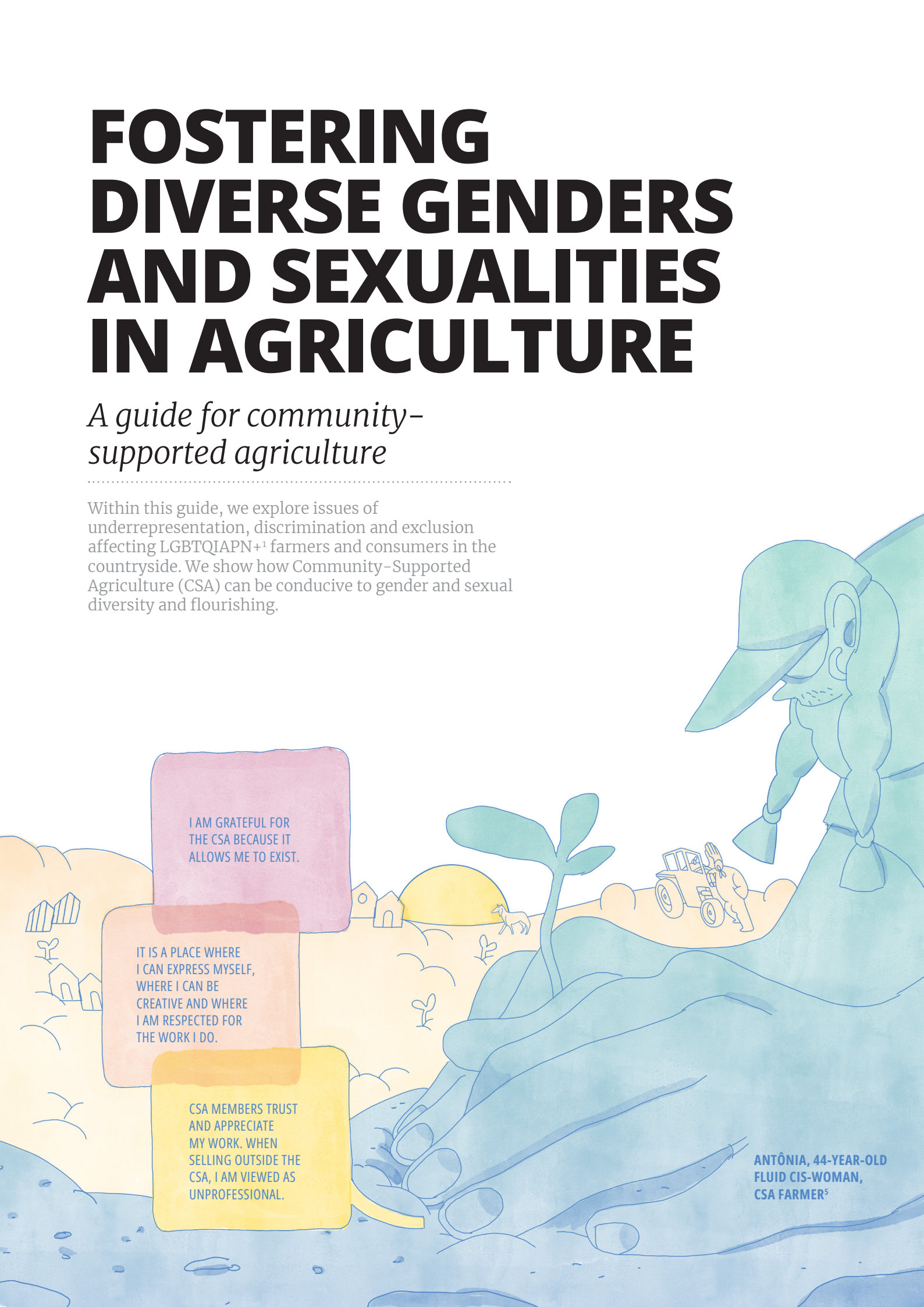


FOSTERING DIVERSE GENDERS AND SEXUALITIES IN AGRICULTURE

A guide for community-supported agriculture

Within this guide, we explore issues of underrepresentation, discrimination and exclusion affecting LGBTQIAPN+¹ farmers and consumers in the countryside. We show how Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) can be conducive to gender and sexual diversity and flourishing.



I AM GRATEFUL FOR THE CSA BECAUSE IT ALLOWS ME TO EXIST.

IT IS A PLACE WHERE I CAN EXPRESS MYSELF, WHERE I CAN BE CREATIVE AND WHERE I AM RESPECTED FOR THE WORK I DO.

CSA MEMBERS TRUST AND APPRECIATE MY WORK. WHEN SELLING OUTSIDE THE CSA, I AM VIEWED AS UNPROFESSIONAL.

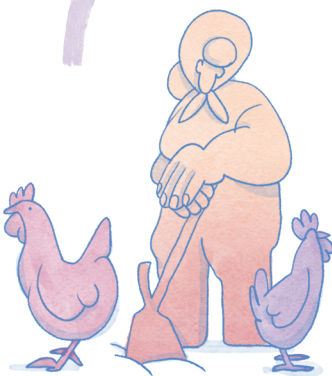
ANTÔNIA, 44-YEAR-OLD FLUID CIS-WOMAN, CSA FARMER⁵

1. Gender and sexual discrimination and inequity are barriers to sustainable agriculture

A MALE HETEROSEXUAL FARMER UNEXPECTEDLY STARTED ASKING ABOUT MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY GIRLFRIEND QUITE PROVOCATIVELY.

THAT WAS SO RANDOM. I WAS BUYING FROM HIM. WHY WOULD YOU HARASS YOUR CLIENT?

ANYWAY, I PUT DOWN MY STUFF AND DID NOT BUY FROM HIM IN THE END.



LAURA, 32-YEAR-OLD BI-SEXUAL CIS-WOMAN, CSA MEMBER⁵

The model of a conventional family farm typically shows a heterosexual couple and their nuclear family following traditional masculine and feminine roles in the family, the household and the farm. This model presupposes that cisgender (someone identifying with the sex assigned at birth) and heterosexual persons are the norm, a concept known as “heteronormativity”, and that men have more power and abilities than women, a phenomenon referred to as “patriarchy”. For example, it links masculinity to leadership in food production, commercial operations, and machinery usage while assigning femininity to subordinate roles in the fields and sales, manual labour and responsibility over unpaid housekeeping, cooking and childcare duties.

However, the heteronormative and patriarchal structures within the family farm and their implications for social inclusivity and diversity in agriculture deserve deeper questioning.

People with diverse gender and sexual identities encounter a hostile environment when pursuing farming careers. LGBTQIAPN+ farmers commonly experience both interpersonal and systemic discrimination, limiting their active participation in agriculture. Similarly, LGBTQIAPN+ consumers interested in engaging with food production might feel discouraged due to the perception of agriculture as a conservative sector. From an intersectional perspective, it is important to recognise that these experiences affect LGBTQIAPN+ persons differently depending on their gender, ethnicity/ race, class and other social markers of difference and privilege. To create a future of sustainable agriculture that benefits all genders and sexualities intersectionally, it is essential to address discrimination and inequity within the agricultural sector. This involves taking fundamental steps to ensure inclusivity and protection for LGBTQIAPN+ farmers and consumers, alongside promoting environmental sustainability.

The heteronormative and patriarchal foundations of agriculture create several barriers, such as:

- **Underrepresentation:** In many countries, the agricultural census uses binary gender measures, excluding farmers who lie on the gender spectrum, especially those who are non-binary and transgender. This reinforces an institutional bias towards cisgender and heteronormative

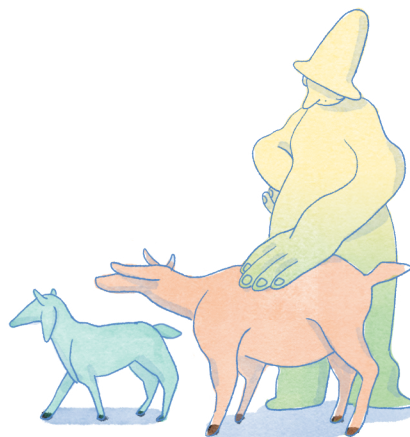
perspectives^{2,3}. As a result, the census fails to capture the needs and contributions of LGBTQIAPN+ farmers, hindering the development of policies and resources tailored to their unique requirements, like inclusive training programs and unbiased commercial opportunities.

- **Discrimination:** LGBTQIAPN+ farmers encounter discrimination in acquiring farmland and inheritance rights because they may not conform to traditional stereotypes in agriculture associated with dominating masculinity or subordinate femininity. This includes biases related to the agricultural profession, such as the assumption that only cisgender and heterosexual men are legitimate farm owners and responsible for the economic viability of the farm. This discrimination extends to difficulties in obtaining credits, loans, job opportunities, and selling produce in local markets, all stemming from non-conformity to conventional gender and identity roles in agriculture.
- **Exclusion:** Safe spaces that are free of biases and threats for LGBTQIAPN+ persons are scarce in rural areas, often limited to dating apps and hidden meeting spots. The commonly promoted slogan “out and proud” by LGBTQIAPN+ advocacy networks doesn’t align with the reality in agriculture and rural settings. LGBTQIAPN+ persons often feel compelled to downplay their sexual and gender identities to fit into rural communities and secure job opportunities in agriculture. This compromises their dignity and diminishes their ability to contribute to a thriving agricultural and rural environment.

I WANT TO LEASE LAND FOR MORE SPACE FOR THE GOATS, AND I CAN'T.

THAT'S ONLY BECAUSE I'M A WOMAN, SO THEY DON'T TRUST THAT WHAT I'M DOING IS SERIOUS.

MAYBE IF I WERE MARRIED TO A MAN, MY HUSBAND WOULD BE ABLE TO HELP ME LEASE LAND.



ANA, 39-YEAR-OLD FLUID CIS-WOMAN, CSA FARMER⁵

2. Attracting, accommodating and supporting gender and sexual diversity in CSA

I DON'T HAVE MANY SOCIAL CONNECTIONS IN THIS REGION, SO I DON'T NORMALLY EXPRESS MY SEXUALITY PUBLICLY. WHILE IN THE CSA, THE SOCIAL CONNECTIONS ARE TIGHTER, WHICH IS WHY I AM THERE WITH MY HUSBAND.

ATTRACTING GENDER AND SEXUAL DIVERSITY



MATTEO,
50-SOMETHING-YEAR-
OLD GAY CIS-MAN,
CSA MEMBER⁵

CSA is often associated with, or finds inspiration in the family farm model for structuring their operations and self-organisation. However, further engagement with gender and sexual diversity can significantly amplify the transformative potential of CSA.

While not yet widespread, CSA has the capacity to contribute to greater diversity in genders and sexualities within agriculture. Recent studies, including those in the U.S.A.², Switzerland⁴ and Portugal⁵, have highlighted the experiences of LGBTQIAPN+ farmers and consumers participating in CSA initiatives. These findings reveal the potential of CSA to provide an alternative to the conventional heteronormative and patriarchal structures in food provision.

How can CSA organisations attract, accommodate, and support gender and sexual diversity? The following questions can be used to stimulate reflection within your CSA organisation.

CSA can appeal to LGBTQIAPN+ farmers and consumers seeking inclusive and environmentally sustainable farming approaches⁵. Three key aspects of CSA stand out: (1) CSA enables solidary relations and interactions in food production, with the farming landscape and local communities in ways that reflect participants' values and principles; in turn, this opens up opportunities to articulate LGBTQIAPN+ values within CSA organisations; (2) CSA establishes partnerships between farmers and local consumers that offer economic opportunities for the LGBTQIAPN+ population entering the farming world; (3) CSAs self-organise, which can allow LGBTQIAPN+ people to negotiate their position in local communities.

- How could community relationships, farmer-consumer partnerships and self-organisation within your CSA organisation become more inclusive of gender and sexual diversity?
- How can you encourage dialogue between LGBTQIAPN+ farmers, local consumers, and your CSA organisation?
- In what ways could your CSA organisation adjust the language, visuals, and values in internal and external communication (ex., in newsletters, social media, and at farm events) to be more appealing for LGBTQIAPN+ farmers and consumers?

ACCOMODATING GENDER AND SEXUAL DIVERSITY

CSA can create safe environments that are free of biases and threats for LGBTQIAPN+ farmers and consumers. In these spaces, participants can feel complete, freely express emotions and opinions, actively contribute to agriculture and help feed communities. Achieving this requires the intentional design of daily routines, task allocation and collective decision-making, to reduce discrimination and exclusion, particularly related to gender and sexual diversity. In turn, when LGBTQIAPN+ participants assume leadership roles within CSA, they can inspire broader inclusion throughout the organisation.

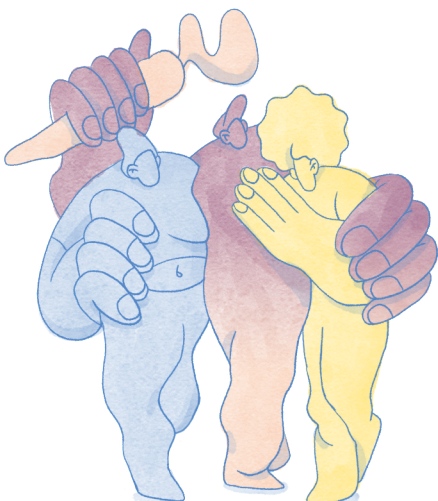
- Who is assigned which responsibilities in your CSA organisation? Who benefits from the current work distribution, and who does not? To what extent does it reflect the conventional heteronormative and patriarchal structures in family, household and farm operations? Are all the members comfortable with the current work distribution?
- How could gender and sexuality dimensions be prioritised in the political agenda of your CSA organisation? How might these considerations align with and complement other concerns such as food sovereignty, treating food as a commons, and promoting agroecology?

SUPPORTING GENDER AND SEXUAL DIVERSITY

CSA can contribute to *queering*⁶ agriculture and the countryside. CSA organisations rely on recurrent meetings between members to distribute produce, make decisions, support farming work, and organise convivial moments. These events often happen on farms, bringing together members living in urban and rural areas alike. Thus, CSA farms become spaces not only for farming but also community-building. A CSA organisation may “raise the queer flag” and declare themselves as inclusive spaces for gender and sexual diversity or instead “keep the queer flag low” to prevent conflict or controversy. These approaches can elicit both positive and negative reactions from local residents. In addition, CSAs can open their doors to the public or participate in events such as LGBTQIAPN+ farmers network meetings or festivals, contributing to the support of gender and sexual diversity in the countryside.

- What are the pros and cons of openly embracing or downplaying gender and sexual diversity within the local context of your CSA organisation?
- Are there any LGBTQIAPN+ advocacy organisations and networks or festivals in your region? How can your CSA form alliances with these groups, and how might these partnerships contribute to inclusivity and diversity in your CSA organisation, in agriculture and the countryside?

VALERIA, 32-YEAR-OLD
BI-SEXUAL CIS-WOMEN,
CSA MEMBER⁵



AS THE LEADING PRODUCERS OF THE CSA, ANA AND ANTÓNIA ARE SETTING AN EXAMPLE BY SHOWING THEIR HOMOSEXUALITY VERY NATURALLY AND NOT HIDING IT.

WHEN QUEER PEOPLE LIKE ME ENTER THE CSA, WE ARE NOT CREATING ANYTHING NEW. WE ARE JUST ANOTHER QUEER PERSON.

ATTRACT GENDER AND SEXUAL DIVERSITY

REINFORCING INCLUSIVITY IN COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS, PARTNERSHIPS AND ORGANISATION OF CSA

FACILITATING DIALOGUE BETWEEN LGBTQIAPN+ FARMERS, CONSUMERS, AND CSA ORGANISATIONS

ADJUSTING THE CSA COMMUNICATION TO APPEAL TO LGBTQIAPN+ PERSONS

ACCOMMODATE GENDER AND SEXUAL DIVERSITY

DISTRIBUTING TASKS IN WAYS THAT ARE COMFORTABLE FOR LGBTQIAPN+ MEMBERS

CREATING SYNERGIES BETWEEN GENDER AND SEXUAL DIVERSITY AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE IN THE POLITICAL AGENDA OF CSA

SUPPORT GENDER AND SEXUAL DIVERSITY

EVALUATING THE PROS AND CONS OF SHOWCASING GENDER AND SEXUAL DIVERSITY IN CSA

CREATING ALLIANCES BETWEEN CSA AND LGBTQIAPN+ ORGANISATIONS, NETWORKS AND FESTIVALS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

CSA CAN!

DISCRIMINATION

UNDER REPRESENTATION

EXCLUSION

PROBLEMS

3. Resources, endnotes and credits

RESOURCES

These are helpful materials to further explore the intersection of gender and sexual diversity, agriculture and CSA.

▪ Introduction to the intersection of gender, sexuality and agriculture

- [Farming for Justice: Queering Sustainable Ag](#) (EN | video)
- [Queering the Countryside: New Frontiers in Rural Queer Studies](#) (EN | book)
- [RWD#11 Humble Hands Harvest / Queer Farmer Network - Hannah Breckbill](#) (EN | podcast)
- [Recognizing Queer Farmers in Food System Transformation](#) (EN | blog)

▪ LGBTQIAPN+ experiences in agriculture

- [A queer, trans farmer cultivating joy and greater diversity in agriculture](#) (EN | podcast)
- [Embracing rural diversity: Genders and Sexualities](#) (EN | brochure)
- [Do zero: Rosa e Raquel - pão com amor a partir do Alentejo](#) (PT | blog)
- [Landless LGBT: Love Makes Revolution](#) (PT | video)
- [Radishes and rainbows: the LGBTQ growers reimaging the traditional family farm](#) (EN | reportage in The Guardian)
- [Dans la Vienne, une Marche des fiertés pour rendre visible la communauté LGBT+ dans les campagnes](#) (FR | reportage in Le Monde)

▪ Examples of LGBTQIAPN+ inclusive CSA

- [Rock Steady Farm](#) (USA)
- [Milkweed Farm](#) (USA)
- [Transgenerational Farm](#) (USA)
- [Sweet Digz Farm](#) (Canada)

▪ LGBTQIAPN+ advocacy organisations, networks and festivals in the countryside

- [Festival Agrocuir](#) (Spain)
- [Fiertés Rurales](#) (France)
- [Queer Farmers Network](#) (USA)
- [ELAN](#) (Germany)

WHAT ATTRACTED ME TO THE CSA WAS THE GROUP OF PEOPLE IN IT, WITH WHOM I SHARED A COMMON INTEREST IN FOOD AND HOW TO TREAT THE EARTH AND ONE ANOTHER.

HOWEVER, IT WAS AMAZING TO REALISE THAT MANY WERE QUEER LIKE ME LIVING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE!



MIGUEL, 40-YEAR-OLD GAY CIS-MAN, CSA MEMBER⁵

ENDNOTES

¹ LGBTQIAPN+ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Pansexual, Non-binary and other gender and sexual underrepresented communities.

² Hoffmeyer, M., Wypler, J., & Leslie, I. (2023). Surveying queer farmers: How heteropatriarchy affects farm viability and farmer well-being in US agriculture. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 12(3), 1-15.

³ For a European example, see the case of Portugal. INE (Instituto Nacional de Estatística). 2021. *Recenseamento Agrícola, Análise dos principais resultados: 2019*. Lisbon: INE

⁴ Pfammatter, P., & Jongerden, J. (2023). Beyond farming women: queering gender, work and family farms. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 1-13.

⁵ Raj, G., 2024. Selective, reciprocal and quiet. Lessons from rural queer empowerment in community-supported agriculture. *Agriculture and Human Values*, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-024-10552-9>.

⁶ By queering agriculture and the countryside, we mean disrupting or challenging established ideas about what is considered normal or acceptable in these spaces, fostering inclusivity, diversity, and support for LGBTQIAPN+ people (see Gray, M. L., Johnson, C. R., & Gilley, B. J. (Eds.). (2016). *Queering the countryside: New frontiers in rural queer studies* (Vol. 11). NYU Press.)

CREDITS

This work is based on a research project conducted by Guilherme Raj at Utrecht University, The Netherlands (<https://unmaking.sites.uu.nl/about/phd-research-projects/phd-research-project-power-in-the-unmaking-of-capitalism/>). This research has examined power relations from the perspective of a total of 12 LGBTQIAPN+ farmers and consumers within a CSA organisation in Portugal. The research was part of the project UNMAKING (<https://unmaking.sites.uu.nl>) at Utrecht University, funded by the European Research Council (Starting Grant 802441) and by the Dutch Research Council (NWO) (grant 016.Vidi.185.073). Guilherme Raj and Giuseppe Feola authored this brochure; design by www.bomburo.com.

