

# Your Vegetable Shopping in Bengaluru Can Directly Help Farmers. Here's How!

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More people in Bengaluru are now eating well, buying locally and getting to know the farmers who grow their food – all thanks to the [Navadarshanam Trust's Community-Supported Agriculture \(CSA\)](#) initiative is turning two years old this year.

The atmosphere on Sunday morning at the Canara Union Community Hall in Malleswaram, Bengaluru, is relaxed and friendly, as people trickle in to pick up their vegetable baskets from the Navadarshanam Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) scheme.

Some just put their share from a box into the carry bag that they bought and take off to enjoy their Sunday, while others hang around for a chat with the volunteers, Uma and Srinivas, and the farmer, Laxminarasa, who are all helping with the delivery that day.

Among the members of the first hour of the CSA are Vani Murthy and her husband Ram, who in addition to their vegetables, are getting some cow dung, fresh from the farm for their compost and terrace garden.

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## **What is CSA?**

### **Weekly vegetable box pickup on Sundays in Malleswaram, Bengaluru.**

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Currently, there are around seven pickup points across Bengaluru, where over 100 member households pick up their supplies for the week on Sundays. The consumer members of the CSA seem to be very happy with the vegetable supply to date. They can choose to get a basket of 4-12 kg of vegetables every week, which comprise a variety of seasonal vegetables – around 30 varieties in total over the year, and usually 3-5 bunches of fresh greens per box.

As one member says, "The diversity in our diet has increased since we joined. We get vegetables in the box that we would normally never go and buy, and that we didn't even know what to do with at first."

Also, members can order groceries and bakery items from the Navadarshanam Producer Cooperative. Vani and Ram, for instance, ordered some cold-pressed groundnut oil, delivered in their steel container which they handed in beforehand.

Not everyone has the drive or foresight though, so most of the groceries are still packaged in cloth bags (where possible) or else plastic. A more comprehensive, sustainable solution to the packaging question is currently being hatched by the Navadarshanam team.

### **The CSA model: Supporting a farmer instead of buying vegetables**

*Vegetable box and groceries with baskets of a CSA member.*

The CSA is a new offering under the Navadarshanam Trust Self Help Group, a food enterprise owned and operated by a group of villagers that provides a sustainable income to more than 30 families from the local village community.

What's special about the CSA model is that the members are not mere "consumers" who buy whichever vegetables they fancy in whatever quantity, whenever they like. Instead, they enter into a partnership with the farmers, making a long-term commitment to support the farmers who grow their food and consume what they produce. This gives farmers more security to plan their crops, helps them minimise waste and allows consumers to share the risks inherent in any natural system such as farming.

Once a herd of elephants invaded the vegetable garden at Navadarshanam the very day before the harvest was due, so there were 200 kg less cabbage on the delivery day than anticipated. "We had to send out an online message to the members saying, 'Sorry, folks, no cabbage this week'," says Gopi, initiator and manager of the initiative at Navadarshanam Trust.

On the other hand, when there is a bumper crop, farmers are not left alone to dispose of it at dumping rates but have an assured outlet.

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