is an arrangement that has the capacity to enhance the social meaning of farming and to change the attitude and behaviour of those involved. As there are some commonalities between CSAs, there are also lots of differences and all CSAs are adapted to local variations in environment and the physical and human resources available. It is a new concept in Scandinavia, but it will be interesting to see if the increased interest and demand

for local and organic food may represent an opportunity for CSA in the future. In the following chapters I will explore this further in the case of Norway.

## **3. Methods**

In order to answer the problem statement and the research questions of this thesis, I have done a case study using a qualitative research strategy. In this chapter I explain why I have chosen this certain strategy and design. Furthermore I present the methods used for data collection and analysis. My data sources are interviews, observation and documents. I finish the chapter with some considerations and limitations.

### ***3.1 Research Strategy and Design***

#### **3.1.1 Qualitative Research Strategy**

In this thesis I want to describe the pilot project on CSA, understand how the Norwegian CSA farms are organised, and to investigate on the conditions for this arrangement in Norway. I have chosen a qualitative research strategy to do this. Qualitative research is occupied with understanding and interpretation using words more than causal relationships and measures, the latter which characterises quantitative research strategies and which is not the aim of this study (Bryman 2004).

#### **3.1.2 Case Study Design**

A case study is focused on the “detailed and intensive analysis of a single case” (Bryman 2004, 48). According to Andersen (1997) there is no single definition of what a case is and no extensive agreement on how it is used in a research strategy as it is used in so many ways. Yet it is common to associate a case study with the study of a location, it could be a community or an organisation (Bryman 2004). My case is an arrangement with three different actors: The pilot project on CSA in Norway, with the main actors being the initiative taker to the project, Norges Vel, represented by one of their staff members - the leader of the project; and the CSAs at Øverland and Ommang Søndre farms. According to Bryman there is usually emphasis also on the setting of the case. In my case the setting is the Norwegian agricultural context. Hence what I study is the pilot project on CSA and the Norwegian agricultural context.

A case study is an *ideographic* approach as it is the uniqueness of the case that is of particular interest of the study (Bryman 2004). In this case study I study the uniqueness of two different CSAs, but also the uniqueness of CSA in Norway, as compared to other countries. The study of the framework in which the CSA farms are placed in, the Norwegian agricultural context, is the study of factors that should be relevant for all who want to establish CSAs in Norway, such as agricultural policies, economy, natural conditions and market issues. The assessment of the context will therefore help me identifying the conditions for the further adoption of the arrangement in Norway.

I do not use any hypothesis or theories as a point of departure for this study, hence my approach is *a-theoretical* and *inductive*. A-theoretical studies do “to a great degree draw upon social conventions - in the society or in a reference milieu, to which the researcher relates to more or less consciously“ (Andersen 1997, 127). According to Andersen, it is “important to establish an explicit reference framework for the ongoing work” of the case study (Andersen 1997, 131). My reference framework is the characteristics of CSA, which I have identified through the study of the international literature on CSA, and which is presented in Chapter 2.3. The literature arises from my reference milieu, which is the international CSA-movement. As definite characteristics of CSA that are commonly agreed upon do not exist, the framework is a reflection of how I perceive CSA through the literature. The framework has guided the delimitation of the study, the data collection, analysis, and the presentation of these.

Normally inductive studies end up with a theory, but they might also end up with empirical generalisations, or they can be limited to *empirical knowledge* (Bryman 2004). In this study I come up with empirical knowledge on some concrete examples of CSA in Norway, and on the conditions for the adaption of the arrangement in the Norwegian agricultural context, the latter which would be conditions that Norwegian CSAs would have to relate to in some way or another. It would be the framework within which they would exist.

### **3.2 Data Collection and Analysis**

The data collection and analysis have been done in an iterative process, which means that analyses have been done after each data collection phase and guided the following steps for data collection (Bryman 2004). The data collected through interviews, observation and documents has been used to describe the CSAs and have been seen in relation to the literature

on CSA internationally and on the Norwegian agricultural context. I have approached the Norwegian agricultural context by analysing the experiences made in the pilot project, Government documents, and through literature on relevant issues as presented in the introduction chapter. The categories in which the information is organized have been developed over time together with the background chapter. In this chapter I explain how I have collected and analysed the data. I start with the interviews followed up by the observations and the document analysis. Thereafter I show how I have triangulated the different data sources and used respondent validation to enhance the credibility of the study.

### **3.2.1 Interviews**

#### **Population and Sampling**

The population subject to the research consists of the leader and the reference group of the pilot project, and the people involved in the CSAs at Øverland and Ommang Søndre. I found my informants using a *purposive sampling strategy*, which means finding informants “relevant to the research questions” (Bryman 2004, 334). For the purpose of understanding and describing the pilot project and the pilot CSA farms, I ended up interviewing the leader of the pilot project (staff member of Norges Vel); leader of ØverlAndel (also member of reference group); the treasurer and the gardener of ØverlAndel; and the two farmers at Ommang Søndre Farm, all in all 6 informants.

As the study is focused around the organisation of the CSAs and the context they operate within, I decided not to interview any of the shareholders, except the leader and the treasurer of ØverlAndel. Although it would have been interesting to include the shareholders’ experience and conception of the different aspects of CSA, I found this information to be beyond the scope of the purpose of this thesis. The evaluations done by the shareholders in ØverlAndel after every season have however served the function of complementing the information I have got through interviews and observation. I will come back to the evaluations in section 3.2.3 about document analysis.

#### **Unstructured and Semi-Structured Interviews**

To get as much information as possible from my informants I used both unstructured and semi-structured interviews. The unstructured interviews were quite similar to a conversation (see Bryman 2004), where I had prepared some topics and questions in an interview guide,

but let the informant talk freely, touching upon topics and issues that I not necessarily would have thought of myself. The interviews gave insights that I could follow up in the semi-structured interviews conducted on a later stage, but also in the literature search, in the observations and in the document analyses. I used unstructured interviews when I met four of my informants for the first time: the leader of the pilot project (who I actually had met before, but not for an interview); the leader of ØverlAndel; and the two farmers at Ommang Søndre. I consider these my main informants as they provided me with the most essential information about the pilot project and the Norwegian CSAs. The farmers at Ommang Søndre were interviewed together.

The interviews lasted between one and a half and two hours and were conducted in the work place of each of the informants. This was especially convenient in relation to the informants representing the CSAs, as I at the same time made a visit to the farm site at which the CSAs are based. This way I could get an image of the production base of the CSA farms, and of the area where the different CSA-activities take place.

I did semi-structured interviews with the same informants, but also with the treasurer and the gardener in ØverlAndel. For the semi-structured interviews I prepared an interview guide with specific topics and questions to be answered for each of the informants. The order of the questions was not important and I made many follow up questions to cover the topics the best possible way. All the questions were open ended, as I did not want to guide the answers in any direction.

These interviews were tape-recorded with the interviewees consent and later transcribed. The interviews lasted between 20 and 90 minutes and were also conducted at the CSA farms, except the interview with the pilot project leader. The visits to the farms gave me another opportunity to get familiarised with the farm sites of the CSAs. I also did a second semi-structured interview with one of the farmers at Ommang Søndre as I realised that I needed some complementary information. This time I made a telephone interview.

Unlike many qualitative studies, I did not get the large corpus of textual material to analyse as my questions were quite concrete and of a descriptive nature. It has been more important for me to focus on getting the information right about the project and the CSAs and on making sense out of the information in the context of Norwegian agriculture.

### 3.2.2 Observation

The second method used was observation. I used both non-participatory and participatory observation. As I did this part of the data collection after having conducted the unstructured interviews, I already had some background information to build the new impressions and information on, which was useful for the insight into the CSAs. Likewise it was convenient to do the semi-structured interviews on a later stage, so that I could ask the questions that popped up during the observations. The combination of these methods was therefore fruitful.

The non-participatory version was used at Øverland, where I observed the CSA's general assembly. The timing of this meeting was convenient, as it happened quite early in my data collection phase. It was useful as I got a better overview of the CSA and its decision process, the general assembly being one of the most important arenas of decision making in the CSA. At the general assembly I got insight into the planning process for the coming season, including budgeting, and I met the core group, the gardener and some of the shareholders. It was also appropriate in relation to the CSA for ethical reasons that I was presented for the attendants of the meeting, so that they got informed about me doing research on CSA in Norway, including their CSA.

I used participant observation twice: ones at Øverland and ones at Ommang Søndre Farm. As compared to the observation I did at the general assembly, on these occasions I participated in the activities myself and spent more time talking to people. This was convenient in order to get hold on some of the shareholders' point of view and experience with CSA. At Øverland I participated on the first introduction day to new shareholders, which was combined with 'Green café', a social arena where shareholders meet and share thoughts and ideas. This day new shareholders were shown around at the farm and, what was most important for me, explained how the CSA operates in practice on the ground. Some of those who were already shareholders were also there doing some voluntary work in the field, which was useful to get some understanding of how they organise and experience this activity.

When I visited Ommang Søndre Farm as a participant observer it was on the farm's 'open day', where old and new shareholders were invited to get to know the farm with its facilities, animals and people, and not at least its food. The farmers presented the farm, the idea behind the CSA and how the CSA operates. This way I got more detailed information on the CSA and the farm.

Unfortunately no other activities were organised at Ommang Søndre during my research period, and I could therefore not get any closer impression on how they organise

other activities and on what the farmers and shareholders get out of them. That there were no activities is nevertheless also an observation that contributes to describing the CSA. I was therefore more disappointed not to make it to the Farmers' Market on the two days these were arranged in Oslo during the same period, but other activities on the same days made it impossible to attend. It would have been a chance to talk to the shareholders and to get an impression on how farmers and shareholders meet each other at these markets.

### **3.2.3 Document Analysis**

As a support to the interviews and observations, I did document analysis. I used the budget, shareholder evaluations and brochures to complement the data from ØverlAndel. Ommang Søndre CSA did not have many documents available, and so I only used their brochure. The budget of ØverlAndel, combined with the interview with the treasurer gave me overview of the economy of the association. In order to get a better understanding of the shareholders view and experience of the CSA, for instance related to self-harvesting and connection with the land, the evaluations gave complementary insights. Finally the brochures were used to see how the CSAs present themselves and what they can provide for the shareholders.

In order to see the case in relation to the political conditions for Norwegian agriculture, I have made the use of different government documents, such as Reports to the Storting (Parliament) and Action Plans.

### **3.2.4 Triangulation and Respondent Validation**

Combining different methods or data sources is called triangulation (Bryman 2004). It is a way of cross checking findings and information accessed through different sources, which in this case are interviews, observation and documents, to enhance the credibility of the research. As briefly mentioned above, the combination of interviews and observation was useful as they could both help me to get a better use of the other. The same applies to documents in the combination with the two other methods, as the information I got from the documents was useful to prepare and understand what I got from the interviews as well as the observation. Additionally I could ask my informants about what I had read in documents or seen or heard through observation.

To further increase the credibility of my research, I have used respondent validation. All my informants have got the chance to comment how I have used the information they

have given me. The farmers at Ommang Søndre could unfortunately not make it at the time requested. But the others have commented the presentation made and helped me to get the facts right and to avoid misunderstandings.

### ***3.4 Considerations and Limitations***

Considering the data collected, I clearly managed to get more data about ØverlAndel than about Ommang Søndre CSA. From ØverlAndel I got access to documents and was able to do observations, which both could complement the interviews. For instance this gave me insight into their finances and to how the shareholders experience the CSA, insights that I did not get from Ommang Søndre CSA. On the one hand this can be seen as a weakness, as I can not present as broad a picture about Ommang Søndre CSA as I wanted to and as I have done in the case of ØverlAndel. On the other hand the limited opportunities to observe activities at Ommang Søndre and their limited written documentation can be seen as a reflection of how the CSA operate, and hence can be used as an insight. Finally I was not primarily interested in the shareholders point of view, but recognise that this could give a deeper insight into the CSA.

My approach to the Norwegian agricultural context has been the analyses of the experiences made in the pilot project and government documents, and through the study of literature on relevant issues as presented in the introduction chapter. Another strategy that I could have used to complement my findings would have been to interview stakeholders in the Norwegian agriculture and food sector. For instance it would have been interesting to get insight into how the farmer organisations perceive CSA, and which potentials and challenges they see regarding the arrangement. Another source could have been representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, which probably could have given me deeper insight into the political conditions for CSA. Consumers could have been a third source to get some knowledge on their interest in the arrangement. Consumer surveys were done through the pilot project, but only within special consumers groups; that is members of Oikos, Grønn hverdag and people related to two Rudolf Steiner schools. It would have been interesting to know how the interest among people in general is compared to these groups. Considering the scope of the thesis, I have not pursued these ideas, but realise that more investigation on these issues would be useful.

One issue of ethical concern has been *anonymity*. I have consciously not used names, but I recognise that it is not very difficult to discover who my informants are. This is one reason I wanted my informants to see how I used their information before I finished and submitted the thesis. Unfortunately the farmers at Ommang Søndre did not manage to read it at the time requested, but the other informants have approved my presentation. I also made sure that I did the interviews and tape-recording with prior informed consent by informing my informants about myself, the objectives of my study, and how I would use the obtained information.

## 4. The Pilot Project on CSA in Norway

The pilot project on the adaptation of CSA to Norwegian conditions was initiated by The Royal Norwegian Society for Development (Norges Vel) in 2004 on the initiative from one of their staff members, the leader of the project. The project was two folded: to do information work aimed at interested consumer groups and farmers, and to assist in the establishment of CSAs in Norway (pers.comm.<sup>13</sup>). It has been conducted over a four years period in cooperation with The National Institute for Consumer Research (SIFO) and the two organisations Oikos and Grønn hverdag. These actors and a representative from the organic college in Aurland (Sogn jord- og hagebruksskole) and the leader of ØverlAndel, a pioneer within CSA in the Netherlands, have been represented in a resource group, which has contributed in the development of the project. It has been conducted with the financial support from the Norwegian Agricultural Authority (SLF).

The project has resulted in two Norwegian CSAs: *Øverland Andelslandbruk BA* (*ØverlAndel*) and *Ommang Søndre CSA*. In this chapter I present the background for these CSAs and how the involved actors have organised themselves. Generally speaking I follow the structure of Chapter 2.3 (*Characteristics of CSA*), with the exception of the elements ‘*shared responsibility*’ and ‘*(re)connection with the land*’, which I leave until the discussion in Chapter 5. Before the presentation of these CSAs I give an introduction to the context for and the initialization phase of the project.

### 4.1 Context and Initialization Phase

There were no CSAs in Norway and very few knew about the concept when the pilot project was initiated. As the concept did not have any Norwegian denomination, the reference group decided to call it ‘*andelslandbruk*’ (shareholder agriculture). Here I present CSA in the context of alternative food networks in Norway and relevant policies, as well as how participants to the project were recruited.

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<sup>13</sup> Personal communication: Interview leader pilot project, 20.04.2009.

### **4.1.1 Alternative Food Networks in Norway**

The project was initiated in a period when an increasing number of farmers, and especially organic farmers, adopted a variety of alternatives for direct sales of their products, a trend that is still gaining interest (The Norwegian Agricultural Authority (SLF) 2009). These alternatives include Farmers' Markets, which in fact is a revival of the traditional town markets ("torgsalg"), which used to be important for both farmers and consumers before distribution and sales became centralised; farm shops; subscription schemes; and direct marketing to restaurants, shops and festivals. These are arenas where farmers and consumers can meet face to face and add social value to the products, something that has been lost with the centralisation of processing, distribution and sales of food.

According to Bjune (2003) the motivation behind this development is that the producers get the chance to convey information on the quality of the products and therefore can get a better price. The avoidance of middlemen from the field to the table also helps farmers to get a better price. Moreover, the alternative food networks are convenient for farmers who have too small amounts of their products to be able to sell them through wholesale dealers (The Norwegian Agricultural Authority (SLF) 2009). The increased demand for organic products, which is not satisfied through normal market channels, is another reason. Finally the government gives incentives to develop these alternatives, as the support to the pilot project on CSA suggests.

The financial support from SLF was namely given under the label of creating marketing opportunities for organic products in Norway. At the time when the project was initiated quite some organic products were sold as conventional products, which is still happening, but in a smaller scale than previously. In 2004, 80 percent of the organic milk and 90 percent of the organic meat were sold as conventional products (Bjune & Torjusen 2005). The numbers are now 35 percent for milk and 49 percent for meat (The Norwegian Agricultural Authority (SLF) 2009).

Compared to the food networks presented here, CSA involves some different factors, for instance the mutual commitment for and the direct involvement from the consumers' side in a certain production. The arrangement would therefore represent a new way of organising producers and consumers in Norway.

### 4.1.2 Political Context

The pre-study on the adaptability of CSA in Norway showed that the arrangement could meet at least three political objectives: To promote organic and multifunctional agriculture and local processing and marketing of food; and to improve the contact between producers and consumers (Bjune 2003).

Firstly it was set as a goal in the Report to the Storting no 19 (1999-2000) that 10 percent of production and consumption of food should be organic in 2010. In 2005 this goal was increased to 15 percent in 2015 (Handlingsplan 2009). CSA is a strategy to both increase production and consumption of organic products.

Secondly there is a growing focus on the multifunctionality of agriculture. A farm could for instance provide much more than vegetables through CSA. Actually it is seen as important that CSA can provide more than vegetables as the climatic conditions only allow for a limited number of vegetables as compared to for instance the situation in the USA or Japan. Norwegian organic agriculture is largely animal based and so it would be natural to include animal products in Norwegian CSAs. Yet Bjune suggests that in addition to food production, resources such as “forest/outlying fields<sup>14</sup>, hunting/fishing, cultural heritage, buildings, machines and knowledge/human capital” (Bjune 2003, 14) could be used for the same purpose. Local processing is suggested as well as a possibility for Norwegian farms that would like to establish CSA.

In terms of creating better contact between producers and consumers the already mentioned Report to the Storting no 19 (1999-2000) emphasises the importance of adapting agriculture to the needs and demands of the consumers. It is emphasised that information should be made available to them about products and production methods (Ministry of Agriculture 1999). According to Kjesbu (2004), the acknowledgment of the importance of seeing agriculture, the food-processing industry and the consumer interests in relation to each other was actually followed up by the change of the name of the former ‘*Ministry of Agriculture*’ into the ‘*Ministry of Food and Agriculture*’ in 2004.

Furthermore the current government has put consumer orientation on its agenda. This was expressed already in the government’s political platform referred to as the Soria Moria declaration in 2004, and in the action plan for consumer orientation of the food policy from 2004 (Handlingsplan 2004-2005). The main elements of the action plan are to provide more information about food to consumers so that they can make concerned food choices; and to

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<sup>14</sup> In Norway land which is not farmed or used for housing (considered home fields), are considered outlying fields, where the general public has some rights for usage independent of private ownership.

create a dialogue with the consumers so that consumers themselves can participate and influence food policies. This development fits well to the idea of CSA where consumer orientation is one of the main elements.

### 4.1.3 Recruiting Participants

The main information sources about the CSA initiative were articles in organic magazines, open seminars and information on Oikos' and Grønn hverdag's websites. Organic farmers were also invited on a study trip to visit CSAs in the Netherlands and Germany. The trip was arranged in 2005 with a group of 11 people, of which 8 were farmers and three represented the resource group (Rapport fra studietur ... 2005). The trip gave useful information on how CSA can be realized in different settings and with different resource bases.

The trip and the information work gave motivation to some farmers who wanted to try out the concept. Consumer surveys were conducted among local members of Oikos and Grønn hverdag. This gave an impression of the interest for the concept. The same was done at Øverland Farm in the municipality of Bærum in Akershus County, a farm owned by Norges Vel, and where the first Norwegian CSA was established. In relation to this farm also parents and teachers at the Rudolf Steiner Schools in Bærum and Oslo were asked (pers.comm.<sup>15</sup>).

The results from the surveys showed more interest for the concept in the urban areas than in the rural districts. The limited interest and population concentration in the rural areas made many of the farmers reluctant to establish CSA. Some have given up their plans, while others are waiting and still considering whether they want to try it out or not. The only two CSAs that were established after the surveys were done were the one at Øverland and one at Ommang Søndre Farm in the municipality of Løten in Hedmark County. Norges Vel is providing follow-up assistance to these farms, as well as to the farmers still considering trying out the concept. A third CSA was established at Husbakken Farm<sup>16</sup> in the municipality of Jølster in the County of Sogn and Fjordane, but without any involvement of Norges Vel. This one did however not operate for more than one season and was very limited in scope (pers.comm.<sup>17</sup>).

The pilot project and the established CSAs have got quite some attention in the media. Interviews have been made with involved parts both in newspapers, in the radio and on

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<sup>15</sup> Personal communication: Interview leader pilot project, 20.04.2009.

<sup>16</sup> <http://husbakken.wordpress.com/>

<sup>17</sup> Personal communication: Interview leader pilot project, 20.04.2009.

television. A webpage<sup>18</sup> on CSA in Norway has also been created. Here information can be accessed about the project, the involved farms and their activities. These information channels have had considerable importance for the recruiting of consumers to the project. Additionally the project leader from Norges Vel, and a researcher from SIFO have become part of the Nordic Network for Consumer Research where they have contributed with two papers about CSA (Bjune & Torjusen 2005; Bjune & Torjusen 2008).

The project money from SLF is now exhausted, but Norges Vel is doing some follow-up work at its own expense. They also try to get funding from other sources to further develop the project. The experiences of the CSAs at Øverland and Ommang Søndre farms are interesting references for the arrangement under Norwegian conditions. In the following sections I will present how these farms have organised and developed their operations.

## **4.2 ØverlAndel**

The CSA association *Øverland Andelslandbruk BA*<sup>19</sup> (ØverlAndel) was established in 2006 at Øverland Farm. The farm is owned by Norges Vel and consists of 40 hectares of land and 150 ha of forest. The agricultural production is mainly grain and has since 2006 been in the process of conversion into organic farming. ØverlAndel currently rents 1 ha of land and some equipment from Norges Vel and is allowed to use some of the buildings on the farm.

Except from the goodwill from Norges Vel, ØverlAndel started from scratch. The reference group of the pilot project and a couple of consumers, who caught interest, established the first Norwegian CSA. As shareholders signed in and by hiring a gardener, they could get started.

Most of the shareholders were recruited through the organisations Grønn hverdag and Oikos and the Rudolf Steiner Schools in Bærum and Oslo. Some also got to know about the project through the internet, articles in the Norwegian Biodynamic Association's magazine *Herba*, Oikos' magazine *Ren Mat* (Clean Food) and the local press, or through personal contact with friends, family and neighbours. The association was founded by the reference group as a pilot CSA. The first year 82 shareholders bought altogether 56 shares. In 2009 the number has increased to 120 shareholders (representing 166 adults and 96 children) divided

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.andelslandbruk.no>

<sup>19</sup> BA is an economic association organised as a co-operative society with limited responsibility.

on 75 shares (pers.comm.<sup>20</sup>). In addition a neighbouring kindergarten pays a small sum to manage a small lot on the area of the CSA.

#### 4.2.1 Finances

The shareholders buy shares for one year at a time and the money is collected in the beginning of the season. Both budgets and accounts are open to everybody (it is found on the website on CSA in Norway, which is operated by Norges Vel) and the price is agreed upon at the general assembly. The price of a share is the cost of the production including factors such as the salary of the gardener, administration and equipment; divided on the number of shares. Rent for the land to Norges Vel is covered by the government subsidies related to the organic production on that piece of land, which is collected by Norges Vel (pers.comm.<sup>21</sup>).

This year there was an interesting discussion about the price of the shares at the general assembly, which I attended as an observer. The leading committee of the CSA, or the *core group*, presented a suggestion to the budget in two parts. The first part showed what they could include in the budget if each of the 75 whole shares would cost 3000 kroner, as the previous three years (half a share would cost 1500 kroner). The shares are together equivalent to 225 000 kroner. As the association got some external funds the year before that they did not finish, they also had some extra funds for 2009. The total budget for 2009 was therefore 272 700 kroner<sup>22</sup>.

The second part showed some additional elements that could be included, such as some new plants; a machine which would help them manage the weeds better; watering equipment; and some soil conservation measures, but each of which would make the price go up. All together they would cost 20 000 kroner, or an additional 266, 66 kroner per whole share and 133, 33 kroner per half a share.

It was therefore up to the assembly to decide what to include or exclude in the budget. Some were afraid that the psychological effect of increasing the price above 3000 kroner would scare people away and make it difficult to get enough shareholders, especially because the previous harvest was not very good. Others found that a couple of hundred kroner or even a bit more did not change the situation for them. They had other reasons to participate than to access cheap vegetables anyway.

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<sup>20</sup> Personal communication: Interview treasurer ØverlAndel, 09.05.2009.

<sup>21</sup> Personal communication: Interview leader ØverlAndel, 29.04.2009.

<sup>22</sup> For the whole budget see appendix 2.

The shareholders ended up on a middle way. They decided that the minimum price should be 3000 kroner for a whole share and 1500 kroner for half a share, but would encourage the shareholders to contribute with some more money voluntarily so that the association could be able to do some additional investments. A whole share is aimed at 3 to 4 people and half a share at 1 to 2 people. In June almost 16 000 kroner extra had been collected from the shareholders and watering equipment and extra compost had been acquired (pers.comm.<sup>23</sup>).

Apart from the income from the shares, the association has every year got external funds from the County Governor. This has been important especially in the establishing phase. The first three years the funds have been used for administration. In 2009 the administration costs are covered by the shares to make the CSA independent from external funding. Extra funds will therefore be used to further development, but not for operations that are essential for the operation of the CSA. In 2009 the County Governor has provided 23 000 kroner to skills upgrading which will be used for organic agronomic consultation from *Norsk Landbruksrådgivning*, a public agricultural consultation body; and different courses (pers.comm.<sup>24</sup>).

#### **4.2.2 Production**

The land is mainly used for intensive organic vegetable production. The association hires a gardener from February to November (only part time in the beginning and at the end of the season) every year to take the main responsibility for the farming and to do the daily work in the field. There is therefore no requirement to the shareholders to have knowledge about organic farming or to do any of the work except the harvesting. They are however encouraged to help from time to time in the field. There has also been occasions when the association has had to hire more labour, for instance to do weeding (Styret i Øverland Andelslandbruk BA 2009). The gardener also takes care of the ploughing and fertilizing on the kindergarten's lot to make sure that it is done organically. Otherwise the kindergarten has its own gardener to take care of the production.

The first three years the association chose to grow a range of varieties from more than 20 types of vegetables. The decisions on the production are made by the shareholders in cooperation with the gardener at the yearly general assembly before the season starts. In 2009

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<sup>23</sup> Personal communication: Email from treasurer ØverlAndel, 29.06.2009.

<sup>24</sup> Personal communication: Interview treasurer ØverlAndel, 09.05.2009.

the general assembly decided to reduce the number of vegetables, on the request from the gardener and the core group. The reasoning was that the production had not been very good the previous seasons. Especially in 2008 the fields had been weedy and not given as good harvests as expected, something which was disappointing to and criticized by many of shareholders. The gardener and the core group meant that the high number of types and varieties, which require different attention, gave too much work for the gardener to manage. To reduce the number of vegetable types, and also the area of production, which counted 1,9 ha last year, was meant to give him and the shareholders the chance to do a better job and to get better results. Currently varieties from around 15 types of vegetables are grown on an area of 0,6 ha of the total 1 ha area of rented land. The rest is used for green manure or fallows (weed control measure).

In addition to the vegetables the CSA grows herbs and has made an experiment with grapes and walnut trees. Additionally they have three beehives. The responsibility for these activities is taken by the shareholders, who have divided themselves into subgroups with different responsibilities. The herb-group meets for instance once a week to look after the herbs. The beehive group did a course in bee-keeping in 2008 and managed to get 30 kg of honey from the three beehives. Hence the association's activities are made by and for its shareholders. Everybody is encouraged to join in groups or to establish new groups, to unfold themselves and to use the area in a way that can benefit the community (Styret i Øverland Andelslandbruk BA 2009).

### **4.2.3 Distribution**

The harvest is done by the shareholders themselves. The decision about doing it this way was made mainly due to practical reasons. As the association started out practically without anything in terms of finances or equipment, they found out that they had to arrange the distribution the easiest possible way. The association's leader's previous experience with CSA had shown that a box-scheme, where the products are distributed at certain pick-up points, requires quite a lot of time and equipments. The association would need to have access to boxes, a car, a driver and somewhere to keep the products. "This would be too much to deal with for us in the beginning", according to the CSA-leader (pers.comm.<sup>25</sup>).

Self-harvesting has however turned out to be one of the things that the shareholders appreciate very much (Bjune 2007; Kjernegruppa ØverlAndel 2006). "It is a pleasure to dig in

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<sup>25</sup> Personal communication: Interview leader ØverlAndel, 29.04.2009.

the soil, and my 3 ½ year old boy also likes it” (Bjune 2007, 5), one of the shareholders wrote in one of the evaluations. Another shareholder also expressed the joy of harvesting, as well as “to see the plants grow, to learn about new things, for instance through conversations with the gardener” (Bjune 2007, 5).

Anyhow, there are some who would like to get box deliveries. It has been discussed to create some pick-up points in Oslo, but so far there has been no one in the association who would like to administer the system. The CSA leader (pers.comm.<sup>26</sup>) makes a point out of that Kolonihagen, a subscription scheme for organic products in the Oslo region, actually covers that market of people wanting organic products without digging in the soil. ØverlAndel is an alternative for those interested in harvesting themselves.

Sharing the risk of the bad, but also the rewards of good seasons, is part of the deal in this CSA. If the season is good, the shareholders get more for their shares than in the bad ones. The idea is that as the crops get ready throughout the season, the shareholders come and pick as much of the ripe vegetables as they need to feed their family for a week. They are not supposed to harvest for storage. When it is apparent how much there is of a product in the field, or if there are only small amounts, the gardener often indicates how much each shareholder can take out of each crop.

The gardener is also the one who informs the shareholders about when the crops are ripe and ready for harvest. Information about the status in the field is sent by email to the shareholders continuously during the season so that they know when to come and what to pick. The gardener puts up signs in the field that indicate where it is possible to harvest. The information is also put up on a notice board in the field. There is no one special arrangement to make sure that the shareholders do not take out more products than what is indicated for each share. According to the association’s leader, social control has this function: “This, as everything else in the association, is based on trust and good will” (pers.comm.<sup>27</sup>).

#### **4.2.4 Community**

The community is central in ØverlAndel as all decisions are made and everything is organised by the community itself. The different arrangements including self-harvesting, voluntary work, meetings, courses and celebrations (e.g. Thanksgiving party) are arenas where the shareholders meet and get to know each other. The sub-groups gather shareholders with

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<sup>26</sup> Personal communication: Interview leader ØverlAndel, 29.04.2009.

<sup>27</sup> Personal communication: Interview leader ØverlAndel, 09.01.2009.

different interests. In 2009 there are six groups: The herb-group, bee-hive-group, recipes-group, landscape-group, grape- and walnut group, and the social activity-group.

From 2009 the shareholders are encouraged to come every second Saturday to work in the field or to contribute with something else to the benefit of the community (some people are hindered from working in the field for instance due to physical reasons). The social aspect is important on these days. As the shareholders have felt the need for more social arenas, the CSA has also initiated a 'Green Café' where they meet once a month, share food which they bring themselves, and exchange experiences and ideas. For instance on the introduction day, which was combined with the Green Café, one of the shareholders introduced to the other shareholders the edible wild plants that grow around the field and in the area that the CSA manages. There are both flowers and leaves from trees that can be used for making lemonade, hips from which to make jam and leaves that can be used for tea or as spices. Some of these plants are not restricted to the area of the CSA, but the knowledge about their usage was new to many of the shareholders. Moreover the idea is that one topic is presented and discussed at every Green café. The first two topics dealt with were bee-keeping and weed management in organic agriculture.

It varies quite a lot to what extent the shareholders participate in the different activities. Some are quite active, while others do not participate at all. It is emphasised by the core group that all participation is voluntary. The only obligation the shareholders have in the CSA is to pay their share. The rest is up to each and everyone, but they are encouraged to participate. "We want to make it attractive to participate, that it is fun and a nice thing to do rather than an obligation", one of the core groups member told me on a Saturday when around 20 shareholders were working in the field. That is also the reason they instead of calling in to 'Voluntary work-days' they invite to 'Green Fingers-days'. "The term is much more inviting", the same core group member informs me. It is supposed to give less association to 'work' and more to the social aspect.

6 shareholders make up the CSA's leading committee or the *core group*. The core group has the responsibility for the different activities of the CSA, work as a support to the gardener and is the link between the shareholders and the gardener. The core group members also make plans for the season together with the gardener. The plans are decided upon at the general assembly as shown in the previous sections. This includes decisions on the production, budget and the conditions for the shares. The core group representatives are elected at the general assembly for one year at a time, except the leader who is elected for two years (Styret i Øverland Andelslandbruk BA 2009).

The leader is responsible for the overall coordination of the CSA. This includes having the main responsibility for the communication within the association and the recruiting of shareholders. The recruitment is done in the beginning of every season. There has never been any problem in selling the shares, and in 2009, as well as some of the earlier years; a waiting-list has been made for people wanting to join. One critical factor in terms of recruitment is the high turnover rate, which has been higher than 50 percent every year. According to the leader of ØverlAndel (pers.comm.<sup>28</sup>) a ‘normal’ or ‘healthy’ turnover rate would lie around 10 – 20 percent.

There is no single reason that is pointed out for the high turnover, but the evaluations indicate that some people do not feel that they have got as much to harvest as they have expected. Yet some of them add that the quantity of vegetables is not what determines whether they are satisfied with what they have got back from being a shareholder. Others do not have the time to harvest their own vegetables (pers.comm.<sup>29</sup>). Hence the reasons might be of different art, but the point is anyway that a high turnover is a challenge for the continuity and community building of the CSA.

#### **4.2.5 Communication**

The communication with the shareholders is done regularly through newsletters on email, the association’s website and through the notice board in the field. This includes information on arrangements, the status in the field, harvesting schedules, recipes and summons to assistance for the gardener. Reports and budgets are also conveyed through email and the website.

Otherwise the dialogue is maintained through personal contact in meetings and in the field. The general assembly is especially important as an arena where the shareholders can influence the CSA. The evaluations are also important for feedback from the shareholders and as a guide to the planning process for the coming seasons. Finally the CSA has put up a post box in the field where people can write their thoughts and comments throughout the year.

As for what concerns communication with society, several articles have been written in the local press about ØverlAndel. It seems the media is curious about CSA. “It has caught the attention from the media because it is something new and exiting” (pers.comm.<sup>30</sup>), the pilot project leader explains. Interest has even been caught by the national radio that has had a couple of interviews with stakeholders from ØverlAndel. Many of the shareholders have been

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<sup>28</sup> Personal communication: Interview leader ØverlAndel, 29.04.2009.

<sup>29</sup> Personal communication: Interview pilot project leader, 20.04.2009.

<sup>30</sup> Personal communication: Interview pilot project leader, 20.04.2009.

recruited through these communication channels. “I heard about CSA on the national radio. Then I saw it in the local newspaper, and I decided to give it a try”, one shareholder told me on one of the introduction days at ØverlAndel.

### **4.3 Ommang Søndre CSA**

Ommang Søndre Farm is situated in the municipality of Løten in Hedmark County. It is a family farm owned and run by a couple since 1994. The production on the 48 ha land is certified biodynamic. The farm also has some forest and the animals are taken to the commons (mountain pastures) in the summer season (Ommang Søndre - Løten).

The farmers at Ommang Søndre started direct marketing to the consumers the very first year of production. The first period they bought milk from other farms to make cheese, which they sold at agricultural fairs. When they got their own cows, and later goats, they did not have any milk quota. They continued therefore to make cheese and to sell it at markets and fairs. At that time it was difficult to sell locally produced cheese to the shops (pers.comm.<sup>31</sup>).

This situation made the direct contact with the consumers important from the very beginning of the couple’s production at Ommang Søndre. From 1995 they got a quota for organic cow milk and started to sell some of this milk to Tine, Norway’s largest dairy cooperative, but the participation on markets and fairs has been important as marketing strategies up to today. The extensive travelling has made the farmers become very familiar with people frequenting the agricultural markets and fairs. They have managed to build up a network of customers based on face to face contact and have many regular customers. This was valuable when starting the CSA in 2007.

The point of departure for CSA at Ommang Søndre was the farmers’ wish to have a closer dialogue with their customers, to get to know them better, and that their customers got a relation to them and the farm. They want people to experience and learn about farming so that they can see themselves in relation to the farming system and the products they can get from it. For the farmers it is important that the shareholders can relate to the products; that they have seen the animals, that they have a good life at the farm and are treated well.

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<sup>31</sup> Personal communication: Interview farmer A Ommang Søndre, 22.01.2009.

Farming is more than a production and an economic activity. Farming is a landscape and the farm an individuality. We want people to see this. It is when people see something that that thing becomes real. The same is the case of agriculture. One of the shareholders' duties in this partnership is therefore to see (pers.comm.<sup>32</sup>).

Additionally they saw CSA as a source of more financial stability through the advance payment of shares as compared to the markets and fairs where the sales are unstable and difficult to calculate beforehand. Furthermore they thought it could reduce some of the time and resources spent on travelling involved with the sales. The couple had come across the concept in the Netherlands some years back, but was further introduced to it by Norges Vel in 2006. Norges Vel has facilitated in the starting up of the CSA. The farmers emphasise the importance of consultation in this phase<sup>33</sup>.

Shareholders were recruited through personal contact, the website on CSA in Norway and through articles in the local press. The first year Ommang Søndre CSA sold 20 shares. The shareholders were mainly customers they already had through the Farmers' Market and other markets in Oslo. In 2008 the number of shareholders was 25. Most of them were from the local area and only 7 were from Oslo. In 2009 there are 30 shareholders, about half of whom are from the local area, and the other half from the Oslo region. It is unclear how many people benefit from each share, but the shares are aimed at 1 to 2 (small share) or 3 to 5 people (big share).

The establishment of the CSA at Ommang Søndre has not changed the owner structure of the farm; it is still owned and run by the farmers. The farmers are still in the process of developing and finding their form of the arrangement and would like to develop it further together with the shareholders. In the following I will present how the CSA has been financed and organised the first two and a half seasons of operation.

### **4.3.1 Finances**

The CSA is basically funded on the mutual commitment between the farmers and consumers, where the shareholders buy shares for one year at a time; and the farmers commit themselves to deliver products to the shareholders throughout the year. There are two different types of shares at Ommang Søndre<sup>34</sup>. There first type includes estimated amounts of honey, cheese,

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<sup>32</sup> Personal communication: Interview farmer A Ommang Søndre, 07.04.2009.

<sup>33</sup> Personal communication: Interview farmers Ommang Søndre, 22.01.2009.

<sup>34</sup> See brochure Appendix 4

meat and flour/grain. In 2009 the price of a ‘big share’ is 4000 kroner and a ‘small share’ 2500 kroner. The prices are guided by, but not strictly linked to, the prices of the products when sold in the farm shop or at the Farmers’ Market. The ‘big share’ corresponds to approximately 5 kg of honey, 6 kg of cheese, 14 kg of meat, and 15 kg of flour/grain. The ‘small share’ is equivalent to approximately 5 kg of honey, 3 kg of cheese, 7 kg of meat, and 10 kg of flour/grain. It is possible for the shareholders to negotiate with the farmers to change the content of the shares corresponding to the same price (pers.comm.<sup>35</sup>). It is possible to stipulate the amount of each share beforehand because the production of these products is predictable.

The second type of share is not estimated to any amount of products and includes vegetables, potatoes and eggs. The share costs 1500 kroner. The farmers would like to increase the production of vegetables and potatoes in the coming years to be able to have more deliveries on these products.

For the future the farmers hope to change the way the shares are put together. One thought is to remove the amounts and product types attached to the shares. They would rather like the shareholders to come to the farm and pick what they would like to have in the field or in the shop. According to one of the farmers “it does not matter if the shareholders want meat or cheese. The important thing is that they support the production” (pers.comm.<sup>36</sup>). The only problem is that it is difficult to arrange it this way for those shareholders who need deliveries. The solution could, in the other farmers’ opinion, be that these shareholders define more exactly what they would like to have in their share.

In addition to the shares the farmers have got grants from *Innovation Norway*<sup>37</sup> for three years to do investments to develop the CSA. The money has been spent on some improvements related to the processing of grain and cheese. The farmers still get the same support (subsidies) from the state as before. The budget and priorities of the production are made by themselves and the budget and accounts are not disclosed to the consumers.

### **4.3.2 Production**

Ommang Søndre is a biodynamic farm and hence has a natural diversity in its production, including both plants and animals. The products are cheese and meat from cow and goat, milk from cow, grain and flour, vegetables, potatoes, eggs and honey. All the products except the

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<sup>35</sup> Personal communication: Interview farmer B Ommang Søndre, 07.04.2009.

<sup>36</sup> Personal communication: Interview farmer A Ommang Søndre, 07.04.2009.

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.innovasjon Norge.no/system/Global-toppmeny/English/>

milk, which is sold to Tine (the dairy company), are marketed through the CSA, but also through the farm shop, the Farmers' Markets in Oslo and Hamar, at agricultural fairs and directly to regular customers.

The animals are slaughtered at the local abattoir in Stange (Ommang Søndre - Løten). The cheese, white and brown, is made in the cheese factory at the farm. All the goat milk and some of the cow milk are used for cheese production. The grain is milled at the farm. There are several types of grain, including wheat, spelt, emmer, and rye.

The work is done by the farmers themselves with the assistance of two to three interns. In 2008 the shareholders were invited to do some small jobs at the farm. The farmers plan to arrange more working activities at the farm in 2009. This might include harvesting of vegetables. The reason they do it is currently not so much to get help at the farm, but rather to create an arena for the shareholders to get familiar with the farm and also for the shareholder and the farmers to get to know each other. They do however have a vision of more interpersonal relationships in agriculture where people committed themselves also to help in the practical part of farming, not only to finance it. This would facilitate the realisation of comprehensible agriculture (pers.comm.<sup>38</sup>). CSA is one step closer to this vision.

### **4.3.3 Distribution**

The distribution of the products is based on a box-scheme. Those living close to the farm pick up their boxes in the farm shop, while those living in or nearby Oslo pick up their products at the Farmers' Market in Oslo, where the farmers go anyway to sell their products. There are therefore no extra transport costs involved with the box-scheme, as compared to what it would have been for ØverlAndel. It does also make it possible for people living quite far away from the farm to be shareholders.

The farmers are however willing to make changes to how the distribution is done according to the shareholders' needs. More drop-off points and other delivery dates than those planned by the farmers until now are changes that might be made. This year the shareholders are also invited to come to the farm and pick their own vegetables, as mentioned above.

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<sup>38</sup> Personal communication: Interview farmer A Ommang Søndre, 12.06.2009.

#### **4.3.4 Community**

There are currently few arenas where the shareholders meet each other or meet with the farmers. According to the farmers there is therefore no strong community involved in the CSA as of today. They do however hope that some kind of community will develop around the farm as the CSA develops (pers.comm.<sup>39</sup>).

The activities at the farm so far has been 'open day' where some of the shareholders have met each other and the farmers, discussed a bit about the CSA, shareholders have got to know the farm, and tasted some its foods. The shareholders have also been invited to participate in the making of cheese and to put up a fence. The community aspect is one reason the farmers plan to invite to more social events and voluntary work at the farm during the year of 2009. One challenge to such activities is that some of the shareholders live far away. It is not so easy for them to come to the farm as it is for people living closer. This is one reason the farmers would like more people from their region to be involved in the CSA.

#### **4.3.5 Communication**

The farmers do not have any routines yet in terms of communication. This is something they want to work on in the future. The communication so far has mainly been personally with each of the shareholders or by email or by phone. Some information has been put on the CSA website too. In the future the farmers want to give more information about the production to the shareholders. An idea they have is to add recipes to the boxes with produce when they are distributed.

For the purpose of communication the farmers see it as an advantage if the shareholders do not live too far from the farm. People living in neighbouring areas can visit the farm more frequently and have closer contact with the farmers. Furthermore communication and closer dialogue with the society has been one of the main motivations behind establishing the CSA. This relates to the farmers wish that people get to know agriculture, what it is and that it has a cost. A couple of articles in the local press have been helpful in terms of communication at this level. It has been a tool to get people in the region aware of what is going on at the farm (pers.comm.<sup>40</sup>).

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<sup>39</sup> Personal communication: Interview farmers Ommang Søndre, 22.01.2009.

<sup>40</sup> Personal communication: Interview farmers Ommang Søndre, 22.01.2009 and 07.04.2009.

## 4.4 Summary

When the pilot project on CSA in Norway started there were no CSAs in Norway and few people knew about the concept. Through the project, information has been provided especially to organic farmers and consumers groups with special environmental concerns (members of Oikos and Grønn hverdag) and assistance has been given to those wanting to try out the arrangement. This has resulted in the two CSAs presented in this chapter.

As I have shown, these two CSAs have had totally different starting points and have also developed in two different directions. ØverlAndel could be characterised as a *consumer-driven shareholder CSA*, typically with a core-group that organises the shareholders and has the main responsibility for the economy and to make sure that decisions are made democratically within the association. The CSA is established on rented land and a gardener is hired to take the main responsibility for the production, which are also characteristics of this type of CSA.

Ommang Søndre CSA on the other hand can be described as a *farmer-driven subscription CSA* as it is initiated by the farmers who have the main responsibility for the arrangement, the budgeting and take most of the decisions. The shareholders are not much involved in the farm operation. One could however question whether this subscription scheme is a CSA or not. As presented in the background chapter, there must be an “*understanding of mutual support*” (Pilley 2001, 6) between the farmers and the subscribers to the scheme for it to be a CSA. As I do not have information on how the shareholders relate themselves to the farmers and the farm, I cannot say anything about what they put into the partnership with the farmers. The prepayment and thereby the sharing of some of the risk, something I will look closer at in the next chapter, and the communication between the farmers and the shareholders are anyway features that distinguishes Ommang Søndre CSA from being an ordinary subscription farm.

The key characteristics of the CSAs are summarised in the table below.

**TABLE 1: CHARACTERISTICS**

|                      | <b>ØverlAndel</b>  | <b>Ommang Søndre CSA</b>  |
|----------------------|--|---|
| <b>Finances</b>      | Whole share: minimum 3000 kr<br>Half a share: minimum 1500 kr<br>Advanced payment<br>Support from County Governor<br>Open budget             | 1 <sup>st</sup> type:<br>Whole share: 4000 kr<br>Half a share: 2500 kr<br>2 <sup>nd</sup> type: 1500 kr<br>Advanced payment<br>Support from Innovation Norway<br>Budget not disclosed |
| <b>Production</b>    | Vegetables, some fruits, some honey  | Meat, cheese, honey, grain/flour, vegetables, potatoes, egg   |
| <b>Distribution</b>  | Self-harvesting  | Box-scheme: Pick-up in farm shop and delivery at the Farmers' Market<br>Shareholders are invited to harvest vegetables  |
| <b>Community</b>     | Community activities: general assembly, green finger days (voluntary work in the field), green café, thanks giving party, sub-groups         | Only few community activities: Gathering of shareholders on 'open day' and some voluntary work.   |
| <b>Communication</b> | Email (newsletters), website, notice board in the field, personal communication at meetings and in the field (green finger days, green café) | Personal communication farmers-shareholders through email and phone and some gathering at the farm. General information on website.   |

## 5. CSA and the Norwegian Context

Having looked at the characteristics of the two CSAs in Norway in Chapter 4, this chapter is devoted to the discussion on the conditions for the adaption of CSA in Norway. The aim is to answer the two research questions stated under objective 2:

1. What does CSA represent in the Norwegian agricultural context?
2. What are the potentials and challenges for CSA in Norway?

I use the topics from the reference framework, including the elements '*shared responsibility*' and '*reconnecting to the land*', as a point of departure for the discussion and in the division of the sub-chapters, as in Chapter 4.

Natural, climatic, geographical, economic and political conditions for agriculture, but also the consumers' relation to food, are issues covered to get an overall picture of the agricultural context. I have got insight into these issues through the study of literature, including government reports like Action Plans and Reports to the Storting. Together they make up a framework which all potential CSAs will have to relate to in some way or another, as do ØverlAndel and Ommang Søndre CSA. The experiences made by these CSAs and the pilot project per se do therefore serve as exemplifying cases in the discussion.

I start my discussion on the conditions for CSA as an arena to share the responsibility of agriculture, and the potential and challenges related to the finances of the arrangement in Chapter 5.1. In Chapter 5.2 I follow up with the context for production, discussing the issues of small- and large-scale farming, organic agriculture and product variety. Continuing with the context for the different ways of distributing the food in CSA in Chapter 5.3, I look at issues such as geographical distance, settlement patterns and environmental concerns. In Chapter 5.4 I bring up the issue of the individualisation of farming in relation to the community aspect. Furthermore I look at the issue of (re)connection with the land, where I see CSA in relation to other initiatives that include people's contact with farm resources. In Chapter 5.5 I relate the element of communication with the political goals of increasing knowledge in the population on food and the communication between producers and consumers. Finally I sum up my findings in Chapter 5.6.

## **5.1 Shared Responsibility and Finances**

As commented in Chapter 2.4.1, the Norwegian agriculture is largely subsidised by the government. It has been a political strategy since the WW II to support agricultural production first of all for food security reasons, but also to maintain employment and settlement in the districts. In the later years there has also been a focus on the importance of agriculture for the environment, especially for maintenance of the cultural landscape and biodiversity (Olsson & Rønningen 2002). There is also a goal to keep the prices down for the consumers. The transfer of capital to agriculture is therefore substantial, as are the import barriers to limit competition from abroad. Therefore Norwegian tax payers already have a substantial responsibility for food and agriculture in Norway.

Yet the kind of responsibility consumers have in CSA is of another nature. In these arrangements the consumers actively support a certain production at a certain production site, not only agriculture in general. But what are the conditions for the arrangement gaining interest among consumers in Norway?

According to Terragni and Kjærnes (2004) ethical consumerism is low in Norway. They point to two reasons for this, the first being that the selection of ethical products is very low in the four retailer chains, which control 99 percent of the market of food in Norway. Ethical products are for instance fair trade products, food that is associated with certain environmental standards like organic and local food, or with special standards for the welfare treatment of animals. The situation is changing with more of these products coming into the shelves of the food stores, especially in Oslo and in some of the larger cities. For instance this year Coop Norway has taken the initiative to market local food and niche products in their shops (*Coop satser tungt ...* 2009). Still, with a lack of choice, it is difficult even for concerned consumers to take responsibility when buying food.

On the other hand people tend to trust that the authorities secure that the food available in the market is “safe, nutritious and of satisfactory quality” (Terragni & Kjærnes 2004, 481). They might see no reason to be concerned about what they buy if the necessary measures regarding ethical and safety issues are taken by public institutions. Moreover, there have been few food scandals in Norway as compared to other countries (Storstad 2002). In these countries the consumers’ choice of consuming organic food is a measure of protection against problems related to conventional, industrial agriculture. The motivation tends to be more related to people’s own health rather than the concern for the environment. In Norway the motivation seems to be the opposite. People have confidence in the Norwegian conventional

agriculture. Notwithstanding the number of food safety issues in the food sector have increased also in Norway the last years, and consumer surveys reveal that Norwegian consumers are getting more concerned about these issues too (Strategy Paper 2008).

A report on the four years of Farmers' Market in Norway and a survey made by Coop Norway do support the first explanation about the availability of choices. The report reveals that the customers want this market to take place more often and with a larger assortment of products, especially of vegetables and fruits (Jervell & Vramo 2007). Coop Norway's survey shows that 4 out of 5 consumers would have eaten more locally produced food if the assortment had been larger in the shops (*Coop satser tungt ...* 2009). These attitudes are reflected in Synovates survey on climate and environment in 2008 as well (Ministry of Agriculture and Food 2008). 80 percent respond that they eat or want to eat more local food than before. At the same time most of the respondents find it difficult to find local and organic products in the stores.

Hence despite the ethical consumerism in Norway being low, the number of conscious eaters and consumers is increasing. Many consumers do however not demand these products for ethical reasons, but simply because they like a more diverse product aspect and different flavours. Politically, the interest among consumers for organic and local food and other niche products is seen as a market opportunity in agriculture. As the food and agricultural sector manages to respond to this, the number of choices increases, for instance through the improved availability of organic products in the retail stores and direct marketing initiatives of organic and local food. CSA could maybe represent another option for people who want to buy these kinds of products.

Another potential for CSA regarding conscious consumers could be if the experience from the Farmers' Market is transferable to the arrangement. For the conscious consumer, it turns out that the direct contact with the food producers at the Farmers' Market has a positive impact on their confidence in the food being produced according to ethical and environmental principles (Jervell & Vramo 2007). The conclusion made in the report is that the Farmers' Market has a potential in relation to these consumers. One could probably say that the Farmers' Market is an arena where conscious consumers can actively take responsibility and support modes of production that they find ethical or environmental friendly. In CSA people often get even closer to the producers and the production of food compared to at the Farmers' Markets, which might represent a potential for the arrangement in relation to this consumer group.

On the other hand I think that CSA could be attractive not only for the conscious consumers. People could find other reasons to join, for instance related to the social aspect of the arrangement, the contact with the nature or the land or simply because they like the taste of certain products. These are factors that I will discuss in the following chapters. In either case, CSA provides a different approach to the shared responsibility of agriculture, exemplified here by the experiences of Øverland and Ommang Søndre CSA.

The difference can be seen most clearly at Øverland. Through paying their shares and participate in decision making, the shareholders take the responsibility of investing in the land and make sure that the land can give themselves, but also future users, a local source of food. The gardener has the responsibility for the professional part of the organic vegetable production and provides the knowledge, which the shareholders do not necessarily have. At the same time Norges Vel has assumed the responsibility of providing the land and goodwill in terms of letting the shareholders unfold themselves on a delimited area on their farm. The shareholders, the gardener and Norges Vel therefore share the responsibility for farming at Øverland. The shareholders cover all the costs of the production and are the ones harvesting and eating the products when they are ready.

Also at Ommang Søndre the shareholders share the responsibility for a share of the production of the farm. But at this farm the shareholders currently have less influence on the production. Actually it is questionable how big the difference is between the responsibility taken by the shareholders compared to the regular customers who support that exact production through regular purchase of products from the farm. One difference is at least that the commitment of the shareholders is for one year through the advanced payment, while regular customers do not commit themselves the same way and can choose not to buy anything at any time. Another difference is that the farmers can plan in a different way as they know what they have of financial resources in advance of the season. At the time being Ommang Søndre CSA has a small number of shareholders, which means the prepayment in terms of the total production is small, and hence also their capacity to control their finances in advance.

Still they state in their brochure for 2009 that they invite people to “pay a *share of what we grow and process* at the farm this year”<sup>41</sup> (my emphasis). This suggests that there is more involved than only the products in this partnership. As one of the farmers told me in an interview:

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<sup>41</sup> See brochure Appendix 4

The biggest difference from a normal subscription farm is that the consumers support the production and commit themselves. They do not buy a share only because they like the products, but they also support the way we do farming (pers.comm.<sup>42</sup>).

When the consumers buy a *share* and become *shareholders*, their role is meant to be something more than that of the consumer, as they do not only purchase some products, but also support the production. They want the consumers to see themselves in relation to the production, as presented in Chapter 4.2.

To share the responsibility of farming in a CSA context usually also includes sharing the risk and rewards of farming, a detail that is different from most other consumer-farmer relationships. In the two Norwegian examples of CSA this works in two different ways. At Øverland the risk and rewards in terms of the result of the production are assumed by the shareholders as they cover all the costs and pay a fixed price independently of how much vegetables they get back. In the first three seasons the shareholders have experienced that their harvest has not been very good, at least of some of the vegetables. They have struggled with weed and some diseases on some species. These are things that can occur in farming, and which usually is something that the farmers have to pay for alone. The case in Øverland is rather that the shareholders have got a little less to harvest. On the other hand, if they manage to get good harvests in the coming years, it will be the shareholders themselves who will benefit from bringing more vegetables home. It is actually reported that this season has started off very well. Maybe it will represent a turning point? In addition, they also share the rewards of experiences at the farm and in the community. I will come back to this in Chapter 5.4.

The gardener has no *economic* risk as he gets paid for every hour he works within the frames of the budget. But as he has the main responsibility for the practical part of the production, it is in his interest to make sure that the harvest is as good as possible in the end (pers.comm.<sup>43</sup>). “The gardener is very brave”, the leader of the association commented to the new shareholders on one of the introduction days at Øverland this year, referring to the big responsibility he actually has. The gardener knows that if he does not do a good job, the association might find another person to replace him. This is how there is also a risk involved for the gardener.

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<sup>42</sup> Personal communication: Interview farmer A Ommang Søndre, 07.04.2009.

<sup>43</sup> Personal communication: Interview gardener of Øverland, 09.05.2009.

At Ommang Søndre there is also a risk assumed by the consumers, especially regarding the second type of share, which includes vegetables, potatoes and eggs. How full the boxes of produce become depends on how well the production turns out. What is different from ØverlAndel is the production at Ommang Søndre aiming at a larger consumer group than the shareholders as these products are also sold through other channels. According to one of the farmers, they make sure they cater for the shareholders and other regular customers first and only then sell the rest through the other channels (pers.comm.<sup>44</sup>). This means that the risk the shareholders in Ommang Søndre CSA assume is less than that of those in ØverlAndel, but anyway greater than for regular or other customers who do not pay anything in advance. Of what concerns the first type of share, the shareholders still take a risk as they pay in advance. But in practice the risk is quite small as the production of grain, meat, cheese and honey at this farm is more predictable than the production of vegetables.

Regarding rewards, there is also a difference in this CSA compared to ØverlAndel. As not all the production is aimed at the CSA, the shareholders do not share the reward of a good production year in terms of quantity. They will however be rewarded if the quality of the products are extra good.

At the same time as the shareholders assume some of the risk of farming, the farmers' part of the risk is reduced. As the shares are prepaid, the risks related to fluctuations in the market is avoided for one year at a time, but is of course only limited to the part of production that goes into the CSA, which I have already shown is quite small. For the farmers at Ommang Søndre CSA can be seen as a way of pursuing an idea of a prepaid production. In their eyes,

Food does not cost money. One has to pay so that it is possible to produce it. Food production should be prepaid (pers.comm.<sup>45</sup>).

The statement is quite in line with what was said at Buschberghof in Germany: “This food does not have a price. But it has a cost” (Bjune & Torjusen 2005, 3), and with the idea of covering the cost of production instead of paying per kilo. In ØverlAndel this distinction is clear: Their food is not for sale and there is no price for the different vegetables. It is produced to the owners of the food, who have invested in it, and who have first hand information about

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<sup>44</sup> Personal communication: Interview Farmer A Ommang Søndre Farm, 12.06.2009.

<sup>45</sup> Personal communication: Interview Farmer A Ommang Søndre Farm, 22.01.2009.

its story. Hence the financing and the way responsibility is divided between producers and consumers is quite different from other market arrangements.

### 5.1.1 Price and Investments

CSA represents a different way to approach the problem of farmers wanting higher prices, while the consumers want food to be as cheap and good as possible, a challenge expressed also by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food in its “Political strategy for food 2008-2010” (Strategy Paper 2008). In this strategy paper there is a concern that in the urge for both lower prices *and* a higher income for the producers, each of them is only partly fulfilled. CSA is interesting in this context, especially in arrangements where producers and consumers discuss and decide on the price together. It is an arena where two groups usually opposing each other actually unite. This is in fact a part of Steiner’s associative economy: The stakeholders in the economy come together and manage it with altruistic goals (Karp 2008).

Whether farmers are willing to open their finances to outsiders is an open question. As ØverlAndel is managed by the shareholders themselves who hire a gardener, there is no farmer who has opened the farm’s accounts. The farmers at Ommang Søndre have chosen not to do so. An open economy where the shareholders have decision power would require a good deal of openness and good will from the farmers’ side. On the other hand it would probably make it easier for the shareholders to understand the real costs of farming.

Experience shows that many people are willing to pay more for products with some kind of special quality, for instance local specialities and organic food (Strategy Paper 2008). In the evaluation of the program for value adding in the food sector it is for instance found that 61 percent of farmers who got support through the program and have developed products with special qualities have got higher prices for their products (Eriksen et al. 2009). This could maybe be translated into a CSA setting. People might be willing to pay a bit more as there are more values attached to the food they get compared to regular food. In this regard the experience of ØverlAndel is interesting, as the shareholders themselves decided to encourage each other to pay more than the minimum price, and actually collected almost 16 000 kroner more than budgeted from the shares.

But the prices would depend on the resource base and the ambitions of the participants. The experience from Ommang Søndre shows that the price of the shares is based on the prices from their other marketing channels. At Øverland the price is not given for each

product, but especially due to relatively weak harvests, the price per carrot is probably not very low.

One question is whether CSA would be an arrangement for rich people? An interesting comment of one of the farmers at Ommang Søndre relating to this was that their customers are not characterised by having much money, but rather by having a special interest in their products (pers.comm.<sup>46</sup>). This indicates that what one is willing to give for food is a question of priorities rather than economic means. In fact people in Norway use only 10,5 percent of their income on food, which is relatively low compared to other countries (Statistics Norway 2009b). At the same time 12,1 percent is spent on culture and leisure. This might suggest that it is possible for people to put more priority into food if they really want to. One could even think that a membership in CSA could be covered not only by people's food budget, but also by the culture and leisure budget, if considering the associative values of CSA like the social aspect and experiences at the farm. Especially in this case it would be important to market these additional values, in order to make people aware that they get more than only food when they buy a share. On the other hand it would probably not be the low income families that first and foremost would stand in line to become shareholders in a CSA, unless measures are taken to include price differentiation between income groups and the alternative of paying through work at the farm, as is practiced in some CSAs in the USA.

Of what concerns financial challenges I can especially point to the lack of long term perspectives as the shares are paid only for a year at a time. Especially ØverlAndel is vulnerable in this sense, as it is based on the shares, except some external contributions, to keep the production and the arrangement going. If they make an investment one year, they do not know if there is anybody to follow it up the next year. JOAA reports on Teikeis where the shareholders actually give personal loans to the farmers ("*Teikei*"system, the ... 1993). This has also been discussed in ØverlAndel in order to buy some equipment, but has not yet been realised. Larger investments, be it buildings, expensive machines, or infrastructure, would probably have to be solved in another manner. It would at least require a more stable consumer group with a turnover rate drastically lower than the current above 50 percent, and a long term rent agreement on the land. Currently the agreement on the land is renewed every year (pers.comm.<sup>47</sup>).

For Ommang Søndre the situation is different as the CSA is based on the farmers' own farm and is only one of more market strategies. The CSA does not make difference to how the

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<sup>46</sup> Personal communication: Interview Farmer A Ommang Søndre, 07.04.2009.

<sup>47</sup> Personal communication: Interview Leader of ØverlAndel, 29.04.2009.

farmers deal with investments, except the positive effect of gaining support from Innovation Norway to invest in processing equipment for cheese and grain.

## **5.2 Production**

### **5.2.1 Small Scale or Large-scale farming?**

From the literature we know that in the USA mainly small-scale farms choose CSA (Lass et al. 2001a). Many farmers do for instance choose it as an alternative solution for maintaining their farm activities when they would not be competitive in the normal market. Yet there are big farms where CSA is adopted as well (McFadden 2004).

Norwegian agriculture is by and large small scale in an international perspective. Both Øverland and Ommang Søndre Farms are actually quite big compared to the average Norwegian farm. While the average farm size is 21 ha (Statistics Norway 2008), Øverland and Ommang Søndre Farms have respectively 40 and 48 ha of land. But as shown earlier, the area used for CSA is not that big on either farm. At Øverland only 1 ha is devoted the CSA and at Ommang Søndre CSA constitutes only a smaller part of the turnover of the farm. They are therefore run on a small scale basis after all.

One question regarding size is whether CSA would represent an alternative for the larger or the smaller farms in a Norwegian context. The larger farms would normally have more options for their operation than the smaller ones. For instance they would have the possibility to get the benefits of economies of scale (Rødseth 2002). Actually Norwegian agriculture is getting more and more industrialised, especially within the swine and poultry production. According to Rødseth there are some new concerns disturbing the benefits of these productions. For instance there are ethical concerns regarding animal husbandry, where animals are considered taken better care of in small-scale farming. The other concern is related to food safety, where health scandals may be associated with large-scale farming. All the same he argues that the benefit of the private economic factors regarding this kind of production will lead to a continued industrialisation of Norwegian agriculture.

Farmer and philosopher Tore Stubberud also thinks that bulk production, for instance of grain, will continue in Norway due to the so called “channelling policies” (Jacobsen & Stræte 2002). The channelling policies are basically regulation of prices of grain and milk in order “to ‘channel’ grain production to the flat lands of south-eastern Norway and parts of

[central Norway], leaving a larger part of the market for milk and other dairy products to farmers in the more marginal agricultural regions” (Kaarhus 1999, 185). According to Stubberud “No farmer will run to the local market place to sell organic chicken, smoked perch or pesticide free leek as long as the family farm gives a reasonable income by selling grain” (Jacobsen & Stræte 2002, 228). In his opinion the channelling policies is a barrier for the diversification in Norwegian agriculture. In Moen and Stubberud’s (2002) eyes Norway should abolish these policies to stimulate alternative production on Norwegian farms. Based on these considerations, other values than the pure economic would have to be preferential for the farmers if they were to choose CSA.

In the case of Øverland, as I have shown, there was for instance no economic need which led to the establishment of the CSA, but rather the wish to try out the concept as a part of the pilot project. Øverland is a demonstration farm owned by an organisation promoting sustainable agriculture, which makes Øverland a special case. At Ommang Søndre the farmers were already part of alternative food networks like agricultural markets and fairs, direct sales to regular customers as well as their farm shop. They had already chosen an alternative strategy to the bulk production and the conventional market. CSA was an additional strategy for them, first and foremost with the aim of getting a closer relationship to their customers and to show people where their food comes from. For them the motivation has been not so much financial as it has been found in social aspects and the desire to communicate to society what farming is about.

For small producers the picture is different. These have until recently had problems finding marketing alternatives for products of small quantity. Yet there has been a favourable development for these producers the last years. It has become easier to sell such products through retailers, and they can use market channels such as the Farmers’ Market, farm shops and direct sales to restaurants, shops and festivals (Ministry of Agriculture and Food 2008). CSA is also an arrangement without quantity requirements in terms of delivery. The farmers and shareholders can actually decide together what they want to produce, when and how often the products should be delivered, picked up or harvested. It would also guarantee a market for the produce – required that enough shareholders sign up to the CSA. The dispersed settlement in Norway might be a challenge in this regard, something I will come back to in Chapter 5.3.

Another concern for small farms might be that they do not have the capacity to provide enough food or variety of products to sustain a CSA. One solution to this, which was the initial plan of the famers of two different farms in Solør who wanted to start a CSA, is to co-operate between farms to be able to deliver a more varied production. These farmers did

not develop their idea though, precisely because they found the customer base being too small. It could be exiting for consumers also to get a relationship to more than one farm. This is a strategy which is used in the USA (Adam 2006).

### **5.2.2 Organic Farming**

Internationally CSA is associated with organic agriculture. Also in Norway it is promoted as an organic market strategy, hence it is natural that both Øverland and Ommang Søndre are organic farms. Ommang Søndre is biodynamic as well, which I have shown is the case for the first CSAs that were initiated in Europe and the USA. The farmers at Ommang Søndre did however not distinctively think of Rudolf Steiner philosophy when they established the CSA, but on request they could see the relevance of it: “CSA is about seeing and experiencing a character in terms of the surroundings. We do also see that as a task in biodynamic farming. So yes, there is maybe a connection between them” (pers.comm.<sup>48</sup>). What is interesting about the statement is that the farmer refers to a quality of biodynamic farming that goes beyond the technical part of farming and rather emphasises the experience of the environment, which as she says, is concurrent with the aim of CSA of bringing people closer to the nature and the agricultural landscape.

Yet Bjune (2003) in her pre-study on the conditions for the adaptation of CSA in Norway, does recognize that also other qualities of agricultural products and services could make CSA attractive, and that this quality does not need to be organic. The key point is that a CSA must provide alternatives to what can be acquired in the normal grocery stores. In the Ministry of Agriculture and Food’s food political strategy paper for 2008-2010 it says that “to succeed in the market it is important to develop and use the competitive advantages related to for instance naturally given or historical conditions, special raw materials, production methods, quality, animal health and food safety” (Strategy Paper 2008, 23). Taste, the peculiarity of what is Norwegian and environmentally friendly production, are also characteristics that are highlighted as competitive. In my understanding these are qualities that could be used to make CSA attractive, and which would not necessarily need to be combined with organic farming.

CSA has anyway been promoted in the organic sector, or one can maybe say that organic agriculture was the gateway for introducing the arrangement in Norway. For

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<sup>48</sup> Personal communication: Interview Farmer A Ommang Søndre, 07.04.2009.

ØverlAndel the environmental friendly profile is important. ØverlAndel's brochure<sup>49</sup> for recruiting shareholders says that the "shareholders participate in securing that the field is used for food production in the most *environmental friendly way that exists today*" (my emphasis), while referring to their organic production of vegetables. In fact the grand majority of the shareholders in ØverlAndel expresses through the evaluations that it is important for them to get organic vegetables and to support organic farming (Bjune 2007; Bjune 2008). In the statement we can also note that consumer *responsibility* for food production is emphasised, mirroring what I said in Chapter 5.1 about shared responsibility.

In this regard CSAs that practice organic farming represent an alternative for the environmentally concerned producers and consumers. Moreover, one of the goals in organic farming according to the Norwegian Food Safety Authority and Debio, the Norwegian organic certification body, is "to support good contact between agriculture and the rest of the society" (Veileder til forskrift 2007). This goal is concurrent with one of the aims of CSA, or at least a natural bi-product of it, as a communication channel between agriculture and society. I will come back to this in Chapter 5.4 and 5.5.

From other countries, as shown in the background chapter, CSA is to various extents a response to the increased transport of organic products in a growing global market. Also in Norway plenty of organic food comes from countries far away through the global food system. Of course Norway does not have the capacity to replace all of this import, especially not through the winter season, but for people who want to make sure the organic food they eat is produced locally, joining a CSA could be an option together with other organic subscription schemes (the latter normally provide local products as far as it is possible, but supplement with food grown in more distant places, even abroad) or buying food at the Farmers' Market.

Furthermore CSA is used as a Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) in places like for instance Japan. This means, as presented in the background chapter, that Teikei-food is normally not certified by any external certification body, but by the shareholders themselves. Yet in the case of Norway this would not be a relevant strategy, the reason being that without certification there will be no subsidies for producing organically. As the great majority- if not all - farms depend on those subsidies, and certification does not represent a significant financial burden to the farmers, rather the contrary, there is no point in avoiding it.

On the other hand CSA could represent a way for organic farmers to guarantee that their production is sold as organic. As already mentioned a large quantity of organically

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<sup>49</sup> See brochure appendix 1

produced food is sold as conventional on the market. Different strategies are tried out to change this situation and as I have shown, the pilot project on CSA was one of the initiatives that got grants from SLF to develop organic market strategies. If the government's goal of 15 percent organic production and consumption in 2015 is to be reached, a market for the products is paramount. It is a clear goal from the current government that producers and consumers of organic food come closer together (Handlingsplan 2009). This is also a reason to put effort into developing CSA as a marketing strategy for organic products.

The availability of organic products in the market is however increasing. One could suppose that the better the availability, the less the need for involving oneself in a CSA if the goal is only the access to organic food and not the other values associated with CSA. The farmers at Ommang Søndre do not see this as a threat. "More organic food in the shops will make more people aware of organic food, which is beneficial for us. Besides, our products will be fresher than what can be found in the shops. Here you get the food directly from the farm. You cannot get it fresher than that" (pers.comm.<sup>50</sup>). The farmer's reasoning can be supported by what is said in the Norwegian Agricultural Authority's strategy plan for organic production and consumption. It says that the knowledge about organic food in Norway is generally low and that this can explain the low demand for it. The knowledge is paramount for the products to sell, as the price is no advantage for this product group (Styringsgruppen for økologisk landbruk 2003).

The report on the experiences from the Farmers' Market also says that corresponding products in the shops do not represent a notable competition as the "experience at the market and the contact with the producers is important" (Jervell & Vramo 2007, 10). Eight out of ten customers say that they will continue to use the Farmers' Market even if they can buy the same products in the stores. This suggests that other factors than only the organic make the products attractive, for instance the freshness as highlighted by the farmer at Ommang Søndre. In a CSA context it would also be the personal contact as at the Farmers' Market, and it could be the experience at the farm, the contact with the land or other attributes of the arrangement.

CSA would in this respect provide a different product than would a food store. For those who are more interested in accessing organic products and not so much in contact with producers, farm experiences, communities or anything else associated with CSA, the availability of organic products in the market would probably represent a competitive factor.

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<sup>50</sup> Personal communication: Interview Farmer B Ommang Søndre, 07.04.2009.

In a setting where there are enough consumers for the combination of CSA and organic food in food stores and/or at Farmers' Markets and/or subscription schemes, the different nature of the different market arrangements would maybe attract different people with different interests. This is what leader of ØverlAndel points to when she says that ØverlAndel is for those who want some soil under their nails and who want to come to the farm to harvest themselves. Those who would like to get organic produce in boxes on their door can subscribe to a subscription scheme. As the municipalities of Bærum and Oslo both have big populations there are enough consumers for both arrangements, and even for Farmers' Market and organic products in the stores. In areas where there are not so many consumers the competition would probably be more real. On other hand the less populated areas are those with less access to organic products. It might therefore take some time before possible new CSAs will face hard competition from the local stores or other organic sales arrangements.

### **5.2.3 Product Variety**

One quality which has shown important in other countries to make CSA attractive is the product variety. In a Norwegian climate, and especially in the Northern part of Norway, the possibilities for producing a wide range of vegetables is naturally limited compared to countries with more favourable conditions for this kind of production. However, as already discussed, the climate might not be the most important reason for the lack of variety in Norwegian agriculture. The Norwegian agricultural policies have to a great extent guided farmers into the production patterns seen in Norway, especially through the channelling policies, which favours the production of milk, meat and grain in certain regions.

The last ten years have represented a change towards more diversity within Norwegian agriculture. This is related to the political goal expressed in the Report to the Storting no 19 (1999-2000) on making agriculture more consumer-oriented. For the farmers this development represents a possibility for innovation and to adapt to a situation where they meet increased competition in the market for agricultural products. Demand for locally produced and processed food with particular qualities, including the taste and cultural experience of food, and programs to support innovation to meet this demand has motivated many farmers to invest in food which differ from the standard bulk production. An example of a program that supports innovation is the program for value adding in the food sector ('Verdiskapningsprogrammet for mat'). It was established in 2001 as a ten year program to stimulate farmers and the food industry to develop specialities of high quality food to sell in

markets with high paying ability. Directed at both primary production, processing and the development of alternative distribution channels, the program aims at increasing the value added for primary producers and their competitiveness in the food market (Rapport 2001).

The result of this development has mostly been that farms specialize on one or only few niche products. It has therefore helped in diversifying the production among the farms, but not at the single farms. Most farms can still not provide a large variety of products, which might represent a challenge for the establishment of CSA in Norway. As far as I can see there are three possible ways of encountering this challenge. One is to use the multifunctional aspect of agriculture, as proposed by Bjune (2003) and presented in Chapter 4.1.2. This could be to utilise the potential of the farms' natural resources beyond what concerns farming, for instance for hunting and fishing, or to find uses for buildings or machines, or to use the human capital and skills in some way or another.

Another way could be to co-operate between farms, as mentioned in Chapter 5.2.1. Together farms can provide a larger spectre of products and a larger potential in terms of multifunctional agriculture. A third way is to utilise the financial mechanisms of CSA to diversify the production, because although it is not possible to produce as many vegetables as in the USA or in Japan, there is potential to grow more than what is grown on most farms today. The diversification is however a matter of cost and must be done at a level that both the farmers and shareholders can bare. To diversify the livestock is for instance a measure that can be quite expensive as in many cases it would include the investment in buildings and equipment as well. An alternative for farms with animal based production could maybe be to develop local processing, like they do at Ommang Søndre, which is stimulated through the program for value adding in the food sector. As already mentioned, Ommang Søndre got support from Innovation Norway to invest in their processing facilities to improve the conditions for the CSA.

A benefit of the broad variety is the possibility to grow different crops and varieties that get ready at different times throughout the season. This way the shareholders can harvest throughout the summer and autumn, as they do at Øverland. It is also a measure to avoid that people get tired of eating the same vegetables, which is referred to as a problem for many CSAs (Adam 2006). Furthermore the variety offers the shareholders a possibility to learn more when they are in the field, both in terms of new plants and how to manage and harvest them. An idea to CSAs that will have to base themselves on few crops could be to grow crops that are possible to store and which do not get damaged after a few days. It would most likely

be a limited experience if the few crops that were produced got ready around the same time of the year, had to be eaten that same week and then it was all over.

The farmers at Ommang Søndre have taken another measure to make the shareholders satisfied with their shares. Together with the shareholders they agree upon how the combination of products in the share should look. The farmers do for instance make cheese from different recipes which the shareholders can choose between. They can also choose how they want the meat from the abattoir, or agree with the farmers on including more of some products and less of others as compared to what is suggested in the CSA-brochure<sup>51</sup>. Hence the farmers are open to dialogue with the shareholders concerning the content of the shares.

This is actually the benefit of the shareholders not sharing the responsibility for the whole production. Then they would have had to divide it equally among themselves. In the situation of Ommang Søndre CSA the shareholders can choose among the products to a larger extent. There is anyway no guarantee that the shareholders would not get tired of the products they get. For farms who would like to start a CSA with little variety in its production, this risk should be kept in mind.

ØverlAndel and Ommang Søndre CSA have relatively wide product spectres. At Ommang Søndre the production has been quite differentiated for many years already, which has been a choice made by the farmers, and which is a natural part of a biodynamic production. In the case of ØverlAndel the fact that the association only produces for the shareholders' consume and all the costs are covered before the season starts, allow the shareholders to make choices about the production without thinking about price fluctuations and competition in the market or of finding markets for their products. This can sometimes be difficult with small quantities as I have shown. It would naturally be more cost effective to specialize in a few crops, but the shareholders have shown willing to pay more to be able to produce with more variety.

At Øverland though it has become a challenge to maintain all the varieties they originally had. As some of the species have not yielded well, many of the shareholders have become disappointed (Bjune 2008). Some have chosen not to buy shares for another season for this reason:

I am disappointed because of the small harvests and will not continue [to be a part of ØverlAndel] (Bjune 2008).

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<sup>51</sup> See brochure appendix 4

There are however many who want to continue despite disappointing results. One shareholder expresses in the evaluation that:

Although I think there is a mismatch between the price and what I have got back, that does not mean that I am dissatisfied. It is not because of the price that I and many others do this (Bjune 2007).

Another shareholder expresses that her own participation in producing her own food has a special value, which seems to compensate for small harvests:

There is a special feeling and taste when you grow your own food. It is not only what you get for every krone that counts (Bjune 2008).

Still the leader of the pilot project expresses her concern about the situation:

There has been too little production and too many weeds. Although many of the shareholders say that it is ok, that they can live with it, I believe there is a limit to what they can take (pers.comm.<sup>52</sup>).

To reduce the area and number of varieties is therefore one of the measures taken to try to improve the situation. Nevertheless, the reduction does not mean that the product variety is small: They still have different varieties from 15 types of vegetables, plus some berries, fruits, herbs and maybe some honey if they succeed with the beehives. And the strategy seems to work. By the end of June optimistic reports were made: “The field has never been as free from weed as now, we have never harvested as early as we have done this year and we have never seen the crops look so good before” (pers.comm.<sup>53</sup>). The CSA-leader is happy about the situation, but would like to see a larger spectre of products in the field again.

Looking closer at the situation of the gardener, he has an additional challenge in his job compared to the farmers at Ommang Søndre and in other CSAs who are established on their own farms. These farmers know the farm, its soil and all the surrounding conditions very well (at least if they have run the farm for a while like they have at Ommang Søndre), and probably have a much easier task when it comes to providing a good production. At Øverland the current farmer is in his third season. He was new in the profession when he was hired and

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<sup>52</sup> Personal communication: Interview pilot project leader, 20.04.2009.

<sup>53</sup> Personal communication: Email from leader of Øverland, 30.06.2009.

did not know the farm from before (pers.comm.<sup>54</sup>). It has therefore taken some time to get to know the conditions of the field, its needs and special character. Additionally the farm has been used for conventional grain production for years, and has only been under conversion to organic farming since 2006. It might therefore take some time to build up the soil and make it able produce in a satisfactory way. The effort of the CSA to do this and the varied production is however a positive contribution to biodiversity at Øverland Farm.

### **5.3 Distribution**

CSA is primarily a local food network, meaning that the way the food takes from field to table happens within a “local” area and that there are no or few middle-men involved between the producer and the eater (Bergflødt 2007). What is considered ‘local’ varies with product, region and country. The Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food defines ‘local food’ as food products that are produced and consumed “within a natural geographic area” (Ministry of Agriculture and Food 2008). Politically it is seen as an environmental strategy within the agriculture and food sector to increase the production of local and seasonal food, as it has the capacity to reduce the use of transport. Energy consumption and environmental burden associated with food has become very high as the food travels more than ever before. Hence CSA is a strategy that is in tune with environmental goals within agriculture also in terms of transport.

One challenge of CSA in a Norwegian context is nevertheless and unavoidably the scattered and small population and farms often being situated far from urban or densely populated areas. The “natural geographic area” might not consist of enough people to constitute a consumer base for CSA. This was, as I showed in Chapter 4.1.3, the reason some of the Norwegian farmers interested in trying CSA did not evolve with it.

Concerning the consumer surveys done to check out the market for CSA around those farms, it is not all that clear to me that there was not sufficient interest for CSA among consumers in those areas. As the surveys were conducted among members of Oikos and Grønn hverdag, they did in fact cover only a small part of an already limited population. As the interest in organic and local food and environmental issues is increasing in the population in general, and only a limited number of people buy a membership in these organisations, it

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<sup>54</sup> Personal communication: Interview gardener of Øverland, 09.05.2009.

could have been interesting to see the results from a survey in the general population, both around those specific farms, and in other places.

According to Stræte and Jakobsen (2002) the population pattern is a challenge for all kinds of niche products in Norway, and especially for the marketing of fresh products. Fresh produce must be offset rapidly to avoid being spoiled before it reaches the consumer. That requires a certain market size, which is difficult to find outside the big urban areas.

Ommang Søndre is a farm situated in a rural area, although not very far from Hamar town (15 km). Still the farmers also include people from the Oslo area in their consumer group, facilitated by their regular participation at the Farmers' Market in Oslo 127 km away, and the use of a box-scheme distribution system, as do most CSAs in the USA and in Japan (Pilley 2001). This allows them to include consumers who live relatively far away, and to create an urban-rural link. The already established system for distribution, but also the infrastructure for storing, cooling and harvesting, as well as the farm shop, was clearly an advantage for the farmers to be able to run this system. It saved the CSA from extra costs and administration, as compared to ØverlAndel, which would have to establish all these things.

Self-harvesting of vegetables is, however - as I have shown - an alternative this year for interested shareholders. The farmers want to introduce this, not so much for economic reasons, but because they want the shareholders to get some experience at the farm and to create a social gathering out of it (pers.comm.<sup>55</sup>). Self-harvesting might be a way for the shareholders to get some contact with the land. As compared to ØverlAndel, Ommang Søndre therefore has the capacity to reach consumers both among those who want deliveries, but also among those who want the experience of harvesting.

The social aspect and the experience of self-harvesting have certainly been important for ØverlAndel, to which I return in the next chapter. But the primary reason the CSA has chosen this way of doing it is of the economic and practical kind. The consequence is that people living far from the farm cannot so easily participate. What is far is relative for people, but obviously for some it is far enough to live in Oslo, although depending on where in Oslo they live. It might mean that it is not so easy to pass by for instance after work to grab some salad to prepare for dinner the same night. The distance from Øverland to the centre of Oslo is 15 km. But, as the ØverlAndel leader (pers.comm.<sup>56</sup>) emphasises, the CSA is not primarily for people in Oslo. They are of course welcome to join, but ØverlAndel is first and foremost a local initiative for people in the communities closer to the farm. And as Øverland is situated

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<sup>55</sup> Personal communication: Interview farmers Ommang Søndre, 07.04.2009.

<sup>56</sup> Personal communication: Interview leader of ØverlAndel, 29.04.2009.

in a densely populated area, obviously with enough people who want to join in, as shown by the waiting-list, there is in fact no need of creating a box-scheme to try to reach more people.

Consequently ØverlAndel provides organic food with a low number of food miles<sup>57</sup> and is an environmental friendly initiative both in terms of production and transport. A common distribution system would nevertheless have saved the environmental costs from shareholders driving all the way to the farm individually. Ommang Søndre CSA avoids extra environmental costs as they deliver the boxes at the Farmers' Market, where they would go anyway with other products. Hence for those who would like to reduce their ecological footprint through their food consumption, CSA could be an option.

The experiences of ØverlAndel and Ommang Søndre therefore suggest that farms that would depend on distant markets would have to be prepared to find alternatives for harvesting and distribution that do not include self-harvesting. Likewise self-harvesting can only be applied if the shareholders live close enough to be able to regularly pass by the farm. It could also be an option to combine the two ways of doing it, like they intend to do at Ommang Søndre. In situations where animal products is part of the production, which is a likely situation in a Norwegian context as there is a high degree of animal based farms, self-harvesting should not be an issue. In situations where special knowledge is required to harvest, for example for operating machines, self-harvesting would probably not be an alternative either.

## ***5.4 Community and (Re)connection with the Land***

### **5.4.1 Community**

The individualization of society has given the farmer a freedom of choice, to form his or her own role after their liking. The price, however, is more loneliness and eclipse of community (Almås et al. 2004, 342).

In Norway, as in many other industrialised countries, the family farm and the agrarian community used to be central units in the society. We do not need to go further back than to

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<sup>57</sup> The term 'food miles' refers to the distance the food is transported from the production site to where it is accessed by the consumer (<http://www.organiclinker.com/food-miles.cfm>).

the late 1960s to find whole families working at the farm, maybe even with additional helpers during peak seasons of harvesting or haymaking. Today, by the contrary, farm work is individualised. The farm might even be only a part time job for one person in the family. The distance between the farms has increased immensely as well, which means that the farmers have fewer neighbours with whom they can share common interests. It should therefore come as no surprise that the number of farmers feeling lonely is constantly increasing. The main reason given for the loneliness is the lack of workmates (Bjørkhaug & Fjeldavli 2002). Additionally most of them do not know the consumers of the food they produce. For some farmers the different direct marketing initiatives do represent a change in this situation.

CSA is one such direct marketing initiative, the difference being the participation of the consumers in the farm operations and that there is a community connected to the farm. As presented in the background chapter, however, the level of community building varies quite a lot between CSA farms. The first initiatives in Europe and USA were especially centred around community building. With the establishment of more market oriented arrangements, the community is not necessarily as important anymore. For some shareholders being a CSA member is primarily a way of accessing fresh (organic) produce (Adam 2006). Anyway, for farmers who would like to get more people involved in the life at the farm, and for people who are interested in meeting people and becoming part of a community, CSA could maybe be an option. Such a choice would depend on the willingness of the whole family or farm members to open up their home to people.

ØverlAndel and Ommang Søndre have had quite different points of departure for what concerns community. ØverlAndel is based on the initiative and effort from the shareholders - it is community-driven. This does not necessarily mean that the community is the most important for the people who participate, but the evaluations at least indicate that to be a part of the community is important or partly important for most of the shareholders for them to feel that they have got something back for their share (Bjune 2007; Bjune 2008). The leader of the pilot project says that the sense of community is probably stronger in many other CSAs, for instance in those that have a longer story, and especially those that have 'survived' difficult periods (pers.comm.<sup>58</sup>). She adds that what happens on Saturdays when people come to harvest or do some weeding, is that "they work a little bit, then they sit down and talk and laugh and eat and drink; and then they go back to work a bit more before they sit down for more talking and eating". This shows some of the social aspect that the CSA has, and the

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<sup>58</sup> Personal communication: Interview leader of the pilot project, 20.04.2009.

potential it has in making people meet and have a good time together. One shareholder that I overheard in the field talking to one of the new shareholders could tell that “It is so nice to come here to do gardening, compared to doing it alone at home. Here we have company while we work”. The introduction of ‘Green Café’ where the shareholders meet once a month to meet, share food and ideas, does also reflect the shareholders’ wish to have more arenas where people can meet and socialize.

The sub-groups are other arenas for socializing and getting together. For instance when the herb-group meet every Wednesday to work with the herbs, they have their own ‘Green café’ where they bring food and drinks and make a social gathering out of the evening (pers.comm.<sup>59</sup>). The invitation of the core group to participate and to create new sub-groups is also a way of letting people use and contribute with their skills and stimulate their creativity. It was for instance the idea of a couple of shareholders to create a “grape-group” and to plant and follow up the grapes last year. The sub-groups are also arenas for the shareholders to learn from each other and to share knowledge of for instance herbs or bee-keeping. This exemplifies how being a shareholder is more than only accessing organic products and how the community involvement can enhance the value of the shares.

The socializing around food and food production at Øverland does reflect what Fossgard (2007) identifies as a change in people’s attitude towards organic food. While traditionally it has been related to moral and responsibility, consumers of organic food do increasingly seek contact with other people who want to spend time enjoying food and life. Compared to other arenas where people can access organic food, such as Farmers’ Markets and subscription schemes, CSA could represent an arena for people coming together to enjoy the food as well.

At the same time, the evaluations reveal that the social factor is not important for everybody (Bjune 2007; Bjune 2008), although few provide a reason. It could be because they are preferentially interested in the vegetables, or they might not have the time or live far from Øverland. The time aspect is at least mentioned by several shareholders as a problem in general.

In Ommang Søndre CSA on the other hand, the shareholders have individual agreements with the farmers concerning their shares; decisions are mainly taken by the farmers; and many of the shareholders live far from the farm. Hence the shareholders’ involvement is limited compared to the situation at Øverland. Some activities at the farm have

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<sup>59</sup> Personal communication: Interview treasurer Øverlandel (leader herb group), 09.05.2009.

been arranged for farmers and shareholders to meet each other. The farmers do hope that a community can be created in the future through an extended participation and involvement from the shareholders' side. This could enhance the social meaning of being a shareholder compared to being a regular customer at Ommang Søndre. The challenge so far this year for the farmers has turned out to be to get time to arrange any activities.

At the same time it is worth noting that there is already a small community at the farm as there are always some interns living there. This is a typical feature for CSA farms also abroad. They have interns not only because they need assistance, but because they want to share the experience and knowledge about farming with them, and "to introduce them to agriculture" (pers.comm.<sup>60</sup>). For the farmers at Ommang Søndre, people's connection with agriculture and the landscape is important, and was, I have shown, one of the main motivations for them to initiate the CSA too. The fact that they already had more people involved in their farm operation might have made the step to involve consumers through CSA easier, especially compared to farmers of the more common individual farm operations.

One factor which I note as critical regarding community building is the high turnover rate among the shareholders. In ØverlAndel the turnover rate has been around 50 percent every year. For Ommang Søndre no estimate is made, but the turnover is substantial in this CSA too. Without continuity among the shareholders, there is less ground for a strong community to develop, compared to communities where 80 or even 90 percent of the shareholders continue from year to year. When people get to know each other better, they can build on their common experiences from year to year and the community might become an integral part of the shareholders' life.

#### **5.4.2 (Re)connection with the land**

Humans have been farming for some 600 generations, and for most of that time the production and consumption of food has been intimately connected to cultural and social systems. Foods have a special significance and meaning, as do the fields, grasslands, forests, rivers and seas (Pretty 2002, xii).

The citation reminds us that farming is an important part of human history. Only for the last few generations have people become separated from the land and the cultural and social

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<sup>60</sup> Personal communication: Interview farmer A Ommang Søndre, 22.01.2009.

systems where the food is produced. In Norway the farming population constitutes less than 3 percent of the Norwegian population (Statistics Norway 2009a). Not long ago most people in Norway lived, or at least had connections to somebody, often relatives, living in the countryside. Many people may not have that anymore. This is the backdrop for the term reconnection with the land, where the goal is to bring people back to the source of food and which is relevant also in the Norwegian context.

In Norway several initiatives exist which have an aim of connecting people to the land and to food that gain increasing popularity. Examples are firstly the direct sales. Secondly it is The Norwegian Farmers' Union's concept "Open Farm"<sup>61</sup>, which celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary last year and where farmers invite people to experience farms around the country for one day with the aim of showing agriculture and its values. Thirdly there is the Green Care<sup>62</sup> concept, which "combines farming with teaching and care". The fourth initiative is farm tourism (Blekesaune et al. 2008). Additionally I would say that the interest for the contact with the land is expressed by the waiting-lists for allotments in Oslo and that one tenth of the population above 17 years old would like to buy a small farm (*Bosetting: Nær 400.000 ...* 2008). Due to the Odelsrett, which gives family members, "by the principle of primogeniture"<sup>63</sup>, the right to buy the land, the turnover of farms is very low in Norway. The demand for small farms does however suggest that there is an interest among the population to connect, or reconnect, depending on the emphasis, with the land. The question is if the potential buyers of land, those who want allotments and other people interested in contact with the land could be interested in joining a CSA if (they knew) that opportunity existed.

What CSA can contribute with compared to the above mentioned initiatives is the participation and influence in a farm operation over a longer period, not only a visit. At the same time it represents an alternative for participation in food production that does not require people to be available all the time to do the work, as is the case of allotments and when people have their own farms. Several shareholders at Øverland do for instance express in the evaluations that they are quite happy to come to the farm especially for harvesting, but also to do other work. For instance one shareholder could tell that she used to have her own garden before, but has been living in a flat the last years. She therefore decided to give it a try to become a shareholder in Øverland. I have also heard more people saying that they were initially interested in getting an allotment in Oslo, but as the waiting-lists for accessing one of

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<sup>61</sup> <http://www.bondelaget.no/apengard>

<sup>62</sup> (<http://www.innpaatenet.no/Default.asp?WCI=DisplayGroup&WCE=1155&DGI=1155>)

<sup>63</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odelsrett>

those are long, they ended up joining ØverlAndel instead. This year as in 2006 there is a waiting-list to become a part of ØverlAndel as well. This might suggest that there are more people wanting to have contact with the land than the Oslo-region currently is able to offer. Apparently people want more than to just purchase vegetables in the shops.

The lust for self-harvesting is also an indicator of this. It has been suggested that the products could be delivered somewhere outside the farm through a kind of box-scheme. Only very few shareholders were interested in that, but it is clear that self-harvesting makes it difficult to participate for those who live far away. But as mentioned in Chapter 4.1.2, if people want box-schemes, they could just as well join a subscription scheme for organic vegetables. Still it might be that some people would like to have the option of some times coming to the farm to harvest and then get deliveries when they cannot make to come all the way to Øverland. It is however understandable that this would require too much administration and costs for the CSA.

Anyway, in the evaluations the shareholders state that they appreciate to be present where the food grows (Bjune 2007; Bjune 2008). Some shareholders commented on their experience with self-harvesting in the evaluations:

My son (3) and I have very much enjoyed picking vegetables ourselves, but also to make the trip to Øverland, bring food and drinks to have a good time! Moreover it has been a pleasure to come home with the basket full of vegetables and prepare dinner with what we know are healthy and good ingredients (Bjune 2007).

Another shareholder expressed this:

For us half of the joy has been to harvest ourselves! This is also important for the children. They eat more vegetables when they know that they are picked at Øverland and find it so nice! (Bjune 2007).

These citations do not only reveal the pleasure of harvesting, but also of eating their own vegetables and the value that it has for the children. That is also the motivation for the kindergarten for having a small piece of land in the field of ØverlAndel. They would like the children to see and experience where the food comes from. “We find it so nice and important

that they want to involve in farming, that we let them use a little piece of our rented land<sup>64</sup>”, explains the CSA-leader.

Another aspect of the self-harvesting is that everything is picked and eaten, no matter the size or how the products look. This feature of using everything and not wasting makes CSA different from other marketing arrangements, where there are certain standards that must be followed and it is not possible to deliver the smallest carrots or the tomatoes that have some brown spots on them. By the contrary at Øverland some people even harvest and eat the weed.

The self-harvesting also invites the shareholders to relate to the seasonal aspect of agriculture and to know more about the different plants, for instance how they look in the field and how to harvest them. Aspects of season and weather influence when and what they might come and harvest. Through being a part of Øverland they also get the chance of following the life of their plants, either in the field or through the regular newsletters. For instance the gardener gives updates telling briefly what he is doing related to the production. Through the work in the field some additional benefits might also appear. For instance when weeding and preparing the strawberry fields, strawberry plants that were not in the rows were removed. In stead of throwing them away, the shareholders brought them home to plant them in their garden and flower boxes.

Finally the Thanksgiving party (*‘høsttakkefest’* in Norwegian) is celebrated to sum up the year and end the season in a nice way, a social event that has been popular at Øverland. Through this party the CSA participants thank the land for what it has given them and they make soup with seasonal crops directly from the field – *in the field* (apropos of ‘local food’ ...). This activity witnesses how CSA can contribute to giving the land meaning for people.

At Ommang Søndre the farmers see it as a responsibility of the shareholders to see the landscape and the special character of the farm (pers.comm.<sup>65</sup>). For them the attention from people gives life to agriculture. If they do not see it, it is equivalent with that it does not exist. Their attitude is quite in tune with that of Jules Pretty:

For all our human history, we have been shaped by nature whilst shaping it in return. But in our industrial age, we are losing the stories, memories and language about land and nature.

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<sup>64</sup> Personal communication: Interview leader Øverland, 29.04.2009.

<sup>65</sup> Personal communication: Interview farmer A Ommang Søndre, 07.04.2009.

These disconnections matter, for the way we think about nature and wildernesses fundamentally affects what we do in our agricultural and food systems (Pretty 2002, xiv).

The shareholders are therefore invited to visit the farm through open days and different activities. They are still limited to some few occasions, but, as already emphasised, the farmers would like to see more participation at the farm from the shareholders' side in the future. Self-harvesting of vegetables will be arranged this year if the shareholders are interested. This could at least be an opportunity for those living close enough to be able to come by the farm. If this is realized there will be a chance for the shareholders to further enhance the meaning of having a share – to get the experience with the land and with farming, and to get stories and memories that will affect the way they see and act in relation to agriculture and the food system in the future.

## **5.5 Communication**

Closely connected to the (re)connection with the land is communication. Together with the political goal of increasing the dialogue between producers and consumers of food as presented in Chapter 4.1.2, there is also a goal to increase the *knowledge* on food in the population. Especially there is a focus on raising awareness about the environmental perspectives related to food, and about Norwegian food, as expressed in the Report to the Storting no 39 (2008-2009) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food's Food Strategy Paper 2008-10 (Ministry of Agriculture and Food 2008; Strategy Paper 2008). In this context it is interesting to look at what role CSA could have to meet these goals.

CSA is, just as other ways of organising direct sales, a way to bring consumers and producers closer to each other, but as I have shown through CSA they often get closer than in the other arrangements. This has two parts: At one level, there is the communication between shareholders and farmers; the other is between agriculture and society as such. Taking the first thing first it is worth remembering what Adam said about communication in CSA:

Enhanced communication helps build community and increases the likelihood that the CSA will survive and prosper (Adam 2006, 8).

In ØverlAndel it is currently the leader of the association who has the main responsibility for the communication flow, both within the CSA and to the society through the media.

Communication is seen as a crucial task for the existence of the association. One of the most important ways of communication, apart from the communication at the farm site, is email, which in the literature on CSA is highlighted as the easiest mean of communication in CSA. Yet it requires that everybody involved in the CSA has an email-account, which one shareholder reported in the evaluation that she did not have, and that she therefore did not get very well informed about what was going on (Kjernegruppa ØverlAndel 2006).

Even though ØverlAndel has quite some communication channels, according to leader of the association<sup>66</sup> there have been too few arenas where the shareholders can meet and communicate informally, so that both joys and frustrations can be shared. For example a shareholder came with her frustration only after the season when it was not possible to do anything to cater for her concerns. If there had been more meeting arenas such frustrations could have been expressed at an earlier stage. The CSA-leader hopes that the Green café can become an arena for communication flow and where the shareholders can share their ideas and frustrations.

A notable detail of ØverlAndel regarding communication is that the annual report, budget and accounts are all published on the website, so that these are available for anyone, member of the CSA or not. This could be seen as a way of communicating to society what it costs to grow vegetables to 166 adults and 96 children in a 1 ha field. Usually it is hard for consumers to know what farming actually costs. Openness on finances could maybe increase the understanding among consumers about the real cost associated with agricultural production, which could be fruitful for the public debate on food prices.

The website has actually been an important tool to reach out to people as it is easily accessible. It is also easy to refer to when people ask for more information on CSA. Today the website covers both of the existing CSA farms, but also a couple of other initiatives that do not exist anymore or that never got started. Anyway, the idea of having a joint site is probably a good idea if more CSAs are initiated and want to spread their message, and also for the consumers to be able to navigate between them and to get some background information on CSA.

The shareholders at Øverland would anyway like to have their own webpage and a new one is in the process of being established (pers.comm.<sup>67</sup>). The current website is operated

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<sup>66</sup> Personal communication: Interview leader ØverlAndel, 29.04.2009.

<sup>67</sup> Personal communication: Email leader ØverlAndel, 30.06.2009.

by Norges Vel, which formally does not have responsibility for the CSAs anymore as the pilot project is over. The new one will be operated by the shareholders on a voluntary basis. The idea is to have a webpage with focus only on ØverlAndel and not so much on CSA in general. It has been suggested to include a blog, articles, recipes, pictures and activity updates among other things and will probably strengthen the communication within the CSA, but also with other people who are interested.

The farmers at Ommang Søndre have had a direct dialogue with consumers since they started the farm. The CSA is an attempt to get an even closer contact with the consumers. Currently the communication happens directly between the farmers and the individual shareholders. The direct communication opens up for the consumers to express what they would like to get from the farm, and the farmers get the chance to explain what they can or cannot provide. This is one way in which the CSA is different from ordinary subscription schemes, which usually operates with boxes with fixed content. There is however no open budgets for the shareholders to see and not possible for them to know the exact cost of the farming operation, contrary to the case of ØverlAndel.

The dialogue with the shareholders and the society is one of the main motivations for the farmers to initiate the CSA. They want to communicate what they are doing, what agriculture is, what is the story behind the food that people eat and, as already mentioned, they want the shareholders to see these things (pers.comm.<sup>68</sup>). “Learn as much as you can, by direct observation and experience if possible, of the life histories of the food species”, said Wendell Berry (1990, 150), advising on how people can become responsible eaters. CSA could be a gateway to this knowledge if the communication aspect of the arrangement succeeds.

Finally it is believed that the media has been important to spread the word on CSA in Norway. At least at Øverland it is claimed that the media attention has contributed to the announcement and recruitment of participants. Both local and lately also the national press has been curious to know about the arrangement, probably inspired by the general attention in the media and society on environment and sustainable consumption. In order to enhance the interest in CSA, it is probably necessary to take more direct measures of marketing. The leader of the pilot project is satisfied with the attention CSA has got in the media, but also thinks there should be written more by the parties involved in the project (pers.comm.<sup>69</sup>). What has been published so far are mainly interviews with the stakeholders in the project.

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<sup>68</sup> Personal communication: Interview farmer A Ommang Søndre, 07.04.2009.

<sup>69</sup> Personal communication: Interview pilot project leader, 20.04.2009.

Information has been published on the homepages and magazines of Oikos, the Biodynamic Association and Grønn hverdag, but this information does not reach the general public, neither among consumers nor among farmers. If CSA is going to gain popularity in Norway, I would argue that more information outside these networks is required.

## **5.6 Summary**

In this chapter I have discussed the Norwegian agricultural context for CSA and shown examples of how the two Norwegian CSAs operate within this context. The discussion and the experiences show that CSA represents a new and additional arena for the shared responsibility of food in Norway. While Norwegian tax payers already indirectly take responsibility for Norwegian agricultural production in general, there is a small, but increasing number of people who show ethical and environmental concerns when buying food. The demand actually exceeds the supply of for instance local and organic food and other niche products, something that represents a potential for CSA. At the same time a lot of the organic food is sold as conventional in the market. CSA could in this situation represent a strategy for farmers to make sure that their organic products are sold as such.

People's willingness to pay more for products with special qualities, also in the two examples of CSA, is promising for the arrangement too. A suggestion is that since CSA can provide a product beyond the food, as it includes a social aspect and the contact with the land, people could possibly be willing to use a part of their culture and leisure budget on CSA, which would increase their paying ability. In this case the additional values to the food would be of particular importance in the marketing strategies.

Financially CSA represents an alternative to traditional methods, and could be a way of uniting farmers and consumers to meet the real costs of production. To have annual agreements might help the farmers to financial control for one season, but there could be challenges related to long-term planning and investments. As the case of ØverlAndel shows, farms that are based solely on CSA might be vulnerable. One potential lies in the different support mechanisms for diversification in agriculture, for instance the program for value adding in the food sector. Ommang Søndre did for instance get support through Innovation Norway to develop processing at the farm. Other strategies should be investigated.

CSA might not be very attractive for farmers who can benefit from economies of scale. For farmers who cannot compete on this scale, niche production is often an option. I

therefore see it as more likely that CSA will be adopted on smaller farms. Øverland and Ommang Søndre are big farms, but the production directed to the CSA is small. A limited product variety on Norwegian farms, a result of both climatic and political conditions, might represent a challenge to the establishment of CSA. Yet there could be a potential to broaden the product spectre through including elements associated with multifunctional agriculture, through co-operation between farms, or by diversification on single farms, helped by consumer willingness to pay, which is the case of Øverland. It should be possible to obtain external financial support also in this respect, as it is a political goal to enhance product diversity in the Norwegian food market.

Another political goal is to reduce transport associated with food, among other ways through increasing the consumption of local and seasonal food. CSA is a local food system, often with seasonal food, and could therefore represent a tool to reach this political goal as well. A challenge to this local food system is nevertheless the small and scattered population, and farms situated far from urban areas. Distance would naturally reduce the participation in a CSA and make self-harvesting difficult. It could even be difficult to establish a CSA at all. A box-scheme could be an option in this situation, as applied by Ommang Søndre, but is a matter of infrastructure and costs as seen in the case of Øverland. And the longer the distance, the larger the cost. At the same time the potential for consumer participation increases closer to and in urban areas, also for self-harvesting. Self-harvesting could be a value in itself, as it is a way to connect to the land. At Øverland it has turned out to be popular. Another environmental benefit of having an own distribution system is that it saves the environmental costs of packaging, and encourages the use of everything from root to leaf on the plants, which represents an effective utilisation of the resources.

The interest in arrangements such as 'Open Farm', 'Green Care', direct sales of food and farm tourism, together with the waiting-lists for allotments and the interest for buying small farms, can be seen as indicators on people wanting connection with farm resources. CSA might represent an option for people with this interest, especially where self-harvesting and other farm activities is involved in the arrangement.

Furthermore self-harvesting and other farm activities are social aspects, which could represent an approach to overcome loneliness among farmers, or a way in general for people to meet others with whom they share interests. It would require openness among farmers and their families to open up their own farms to the public.

Moreover CSA could be an approach to meet the political goal of bringing producers and consumers of food together and to increase the communication between these groups.

This could enhance the understanding between these two groups regarding their different needs. It could also be an approach to enhance the knowledge among consumers about Norwegian food and environmental aspects of food production; another political goal.

## 6. Conclusion and Final Remarks

Initially it caught my attention that CSA was popular in Japan (Teikei), in the USA, and increasingly also in Western Europe, and I wondered what potential it could have also in my own country. In this thesis I have studied the background for and the experiences with CSA in Norway and related it to the international literature on the topic and assessed the conditions for the concept in the Norwegian agricultural context. I will here go through my findings.

ØverlAndel and Ommang Søndre CSA are the two concrete results of the pilot project on CSA. They have become two different arenas for consumer-producer partnerships and shared responsibility for a piece of food production beyond the tax bills, where consumers also assume risks and share rewards of farming. ØverlAndel, a consumer-driven CSA, is based on Norges Vel's farm Øverland, where the shareholders, with the professional agronomic help of a hired gardener, have established organic vegetable and herb production, and experiment with some fruits and honey. The general assembly makes the decisions on the budget (open) and share-prices, how to organise the work and what to produce. The shareholders pay according to ability beyond a minimum price to cover the costs of production. This way they also assume the risk of low yields, which has happened to some species. Consequently they have decided to reduce the number of species and area of production to reduce the gardener's work load and improve the remaining varieties. Participation in the field and in other activities is voluntary, but is encouraged, part of a community building process, and has the capacity to enhance knowledge among the participants about agriculture. Self-harvesting is practiced seemingly with success, although it makes it difficult for people who live far to come and pick vegetables regularly. Access to organic food is evaluated as important among many shareholders, and competition from other sources of organic food does not seem to be a problem as there are waiting lists to join the association. Media and the website have been important tools for the spreading of information and for recruitment. The two main challenges identified are to reduce the turnover of shareholders and to make larger investments. Strategies to overcome these challenges must be sorted out.

At Ommang Søndre the CSA is farmer-driven and established as a complement to other direct marketing strategies to strengthen the contact with consumers and to communicate to society about agriculture. The shareholders make individual agreements with the farmers on the content of their shares with a suggestion from the farmers as a point of departure. They can choose between a relatively wide product spectre, pay in advance, and

thereby assume some of the risk of the production. Regarding finances, the farmers got support from Innovation Norway to make investments in their grain mill and cheese factory to “develop the CSA”. The dialogue, advanced payment and the farmers’ commitment to deliver boxes of produce to the shareholders throughout the season make the CSA different from ordinary subscription schemes. The box-scheme, facilitated by the farmers’ regular participation at the Farmers’ Market in Oslo, represents a rural-urban link and the possibility for people living relatively far to participate in the CSA. The shareholders are invited to the farm for some occasions, and self-harvesting might be realised this year. It has however turned out difficult to get time to organise activities, especially this year. A challenge for the farmers and the CSA is consequently to create arenas for the participation of the shareholders to meet the objective of enhanced contact with these groups, and of the shareholders to become familiar with the farm and the landscape it represents.

Seen in the context of Norwegian agriculture, a potential is identified for CSA as an optional direct market strategy for (organic) farmers on the background of the increasing demand for local and organic food and more choices in the food market. The localness of the arrangement represents an environmental attribute, which is future-oriented in a society in need of environmental friendly solutions. Sufficient local consumer bases are of course easier found in urban areas than in rural areas.

The arrangement has also the capacity to include an arena for people to connect with the land, which might be attractive as an alternative to other popular arrangements that represent contact with farm resources. At the same time consumer involvement in CSA can enhance their knowledge on the natural, human and financial conditions for agriculture and on the seasonal and environmental aspect of food and its biology. Strategies such as the utilisation of the multifunctional aspect of agriculture, the co-operation between farms or willingness of pay/external support can be used to enhance the product spectre. Furthermore CSA represents a way to get the social aspect back into agriculture in an otherwise individualised sector, and to establish direct contact, dialogue and understanding between producers and consumers of food, and between agriculture and society as such.

Many of these characteristics and capacities of the arrangement meet various political goals. Examples are:

- To enhance the contact, dialogue and understanding between producers and consumers of food.
- To increase production and consumption of organic and local food.

- To reduce the transport and environmental costs related to food (produce and eat more local and seasonal food).
- To increase the knowledge on Norwegian food and environmental aspects of food.
- To increase the diversity in production, processing and marketing of food.
- To promote the multifunctional aspect of Norwegian agriculture.

I find it reasonable to think that this might represent a potential for the arrangement to gain further recognition by the authorities. The support to the pilot project can be seen as a primary recognition. This would of course depend on various other factors, such as the economic viability of the arrangement. I cannot on the basis of this study make any conclusion concerning this aspect, but only refer to people's willingness to pay for extra quality and the potential CSA has regarding its social aspect people's access to farm resources, that could be covered by their budgets for leisure and culture. But still, people are price minded and would not pay any price. ØverlAndel's challenge in terms of larger investments could also be a challenge for other potential CSAs.

I have identified five other challenges to the adoption of the concept in Norway: The first is long geographical distances between farms and their potential consumer bases. This could be solved by a box scheme as they have done at Ommang Søndre, but would depend on the CSAs' ability to deal with the increased costs related to it. Long distances also make participation at the farm and self-harvesting difficult.

Limited product aspect is another challenge. Potential strategies to encounter this situation are stated above, but would require extra efforts among the participants. A third challenge is to mobilise interest among farmers and consumers also in the general public outside the target groups of the pilot project to adopt the concept and commit themselves to each other. Fourthly farmers must find time to arrange and carry out activities with the shareholders; and five, a facilitating/consulting body would probably be important for potential CSAs if Norges Vel will not continue in this role. Finally it is a challenge to get political recognition for the concept.

All in all this study shows that CSA represents a new approach to the organisation of food production, its producers and consumers in Norway. The concept has many potentials and challenges and each CSA would have to find its own strategy as ØverlAndel and Ommang Søndre CSA have done. Yet, more research is required to the further adaptation of the arrangement to Norwegian conditions, for instance on topics such as economics, how to

develop a large enough product spectre, and on consumer and farmer interest to involve in CSA arrangements.

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## Appendices

### *Appendix 1: Brochure Øverlandel 2009*

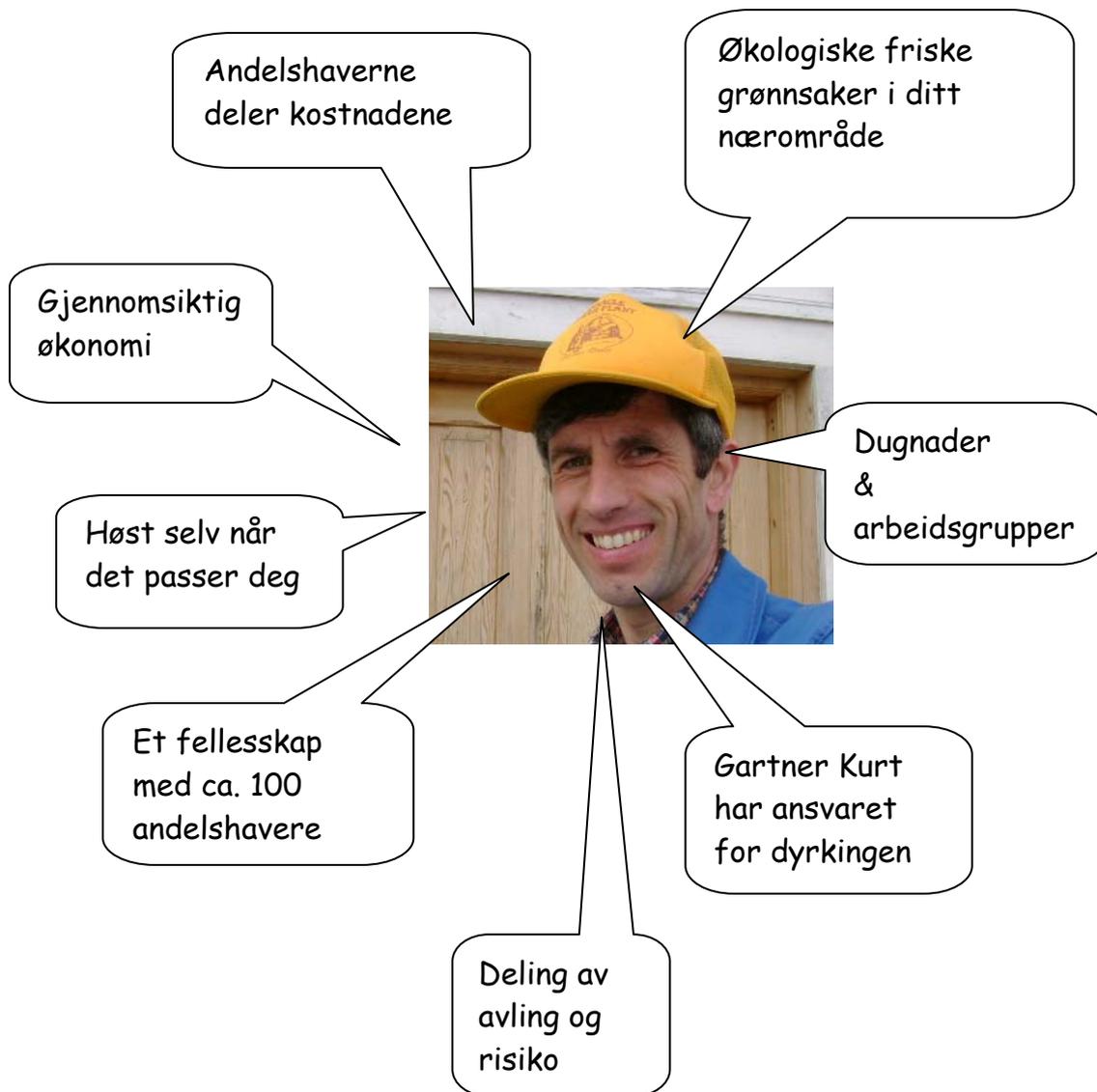
Bli en del av løsningen

Økologiske grønnsaker fra Øverland  
Andelslandbruk  
i Bærum



Kjøp din  
andel for  
2009 nå!

## Dette kan du bli en del av



## Slik fungerer det

Som andelshaver i Øverland Andelslandbruk BA (Øverland), kjøper du en andel i åkerens produksjon for ett år av gangen. Du velger selv om du ønsker en hel andel (til 3-4 personer) eller en halv andel (til 1-2 personer). Pris for en hel andel er ca kr. 3000,- og halv andel ca. kr. 1500,-.

Gartneren Kurt Oppdøl dyrker et utvalg av ca. 20 kjente og ukjente grønnsaker pluss en urtehage etter en plan med budsjett godkjent på

årsmøtet i februar. Når grønnsakene kan høstes, får du beskjed per e-post. Du kommer når det passer deg, men du kan få veiledning av gartneren om hvordan du skal høste. I tillegg får du jevnlig informasjon per e-post, på oppslagstavla eller på nettsiden.

Høsteperioden for 2009 er planlagt fra mai til og med oktober, mest frilandsgrønnsaker og urter, men også noen drivhusprodukter, blomster og bær.

Hagejordet vi disponerer er på ca. 10 mål i år, og ligger langs Gamle Ringeriksvei. Hagejordet drives økologisk. Andelshavere er med på å sikre jordet til matproduksjon på den mest miljøvennlige måten som finnes i dag.

## Interessert?

Ta kontakt med oss og du får tilsendt mer informasjon om årets planer for Øverlandel.

Øverland Andelslandbruk BA  
Gamle Ringeriksvei 123  
1356 Bekkestua

[post@andelslandbruk.no](mailto:post@andelslandbruk.no)

Du kan også lese om andelslandbruk på nettsiden

[www.andelslandbruk.no](http://www.andelslandbruk.no).

Her står både Øverland og flere andre andelsgårder beskrevet.

Vi håper å se deg på jordet i 2009!

Hilsen  
Kjernegruppen  
for ØverlAndel

## Appendix 2: Budget ØverlAndel 2009

| ØverlAndel BUDSJETT FORSLAG 2009              | Basis                    | Tillegg                  | Gjennomsnittlig økning per hel andel |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Lønn Gartner                                  | 140 000,00               |                          |                                      |
| Medarbeider                                   | 20 000,00                |                          |                                      |
| Ferieavløser                                  | 6 000,00                 |                          |                                      |
| Administrasjon kjernegruppe                   | 42 000,00                |                          |                                      |
| Veileder Fabio                                | 15 000,00                |                          |                                      |
| <b>Totalt Personal Kostnader</b>              | <b>223 000,00</b>        |                          |                                      |
| Frø, stikklok, settepoteter, planter          | 12 000,00                | 7 000,00                 | 93,33                                |
| Miljø plast                                   | 2 500,00                 |                          |                                      |
| Gjødsel, kalk, jorddekke med mer              | 6 000,00                 | 5 000,00                 | 66,67                                |
| Drivstoff til redskap                         | 2 500,00                 |                          |                                      |
| <b>Totalt Produksjonskostnader</b>            | <b>23 000,00</b>         |                          |                                      |
| Ugressharve                                   | 5 000,00                 |                          |                                      |
| Vann anlegg                                   | 5 000,00                 | 5 000,00                 | 66,67                                |
| Plastlegger                                   |                          | 3 000,00                 | 40,00                                |
| Materialer                                    | 1 500,00                 |                          |                                      |
| Drivhus plast                                 | 1 000,00                 |                          |                                      |
| Vedlikehold traktor                           | 1 000,00                 |                          |                                      |
| <b>Totalt Redskp, Materialer, Vedlikehold</b> | <b>13 500,00</b>         |                          |                                      |
| <b>Kjøring, transport</b>                     | <b>4 000,00</b>          |                          |                                      |
| Møtekostnader, sosialt, adm                   | 5 000,00                 |                          |                                      |
| <b>Totalt Møtekostnader, Sosialt, Adm.</b>    | <b>5 000,00</b>          |                          |                                      |
| <b>Birøkt</b>                                 | <b>4 000,00</b>          |                          |                                      |
| <b>Finans utgifter</b>                        | <b>200,00</b>            |                          |                                      |
| <b><u>Sum kostnader</u></b>                   | <b><u>272 700,00</u></b> | <b><u>20000</u></b>      | 266,67                               |
| Andeler 75 * 3000                             | 225 000,00               |                          |                                      |
| <b><u>Sum inntekter</u></b>                   | <b><u>225 000,00</u></b> |                          |                                      |
| <b><u>Driftsresultat</u></b>                  | <b><u>-47 700,00</u></b> | <b><u>-67 700,00</u></b> |                                      |
| Sum gjennomsnittlig økning pr hel andel       |                          |                          | <b>533,33</b>                        |

**Ekstra utgifter hvis støtte**

Mandala hus  
 Hekk  
 Skilting  
 Nettside

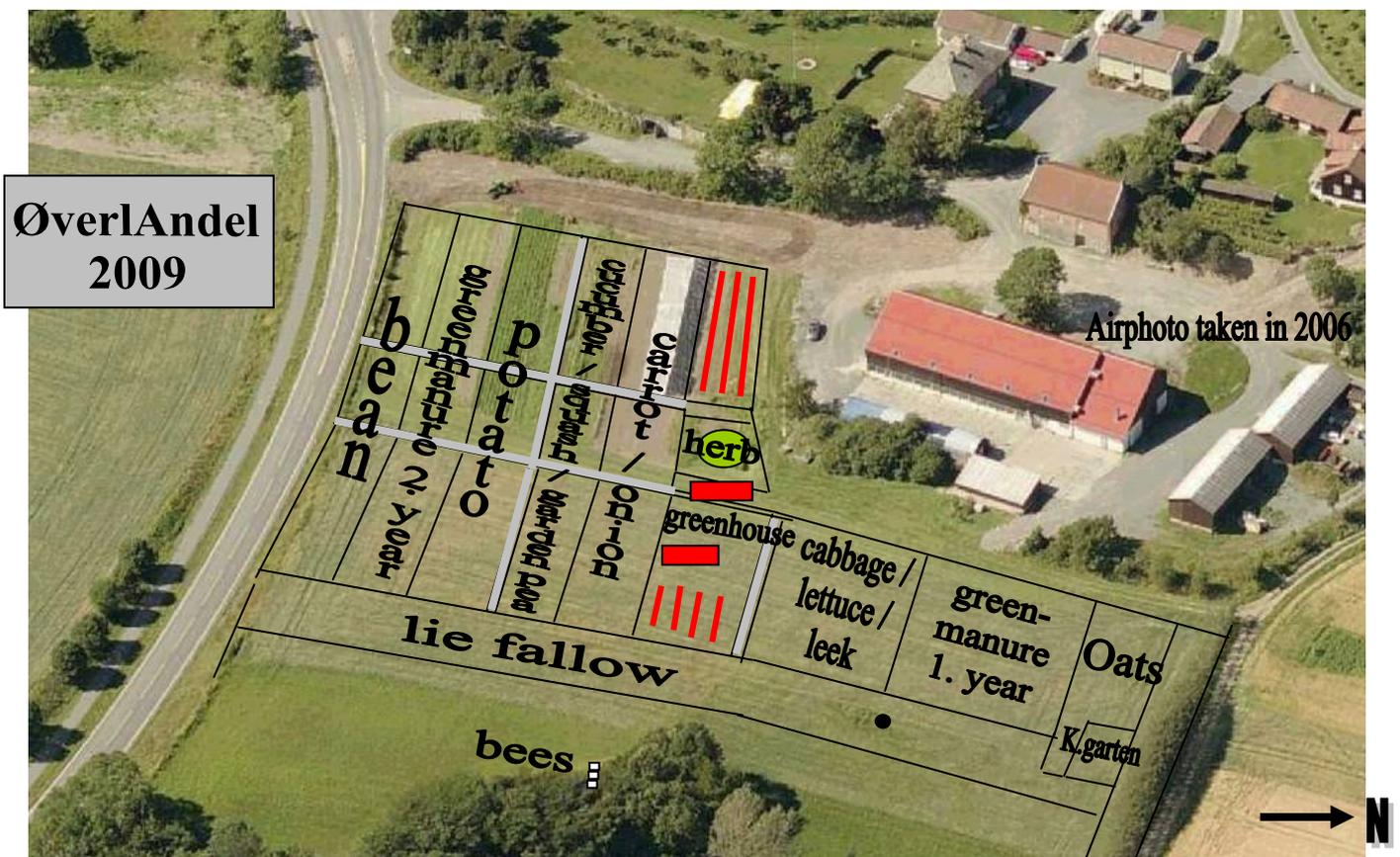
?  
 ?

2 000,00  
 10 000,00

**Søkes hos**

Fylkesmannen  
 Norges Vel  
 Fylkesmannen  
 Fylkesmannen

**Appendix 3: Field of Øverlandel**



## Appendix 4: Brochure Ommang Søndre 2009

# ANDELSLANDBRUK PÅ OMMANG SØNDRE 2009

## OMSETNINGEN

I alle år har vi solgt egne produkter på marknader og torg. I tillegg ønsker vi å videreutvikle et andelslandbruk (CSA) her på gården med faste kunder som andelshavere. Slik får gården en forutsigbar omsetning og forbrukerne får innflytelse og tilgang til Ommangs produkter. Andelslandbruk (på engelsk Community Supported Agriculture – CSA) er en form for direkte omsetning og dialogue mellom gårder og forbrukere.

Du kan bli andelshaver ved Ommang Søndre ved å betale din del av hva vi dyrker og foredler på gården dette året. De som ønsker det kan være med å høste grønnsakene sine selv, og bli kjent med gården og oss.

Vi vil gjerne invitere dere til årstidssammenkomster og arbeidsdager vår, sommer og høst. Om vinteren holder vi årsmøte der planer for kommende sesong blir lagt fram og diskutert.. Du kan hente varene dine på gården eller ved Bondens Marked i Oslo.

## Hentdatoer i 2009

|                         |                                 |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Bondens Marked,<br>Oslo | Ommang Søndre,<br>gårdsbutikken |
| 28. mars,               | 28. mars,                       |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 23. mai,<br>8. august,<br>22. august (kun<br>grønt/egg)<br>5. september,<br>10. oktober,<br>24. oktober (kun<br>grønt/egg)<br>14. november,<br>19. desember | 9. mai,<br>15. august,<br>29. august (kun<br>grønt/egg)<br>12. september,<br>3. oktober,<br>17. oktober, (kun<br>grønt/egg)<br>7. november,<br>12. desember |
|---|---|

## BESTILLING 2009

Jeg bestiller herved:

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| 1. Liten andel (1-2 personer), cirka  | Kr 2.500,- |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 5 kg honning</li> <li>- 3 kg ost</li> <li>- 7 kg kjøtt</li> <li>- 10 kg mel/korn</li> </ul>  |            |
| 2. Stor andel (3-5 personer), cirka   | Kr 4000,-  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 5 kg honning</li> <li>- 6 kg ost</li> <li>- 14 kg kjøtt</li> <li>- 15 kg mel/korn</li> </ul> |            |
| 3. Grønnsaker, poteter og egg.  | Kr 1500,-  |
| SUM   |            |

Navn: .....  
Adresse: .....  
Tlf: .....  
E-post: .....  
Leveringssted: .....

Beløpet betales på forskudd etter faktura fra Ommang.

## OMMANG SØNDRE

Ommang Søndre er en biologisk-dynamisk gård som ligger i Løten på Hedemarken. Gården har eng- og kornproduksjon, noe grønnsaker, potet og husdyrhold med 13 melkekuer, 36 melkegeit, kje, noen høner og ender.

Dyra beiter fem måneder på eng, i hømning og på setervoller 700 m.o.h. oppe i Løten Almønning. Drevet gårdsareal er ialt ca. 450 da.

All geitmelk og en del av kumelken foredles til kvit- og brun ost. Ostene ystes tidlig om morgenen i det gamle bryggerhuset på tunet tre ganger i uken. Melken pasteuriseres ikke og ysting og koking av brunost skjer med vedfyring. Dette gir ost med mye smak.

En del av korn dyrkingen er korn til matmel: hvete, rug, spelt, emmer og bygg. Slakt og foredling av dyr foregår ved Brovoll i Stange og vi selger noe kjekjøtt, kalvekjøtt og spekemat av geit. I tillegg selges det kje- og geitskinn. På Ommang står det bikuber som gir oss verdifull honning.

Eiere og brukere:: Bente Pünther og Gertjan de Snaijer.

Adresse: Ommang Søndre, 2345 Ådalsbruk.

E-post: [ommang.sondre@online.no](mailto:ommang.sondre@online.no)

Web: [www.norgesvel.no/andelslandbruk/gardene/ommang](http://www.norgesvel.no/andelslandbruk/gardene/ommang)

Tlf: 6259 2794

## **Appendix 5: Interview Guides**

### **First Interview Leader of the Pilot Project (ca 90 min)**

#### **Update on CSA**

- What is the development within CSA in Norway: An update
- What is written, studied? Any relevant literature?
- What are relevant issues for discussion about CSA in Norway?
- In the pre-study to the pilot project it says that alternative organisation forms for CSA in Norway must be investigated further. Will this be done?

#### **CSA in a Norwegian context**

- How can CSA be organised under Norwegian conditions? Any special concerns?
- Are there any institutional/juridical barriers/concerns for the establishment of CSA?
- Does CSA fit into the Norwegian agricultural system?
- Is CSA relevant in Norway?
- How has CSA been received by the authorities?
- How do you evaluate the future of CSA in Norway?

### **Second Interview Leader Pilot Project (ca 90 min)**

#### **The pilot project**

- Where did the idea of introducing CSA to Norway come from?
- Can you describe the pilot project?
- Why did it get support from SLF? What did you get support to do?
- Who has been part of the reference group, and what has been its role?
- What has been the role of Grønn hverdag and Oikos in the project?
- What was the background for the denomination 'andelslandbruk'?

### **CSA in a Norwegian context**

- Why establish CSA in Norway?
- There are many ways of supporting local and organic food production. Why involve in a CSA?
- What makes CSA different from other direct marketing strategies?
- There are waiting lists for allotments in Oslo. What can it tell us?
- What is the potential for CSA within the biodynamic community in Norway?
- What have been the challenges for CSA in Norway?
- How has the response from the authorities been? Got support to the pilot project, and then?
- What will be the role of Norges Vel regarding CSA after the project is over?
- Anything else you would like to add/that I should know?

### **First Interview Leader of Øverland Andelslandbruk BA (ca 2 hours)**

#### **CSA in Norway**

- What is the development within CSA in Norway lately: an update
- What is written, studied? Any relevant literature?
- What are relevant issues for discussion about CSA in Norway?

#### **Øverland Andelslandbruk BA**

- How is the CSA organised?
- How do you finance your operations? Any external sources?
- Have there been any juridical complications?
- How many shareholders participate in the CSA?
- Do the CSA lease the land from Norges Vel? Area of the land?
- What do you produce?
- Which activities do you have where the shareholders participate?
- Potentials for the CSA?
- Challenges and limitations?

## **Second Interview Leader of Øverland Andelslandbruk BA (ca 50 min)**

### **Organisation**

- What does the association consider are the principles for CSA?
- Why did you decide to organise as a BA?
- Why did the association choose self-harvesting?
- In what way is the kindergarten a part of ØverlAndel?
- What kind of assemblies do you have apart from the general assembly?
- Who has the responsibility for updating the home page and for the information on the page?
- What is your role as a leader?

### **Economy**

- For which price do you lease the land from Norges Vel?
- What has the price for a share been the last three years? Has it changed?
- Are there many shareholders who pay more than the minimum price?
- Do you as a leader and the gardener have shares?

### **Other things**

- Is there any relation between ØverlAndel and the anthroposophy milieu?
- How/what are the future prospects for ØverlAndel?
- Anything else you would like to add/that I should know?

## **First Interview Farmers Ommang Søndre (ca 90 min)**

- Background about the farm and for choosing CSA

### **About the CSA:**

- Number of shareholders
- Where are the shareholders from?

- Price of the shares
- How much do the shareholders participate/decide regarding planning, budgeting and work on the farm?
- Open/not disclosed budget?
- Constitution/rules
- How are the products distributed
- How do you recruit shareholders?
- How did you develop this way of organising it?

### **Experiences**

Is the CSA economically sustainable?

Would it be possible to have CSA without other marketing strategies?

Does CSA influence the subsidies you get?

What have been the challenges?

What are your ambitions for CSA in the future?

What has been the importance of CSA as a facilitator? Would you need a facilitator in the future?

### **Second Interview Farmers Ommang Søndre (ca 40 min)**

#### **Motivations**

- Why did you establish a CSA?
- What do you want to achieve with the CSA?
- What is for you the difference between people buying your products in the farm shop or at the Farmers Market, and that they buy shares in the CSA?
- Is there a relation between you running a biodynamic farm and establishing CSA? Are you inspired by Rudolf Steiner for what concerns CSA?
- Do you have political motivations for running a CSA? (Is it a reaction to anything?)

#### **Shareholders**

- How many shareholders do you have so far this year? Where are they from?
- Why is it important for you that you have local shareholders?

- Why have you not stipulated any amounts of the products in the second type of share?
- Where do the shareholders pick up their products? Is self-harvesting practiced also?
- How do you communicate with the shareholders? Do you have internet at the farm?
- Do the shareholders have any responsibilities beyond paying the shares in advance?
- Which activities will you accomplish with the shareholders in 2009?
- You said you wanted the shareholders to get to know the landscape. Can you elaborate on that?

### **Finances**

- What is the level of the prices of the shares compared to the other products that you sell?
- How many shareholders do you want in the future? How much of production/turnover would you like to be realised through the CSA?
- You got support from Innovation Norway to “develop CSA” on the farm. How exactly have you done that with the help of the money? Was the support crucial for the establishment of the CSA?

### **Experiences**

- Has your everyday life changed after establishing the CSA?
- Has the risk of running the farm changed with the CSA? Evt does CSA have the potential of changing the risk?
- Anything else that you want to say/that I should know?

### **Third interview Farmer A Ommang Søndre (ca 20 min)**

#### **Shareholders**

- How many shareholders do you have now? Where are they from?
- Did any of them participate last year?
- Have you had any activities with the shareholders so far? Any plans?
- Do the shareholders turn up at the farm? Do you know them? Do they know each other?

### **Production/distribution**

- Why do you want to increase the production of vegetables/potatoes?
- How do you distribute the vegetables/potatoes/egg between the CSA and other marketing channels?
- Can the shareholders choose what they want of vegetables in their share?
- Does the CSA have any influence on what you produce?

### **Economy**

- How much of the farm's turnover and production goes through the CSA?
- Have you made a business plan for the CSA that I can see?
- Anything you want to add/that I should know?

### **Interview Treasurer ØverlAndel (ca 20 min)**

#### **Economy**

- How many shares are sold?
- Have many shareholders paid more than the minimum price? How much extra money have you got from the shareholders?
- Have you got any external financial support?

#### **Other things**

- Which sub-groups do you have in the CSA this year?
- What is the responsibility of the core group?
- Why did you establish Green Café?
- What is the CSA's intention behind celebrating Thanks Giving?
- Is the post box new/used frequently?

### **Interview Gardener ØverlAndel (ca 20 min)**

- Did you know Øverland Farm before you started working for the CSA? How does that influence your work?
- There was conventional production at Øverland up to 2006. What does that mean for your work?
- What significance does it have not to have animals on the farm or in the CSA?
- What is your role in the association?
- Do you feel that you have a responsibility for the future of Øverland?