

Vernon Peterson
Kingsburg, Calif.
Abundant Harvest Organics
Type of Operation: Direct-to-consumer organic products, produce and peaches
Size of Operation: 5,300 customers
In Business Since: 2007 (Abundant Harvest Organics)
Farm Credit Partner: Golden State Farm Credit
Working with Farm Credit Since: 1989



Lifelong farmer Vernon Peterson has built a successful new business that brings fresh, organic produce from local farmers directly to his California customers through a subscription-based approach, becoming an active member of the growing Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) movement.

His company, Abundant Harvest Organics, selects seasonal produce from local, certified organic farmers and then assembles individual boxes filled with the healthy and chemical-free food. Vernon himself, who switched from conventional to organic methods in 2003, supplies peaches, produce and chickens to the company. The boxes are delivered weekly to a small number of “Community Hosts” throughout the company’s service area for individual customers to then pick up. More than just a delivery arm, these hosts also become part of the sales force, earning a percentage of the sales they generate.

After five years of steady growth, Abundant Harvest currently has 5,300 customers. One significant factor in this growth is the reasonable cost of the service: Abundant Harvest requires only an initial \$30 deposit on the plastic bin used for delivery, and a weekly fee of just \$22 for a small box, which feeds two people for a week, and \$37 for a large box, which feeds four people. Customers are empowered to manage their account online, and can choose to skip deliveries with no penalty, or request to add a variety of “Add Ons” to their delivery.

“I was positive I could deliver a good organic product for what people were paying for conventional produce, and we’ve been able to realize that,” Vernon says. “That’s because we’ve gone around the traditional packaging and sorting process, bringing the product directly from the grower to the consumer.”

Abundant Harvest is a boon to its growers, as well. Not only are they paid a good price for their crops, they are assured a market. To further support this, the company conducts quarterly meetings with their growers where they decide which crops each will be growing, thus avoiding over-supply. More, Abundant Harvest agrees to a price before the farmers even plant the seed, and they’re paid for their crop the day they deliver it.

Consumers, too, benefit from these relationships: rather than depending on the crops from a single operation, Abundant Harvest has alliances with nearly 20 farms, each of which grows multiple crops. “The average American eats 12 to 15 different produce items in a year,” Vernon says. “Our customers get that in a week.”