



## ASAT Romania: a community supported agriculture model for sustainable food systems

[www.asatromania.ro](http://www.asatromania.ro)

### From AMAP to ASAT

ASAT (Association for the Support of Peasantry Agriculture) is a Romanian community-supported agriculture initiative that connects groups of urban consumers with sustainable small-scale farms from proximity rural territory to ensure access to clean, fresh, locally produced food through an equitable partnership (<https://asatromania.ro>). ASAT is the first community-supported agriculture (CSA) network in Romania, and still one of the few CSA advocates in the country.

The first ASAT was initiated in 2007 in Timisoara, in the aftermath of a public meeting with Denise Vuillon, hosted by the local Town Hall. Denise and Daniel Vuillon were the first farmers to implement a Local Solidarity-based Partnerships for Agroecology in France, an experience inspirational for the development of AMAP network (*Associations pour le maintien d'une agriculture paysanne in French - Association for Maintaining Small Scale Family Farming*)<sup>1</sup>, starting 2001 in Ollioules commune of southern France.<sup>2</sup> Between 2007-2008, Denise Vuillon made 4 visits in Romania, to present AMAP model in different towns, and even to the Romanian Agriculture Department. She was visiting Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Sibiu, Târgu Mureş, and Timisoara. Only in the last town she found sufficient volunteer resources and the willingness of citizens to test the model.



The launch of ASAT in Romania was facilitated by the transfer of information and experience between small farmers in France and Romania, exchange supported by Council of Europe, through Territories of co-responsibility project promoting models of sustainable development<sup>3</sup>, and URGENCI<sup>4</sup>, a network of CSA networks of all over the world.<sup>5</sup>

The first ASAT partnership was launched and piloted between 2008 and 2010 with 20 families of consumers. By 2013, there were 11 ASAT partnerships nationwide,

and the number continued to grow.

<sup>1</sup>Denise Vuillon, 2011, L'histoire de la première AMAP, L'Harmattan, Paris, 43-65

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.olivades.com/>

<sup>3</sup> Vuillon, 2011, 186

<sup>4</sup> Vuillon, 2011, 182

<sup>5</sup> <https://urgenci.net/about-urgenci/>



In 2014, ASAT was officially registered as a legal entity and became a member of the URGENCI network for community-supported agriculture. The organization introduced the use of at least 30% traditional seeds in its partnerships in 2014. Over the years, ASAT has expanded its partnerships, including complementary producers of fruits, cheese, and natural syrups. The organization adopted the European Declaration of Community-Supported Agriculture in 2016.

Between 2008 and 2014 the ASAT network had no legal status and functioned as an informal association of consumers and producers guided by a **common Carta**, supporting small-scale agriculture to contribute to the development of a socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable farming system.

### ASAT as part of CSAs & Local Solidarity-based Partnerships for Agroecology network

Established in 2008 by a group of consumers and activists, ASAT is the first community-supported agriculture (CSA) initiative in Romania, aiming to develop local solidarity partnerships between urban consumers and local holders, fostering a sustainable small-scale farming model. These partnerships are collaborative models of production and distribution of food, referred to as Local Solidarity-based Partnerships for Agroecology (LSPAs).<sup>6</sup>

Solidarity partnerships represent **collaborative agreements** between consumers and local producers, allowing consumers to subscribe to consistent deliveries of seasonal produce from a designated farmer. This arrangement not only aids farmers in planning their production effectively but also ensures them a stable income. In return, consumers enjoy access to fresh, seasonal vegetables and establish a direct relationship with the producer. Originating in Japanese movement of Teikey in the 1970s, CSA has since spread globally, including to Europe and the United States, these partnerships typically function on an annual subscription model, where consumers pay upfront for a season's supply of produce. This approach helps cover production costs and provides financial stability to farmers ([CSA4EUrope Handbook.pdf](#)).

ASAT promotes agroecological practices ([www.asatromania.ro](http://www.asatromania.ro)), ensuring that produce is grown using traditional, agroecological, or certified organic methods, emphasizing the importance of educating both consumers and producers about sustainable agriculture and maintaining transparency. Additionally, ASAT underscores the importance of cooperation between producers and consumers, highlighting the concept of risk and benefit sharing. In this framework, both consumers and farmers share the risks and benefits associated with agricultural production, fostering a sense of community and mutual support.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://urgenci.net/about-us/>



ASAT Romania nourishes a critical movement for maintaining local small-scale food producers, building alternatives of solidarity economy. ASAT partnerships are based on the desire to **preserve social and environmental capital**, as guarantees of good quality local food, and of autonomy and sustainable farming.

The association aims to increase opportunities for smallholders in terms of **fair price, and access to decent living conditions**.

**ASAT between 2007 and 2025:**



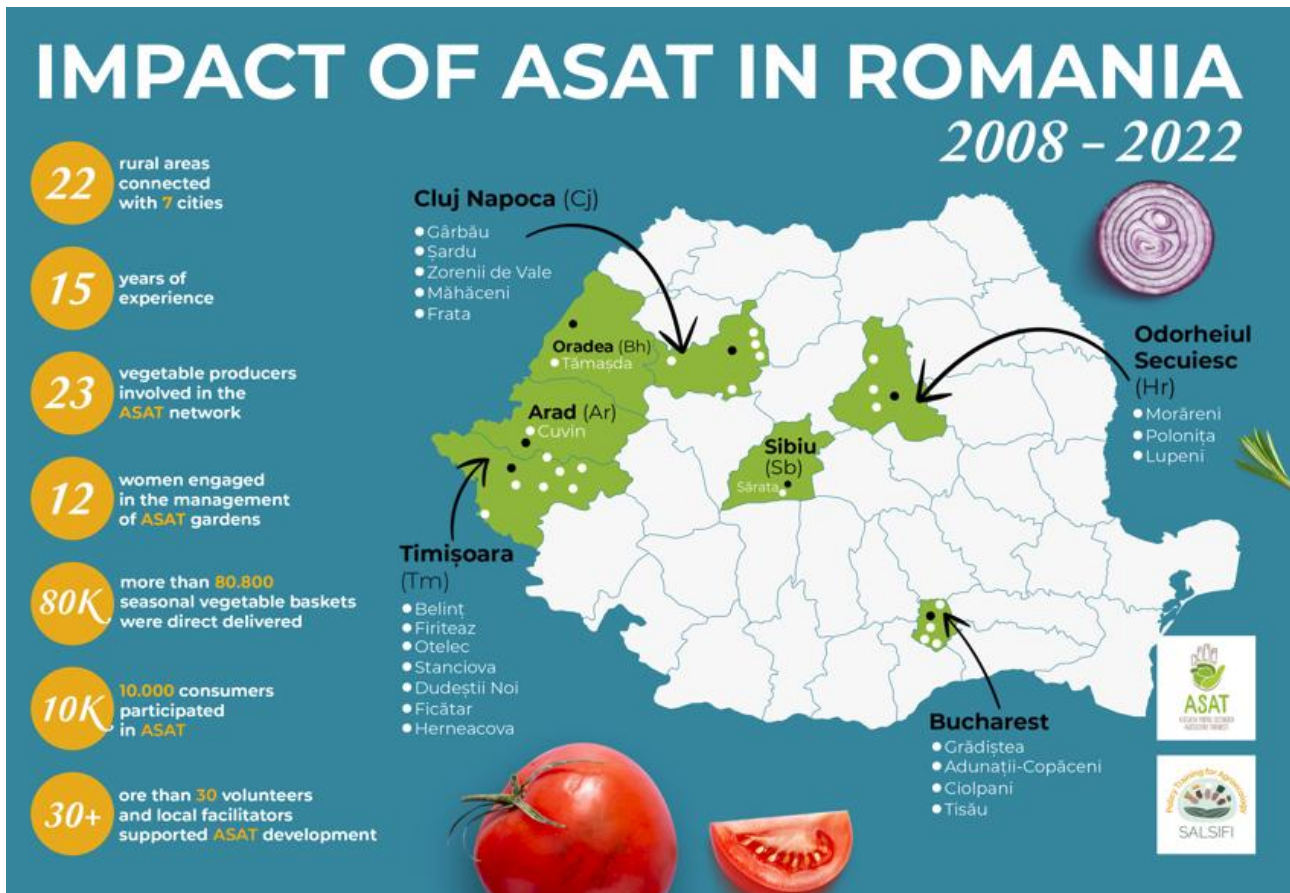
- **2007:** Denise Vuillon (producer and founder of AMAP France) presents the ASAT model in Timișoara;
- **2008-2010:** launch and piloting of the first ASAT partnership (with 20 consumer families);
- **2013:** there are 11 ASAT partnerships in Romania and the 12th is being initiated;
- **2014-2015:** the ASAT association is registered as a legal entity and becomes a member of the international community supported agriculture network, Urgenci; the use of a minimum of 30% traditional seeds in ASAT partnerships is introduced;
- **2016:** the number of ASAT partnerships is

increasing at the national level, complementary producers are joining constantly (fruits, cheeses and natural syrups); The European Declaration of Community Supported Agriculture is adopted by all Urgenci members;

- **2017-2018:** ASAT national meetings take place in Odorheiu Secuiesc and Timisoara;
- **2019:** ASAT participates in the 7th international symposium of Community Supported Agriculture;
- **2024:** 15 years of ASAT in Romania (national meeting at Timisoara, facilitated by CRIES);



- **2010-2025:** new ASAT partnerships are initiated in Timișoara, Cluj-Napoca, Oradea, Bucharest, Sibiu, Odorheiu-Secuiesc, Arad, a total of 23 producers, of which 12 are women. Partnerships are based on annual contracts with more than 2,200 consumer families





### Financing:

ASAT operates as a collaborative initiative where decisions are made collectively between producers and consumers. Funding sources include:

- **own funds** (membership fees, consumers fees);
- **EU funds (specific projects):**
  - Voice for CSA (2018-2019) – founded by Erasmus +;
  - Salsifi (2020-2023) – founded by European Commission;
  - Looking UP (2024 – 2025) – founded by Erasmus +.

### Governance & Team:

**The ASAT association currently consists of 12 members: 9 consumers and 3 producers. The Board of Directors for the 2023-2026 is composed of:**

- Marius Cobarzan – president;
- Brindusa Birhala – vice-president;
- Sergiu Florean – general secretary.



## Partners and Networks:

ASAT has a close partnership with **CRIES Association** ([www.cries.ro](http://www.cries.ro)), its founding organization and a key promoter of community supported agriculture (CSA) in Romania. CRIES (Center for Resources for Ethical and Solidarity-Based Initiatives) played a crucial role in developing the first ASAT partnership and continues to support the network through research, advocacy and educational activities. The collaboration between ASAT and CRIES strengthens efforts to promote **sustainable food systems, ethical consumption, and direct producer-consumer relationships**. Through this partnership, ASAT benefits from CRIES expertise in social economy, food sovereignty and public policies, ensuring a solid foundation for the long-term development of the CSA model in Romania.



As a national network for community supported agriculture, ASAT association is a member of the international **URGENCI network** ([www.urgenci.net](http://www.urgenci.net)), which is present in 32 European countries. The members of this network are local or national organizations that coordinate various forms of solidarity partnerships for agroecology, the most well-known being community supported agriculture (CSA). The main objective of URGENCI is **to develop a transnational network of regional and local partnerships between producers and consumers**. The core activity of the network is **education**. Sharing experiences and educational materials is a top priority to support local groups in improving their practices and in building a strong pan-European and global community.

As an association that includes urban consumers (alongside small rural producers), ASAT is part of the **Nyeléni movement for food sovereignty** ([www.nyeleni-eca.net](http://www.nyeleni-eca.net)) at the regional level in Europe and Central Asia. This is a political and social alliance of grassroots and community-based movements and organizations that represent small-scale producers: peasants/small farmers, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, small-scale fishers, agricultural and food workers. It also supports social groups such as the urban poor, women's and youth organizations from both rural and urban areas, consumer groups, environmental, justice, solidarity, and human rights organizations, as well as community-based food movements that politically adhere to the principles of food sovereignty.



Food sovereignty was originally defined by the international peasant movement La Via Campesina as a response to the concept of "food security" and signifies "the right of people to healthy and culturally appropriate food, produced through ecological and sustainable methods, as

well as their right to define their own agri-food systems." This concept prioritizes local production and consumption, as well as a series of rights related to food production that should be in the hands of small-scale producers rather than large corporations.



## Our Focus: ASAT Partnerships

An ASAT partnership is a **collaboration between a producer and a group of consumers to support small-scale farming**, with the goal of preserving and sustaining local farms through a model of sustainable agriculture. It is, in essence, a form of peasant farming that is socially fair and beneficial for both consumers and the environment.

Each ASAT partnership **brings together a group of consumers and a local producer in a commitment-based contract**. Through this agreement, each consumer purchases a share of the farmer's production at the beginning of the season, receiving regular deliveries of fresh produce at a stable price. The producer, in turn, commits to delivering high-quality products in accordance with the ASAT Carta principles.

Consumers contribute in advance to a portion of the **annual subscription cost**, directly supporting production expenses and providing financial stability for small-scale producers. This upfront investment ensures that producers can focus on sustainable agricultural practices without the burden of financial uncertainty.

In return, **the farmer is supported throughout an entire growing season by the consumer group**, to whom they provide a weekly basket of fresh, locally grown vegetables.

This strong commitment between both parties – combined with collective management, transparency, fair pricing and advance payment – creates a resilient system where both the benefits and risks of responsible, local food production are shared.

The **direct relationship between consumers and farmers** at the core of this model contributes to a fairer and more sustainable food system, centered on local production. Consumers share equally in the harvest from a specific agroecologically cultivated area, managed transparently by the small-scale producer. This form of cooperation between urban and rural citizens enhances access to healthy, locally produced food grown using traditional, agroecological, or even certified organic farming practices.



An ASAT partnership aims to provide consumers with access to high-quality food at a fair price while enabling them to make informed choices about how their food is produced. At the same time, consumers actively contribute to the preservation and development of local agricultural activities in line with sustainable development principles.