

Urban Farming Forum 2011 -- Finance and managing risk notes

Cooperative model idea:

- Minimizing “start up” risks and cost by using land donation (no rent), the donation or sharing of equipment, CSA program, and volunteer members.
- Urban farms could follow coop models to counteract financing and managing challenges. It doesn't have to be formal associations or coop.
- Need to create space for urban farmers to meet, connect and share experiences in order to create cooperation.
- Farmers could share volunteers. Volunteer's bank could be created. Convenience of not having to train people every time.
- Labour swapping system could be created.
- Farmers could get together to share table at markets, to save on the table rental cost and provide a greater variety of produce to consumers.
- Sharing equipment and tools (ex: Richmond sharing farm tools)
- Coop model for farmers to work together, sale together, distribute together. Making it possible to meet the demand of restaurant or bigger buyers. Farmers could share restaurant contracts.

Banking and access to capital

- Institution could development a model of financing, tailored to urban farm business model. (e.i: longer process for repayment).
- Business plan skills needed to access loan and grants. Workshop needed to train farmers to write proper business plan and grant application.
- One-on-one connection with loans and grants providers
- Vancity is working towards creating support for urban farming, and the local food sector. Connection need to be foster with Vancity to guide the process.
- Zero fees business bank account need to be created (can be found at Honk Kong bank)
- Need to create a list of the existing financial resources for urban farmers.
- Funders (institutions) ran workshop or template to help urban farmers meet what financing institution are looking for.

CSA

- CSA model as a good system to support starting and ongoing farming business
- Provides farmers with a good amount of start up capital.
- Using the “original” csa model, including the share of all risks and the bounty, compare to the “box program” system where consumer get exactly what they pay for.

Others points

- Managing mental and physical health could increase your financial potential. Sustainability!
- Volunteers are an important source of help to create sustainability, but they are often untrained. Need good management skills to harvest the benefit of volunteers on farm.
- “Train the trainer” model for farmer on training volunteers.
- Record keeping and accounting: important for the acknowledgement of farm success and how to do better next time.

- Partnership between professional recorder keeper and accountant and farmers can be considered.
- Linking business skill and farming skill in one community to achieve sustainability.
- Self-employment insurance possibility only if you are a bigger scale. Need to create relationship with insurance cie to broaden the definition of income.