



CSA Integrity Policy

Adopted by the FairShare Board on 10/31/12, revised 10/20/16.

Background

FairShare CSA Coalition strives to promote and represent the very best CSA experiences for members and producers alike. Together, we maintain and elevate the integrity of CSA in our region through top-quality member service, ongoing member-farmer communication, and farmer resource and skill sharing. As a coalition, we place trust in each other to provide the best service possible to our members throughout the season.

FairShare advocates for our farms as staff field CSA inquiries from farm members, potential members, and the public. To accurately address these inquiries and to maintain a high level of integrity and accountability within our CSA community, FairShare has the following recommendations, requirements, and protocols for all endorsed farms.

Recommendations

I. Member Communications Plan

Good member communications can not only engage members, but also prevent issues that lead to complaints, non-payments, and/or non-renewals. FairShare RECOMMENDS having a member communication plan that includes:

- Newsletter format and timing (paper/e-mail/Facebook, weekly/biweekly, etc.)
- Details on how members can reach out to the farmers through e-mail, phone, social media including the method and timing preferred by the farmers.
- Protocol for responding to member communications: Ideally, farms should respond to all member-initiated communications within 48 hours. Alternately, farms can set up an automatic response that lets members know when they can expect a response within no more than 7 days.
- Delivery disruption communications: Farms should have a way to notify members in advance when a delivery must be postponed or cancelled for any reason.
- Delivery disaster communications: Farms should have a way to communicate with members quickly when disaster unexpectedly delays or prevents shares from being delivered on the scheduled delivery day.

See pages 30-31 and 39 of the free [CSA Member Agreement Workbook](#) from Farm Commons for assistance developing a member communication plan.

II. CSA Member Agreement

FairShare RECOMMENDS that all endorsed farms develop and use a CSA Member Agreement. That agreement should include basic information about shares, pickup locations, prices, etc. Including additional information about how risks and rewards are shared between farmers and members and how the farm prioritizes where product will go among various markets (including CSA) can be extremely helpful when establishing expectations and good relationships with members. Further, these additional details can help prevent many misunderstandings, including when members see their farm's products in other markets and wonder why they are not included in their shares.

Farm Commons provides a free [CSA Member Agreement Workbook](#) that covers all essential components of a good agreement as well as ways to customize the agreement to each farm's personality and style.

III. **CSA Member Refund Policy**

FairShare RECOMMENDS that all endorsed farms have a refund policy and provide a copy of that policy to FairShare (whether or not it is provided to members). Ideally, the policy will include:

- what happens when a member wants to cancel for any reason
- what happens when a farm cannot deliver all shares as understood at the time of sign-up

Having a refund policy in place not only helps farms be prepared for worse case scenarios, but also helps FairShare support farms when responding to members requesting refunds.

See pages 20-26 and 37 of the free [CSA Member Agreement Workbook](#) from Farm Commons for assistance developing a refund policy.

Requirement

IV. **FairShare Communication Plan**

FairShare's goal is to help both farms and members weather difficulties together and maintain a strong reputation for CSA overall. FairShare REQUIRES that endorsed farms communicate the following issues to our office so that we may accurately respond to member inquiries and provide support to all farms facing difficult circumstances.

- The date and circumstances of any planned delivery postponement or cancellation where members are notified prior to the delivery day.
- The date and circumstances of any unplanned delivery postponement or cancellation where members are notified on or after the scheduled delivery day.
- Any change in primary management (new owner or primary decision maker), even if the new person is a family member.

The best way to inform FairShare of these issues is to include the Grower Program staff person on the communication whenever and however you inform members. [Current staff person is Claire Strader, claire@csacoalition.org]

If a farm fails to communicate any of these issues to FairShare, the consequences in section VI below are automatically triggered as soon as FairShare discovers that failure to communicate.

Protocols

V. **Feedback from Members**

FairShare regularly receives both positive and negative feedback from members. FairShare staff always ask members to communicate their feedback directly with their farm. When feedback is given directly to FairShare, staff relay that feedback to the farm through a standard [feedback form](#).

VI. **Formal Complaints**

A formal complaint is triggered when a member specifically reaches out to FairShare with a specific issue about a specific farm. When FairShare receives formal complaints from members, those complaints are passed on to the farm through a standard [feedback form](#) and accompanied by an offer of assistance in addressing the issue, if appropriate.

If FairShare receives 3 or more formal complaints in one season from different individuals affiliated with a farm, that farm will be REQUIRED to do one or more of the following (as determined on a case-by-case basis by the Farm Endorsement Committee):

- meet with the Farm Endorsement Committee
- submit documents and/or a communication plan as requested
- attend winter trainings to address issues related to complaints from members
- complete full or modified re-application for endorsement for the following year
- agree to a probationary endorsement period
- other actions the committee deems appropriate

VII. Delivery Cancellations

1. If an endorsed farm cancels 10% or more deliveries in one season the Farm Endorsement Committee will review the situation and may require the farmer to attend winter workshops, trainings, or other activities to develop skills in the areas identified as the cause of missed deliveries.
2. If an endorsed farm cancels 20% or more deliveries in one season, the farmer must submit a re-application for endorsement by November 1 for endorsement the following year.

VIII. Change in Primary Management

When a farm experiences a change in primary management (new owner or primary decision-maker for the CSA operation, even if the new person is a family member), the Farm Endorsement Committee will review the situation and notify the farm of any required actions or follow up, including, possibly, a re-application for endorsement.