



Photo: Courtesy of ECO Farm

by Brenda Goldsworthy

ECO Farm, located along the beautiful Etomami River in Hudson Bay, Saskatchewan, is a Community Shared Agriculture (CSA) farm with 100 current members. Keith Neu started his CSA—Etomami Community Organic (ECO) Farm—in 2007. Now in its fourth year, it has grown from 30 to 100 members with room to expand.

“Desperate times call for desperate measures... and desperation made me do many things!” says Keith, talking about the various incarnations his farm has gone through—from a chemical farm, to an organic farm, to a Community Shared Agriculture farm.

In the early '80s Keith farmed chemically, but by the end of the decade he was broke. “Desperation got me into organic farming. I figured there had to be a better way than giving all the profits to the chemical companies.” His farm became Certified Organic in 1990, and all through the '90s Keith says the crops were good, the climate was consistent, the money was stable, and there was no trouble keeping up with the rotations. Then he noticed the weather was changing. “From 2001 to 2006 it was like being on a roller coaster of wild weather with droughts, and floods, and frosts. In 2006, for the first time in my life, I wasn’t able to put a crop in. I couldn’t even finish seeding because it was too bloody wet! I just had to find a different way to make a steady income and stay on the farm.” In the spring of 2006, Keith attended a meeting in Prince Albert organized by Food Secure Sask. Many questions needed answering. Where does our food come from? How is it grown and raised? Are chemicals used? Is

it genetically modified? How long has it been in transport and storage? Has it been in contact with any contaminants? Concern was expressed over and over again about the quality and safety of food available and who was controlling their food supply.

“The idea started to take root—to have real food security you have to have a farm or know a farmer. And I realized that my farm doesn’t produce food—it just feeds the system. In the ‘dirty thirties’ my dad had no money, but

always had a full belly because he produced his own food. I had to figure out how to feed people directly—the full meal deal—the old pioneer-type of self-sufficiency.”

Keith knew a bit about Community Shared Agriculture, and since he’d already been selling his beef directly to consumers since 2000, he started talking to some Saskatoon friends who were very enthusiastic about the idea and, with their help, ECO Farm was started as a CSA in the spring of 2007. Thirty members signed up the first year. It jumped to fifty in 2008. One hundred people joined the farm in 2009, and in the 2010 season we maintained the farm at the 100-member mark. This spring our ECO Farm will begin its fifth

Photo: Gary Smith

If you haven’t seen the movie *Food Inc.* yet (www.foodincmovie.com), check it out. It will open your eyes and change the way you think about your food.



Keith Neu

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Come to our Info/Sign-up Meeting to renew your contract, sign up as a new member, ask questions, and talk directly to Keith, the farmer who grows our food.

**Saskatoon: Friday, March 11, 7:00 pm
Grace Westminster Church basement
505-10th St. E. (corner 10th & Eastlake)**

**Regina: Tuesday, March 1, 7:00 pm
Connaught Library
3435-13th Ave. (corner 13th & Elphinstone)**

season and we're now in a position to be able to expand. Long-range plans are to reach the farm's capacity of 200 members.

The CSA model is about getting involved in the production of (and decision-making about) our food. Through CSA, farmers and consumers work together to restore the connection between people and their food source. Community Shared Agriculture has many advantages. Consumers know who produces their food and how it's produced. They support local, sustainable agriculture and ensure that farmers receive a fair price. They support the environment, get fresh, healthy, tasty food, and have a farm they can go to. Because both consumers and farmers share in the production risks and benefits, farmers are provided with the stability and security they need by having a steady income, and they get a community that cares about the farm and the farmer.

The basic plan is simple: each member makes a commitment to the farm for one year and both consumer and farmer share in the production risks and benefits. Members sign a contract each spring and include 12 post-dated cheques. Options are varied to accommodate meat eaters, vegetarians, single folks, and different-sized families. Currently there is one drop off station in Saskatoon and one in Regina. Twice a month during the growing season, and once a month during the winter and spring, Keith drops off each member's preordered food. Products include garden produce (fresh, frozen, canned), beef, chickens, eggs, flour, flax, pickles, herbs, and other available food throughout the year.

Keith's plans for the future include planting an orchard, getting honeybees, and buying grain cleaning and milling equipment to supply flours, rolled oats, and pearled grains. He also plans to build a commercial kitchen, an abattoir, a biodiesel plant, and a biomethane digester to supply electricity and become self-sustaining.

Building a guesthouse is also in the works so members can spend time on the farm and enjoy the outdoor life that Keith loves so much. "I think it's important that members come to

Community Shared Agriculture (CSA)
Restoring the link between farmers and consumers

Come to our INFO/SIGN UP MEETING. Meet your farmer!

Saskatoon:
March 11, 7 pm
Grace Westminster Church basement

Regina:
March 1, 7 pm
Connaught Library

Keith Neu, an organic farmer from Hudson Bay, started the ECO Farm in 2007. Now in its fourth year, ECO Farm has grown from 30 to 100 members, with room to expand until the 200-limit is reached.

Receive organic produce YEAR ROUND with the option to add beef, chicken, sausage and eggs.

Know Your Food! Know Your Farmer!

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO ORDER

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FARMER Keith Neu km.neu@sasktel.net

ETOMAMI ORGANICS
ecofarm

the farm, get a feel for the land, and spend time on the piece of dirt that grows their food.”

ECO Farm hopes to be a pilot project that inspires, mentors, and assists farmers to start similar projects so many consumers will have access to Community Shared Agriculture and many farmers will be able to stay on their land, make a living, and do what they love doing.

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Website: www.saskecofarm.com (will be up and running soon)

KNOW YOUR FOOD! KNOW YOUR FARMER!

Brenda Goldsworthy is a Saskatoon writer and editor who has been involved with the ECO Farm since its inception. She also works with many healing modalities including Shiatsu, Reiki, Aromatherapy, Touch for Health, and Zero Point Energy. ✨

Do you know where your food comes from? Do you know how it was grown and raised? Were any chemicals used? Do you know whether it was genetically modified, fairly traded, or sustainably produced? Do you know how long it was in transport and storage or if it was in contact with any contaminants?

Food security is a huge issue and the list of questions just keeps growing. This is especially critical at a time when the industrial food system is so alarmingly centralized and exploitative to the land, to farmers, and to animals. One of the best ways to get sustainable, local, eco-friendly, non-toxic, healthy food is through Community Shared Agriculture (CSA)—a system that provides a direct link between the production and consumption of food.