



## Vermont Farmers' Market Association (VTFMA) 2012-2013 Report

The VTFMA has had a very successful 2012-2013 working session, meeting monthly October - April. On a per-capita basis, Vermont is number one in the country in direct marketing. Self-reported numbers of markets to NOFA-VT demonstrated 34 in 2001, 63 in 2008, 87 in 2010, and 83 in 2013. In 2012, roughly half of the markets in the state completed the Annual Survey, reporting gross sales of \$8,309,040.32 (41 markets reporting). Data for 2013 is still in the process of being collected and will be available by late spring 2014.

Below is a list of this season's highlights:

**VTFMA Annual Meeting** – The VTFMA's 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting took place on January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013 at NOFA-VT's Direct Marketing Conference. This meeting was the most well attended yet! Over 35 markets (some representing both summer and winter) were present, nearly half of the markets in the state. The main focus of this year's meeting was to get feedback on best practices the Board developed over the session. Markets were very receptive and appreciative of VTFMA being included in the process. See below for more information on the best practices documents. In addition, new board members were nominated and elected, see attached list of current VTFMA board members.

**Best Practices Guides** – During the 2012-2013 session, the VTFMA board created a series of three best practices documents to guide the work of Vermont farmers' markets. These documents are intended as guides, not standards. The intention of the VTFMA with these guides is to promote ideas for marketing, governance, and safety practices that if followed will help markets thrive. The board hopes that these prove useful for markets throughout the state and are interested in expanding to additional guides in the future.

**VTFMA Membership** – 2012 marks the first year for the VTFMA to have paying members. Prior to 2012, all Vermont markets were automatically considered members. Now, markets that meet the state definition are able to join the VTFMA for a small fee (sliding scale \$50-\$150). Please see the attached membership benefits page. In 2012, the VTFMA had 58 member markets, representing over half of the farmers' markets in the state!

**Statewide Promotions** –As a benefit of membership in the VTFMA, all member markets received a listing on the new DigInVermont website. VTFMA is a member of the Vermont Agriculture and Culinary Tourism Board which oversees this website and has provided critical input on the marketing of this new resource. An on-line farmers market directory is compiled annually. The VTFMA collaborated with the EBT at Farmers' Market working group to promote both statewide markets in general and also EBT availability at approximately half of these markets. In addition, all member markets will receive a member sign to display at their market and will also have free use of the VTFMA 'Member' Logo.

**Feature Markets** – Through the VTFMA website ([www.vtfma.org](http://www.vtfma.org)), VTFMA facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/VTFMA>), NOFA-VT facebook page and NOFA-VT blog site different markets are featured to highlight the variety and quality of farmers markets in the state.

**2013-2014 Focus** - In the 2013-2014 season, the priority areas of the VTFMA are to :

1. Strategic planning of the role of the VTFMA in statewide farmers' market work,
2. Continue to identify resource needs for farmers markets & develop plans for meeting those needs,
3. Examine other types of markets (ie. online markets) and how they fit into the state statute and VTFMA membership,
4. Explore other market models (ie. markets as wholesale distribution points)
5. Continue and expand statewide promotion.

## **Purpose of the Vermont Farmers Market Association (VTFMA)**

The purpose of the VTFMA is to encourage and establish successful farmers markets in Vermont that enhance direct marketing opportunities for market vendors while building direct connections between vendors and local consumers.

NOFA-VT serves as the staff and fiscal agent of the VTFMA.

## **Benefits of membership in the VTFMA:** *- 60 members*

### **1. Statewide promotion of farmers markets:** all member markets will be:

- Listed in a statewide brochure developed in partnership with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Travel and Tourism, NOFA-VT and the VTFMA
- Listed on DigInVT's web-site, a new promotional site developed by the Vermont Agriculture and Culinary Tourism Council. NOFA-VT/VTFMA has been a member of the Council, and to be listed on the site, markets have to be a member of one of the organizations of the Council. The site listing fee (\$10/market) will be embedded in the VTFMA membership fee;
- Promoted on the VTFMA website (www.vtfma.org)
- Featured in statewide press releases, National Farmers Market Week activities, and promoted with social media
- Receive a 25% discounted membership in the Farmers Market Coalition (FMC), a national resource for farmers markets
- Have use of the VTFMA member market logo and marketing materials (in development)

### **2. Networking opportunities among farmers markets:**

- VTFMA listserv
- Annual meeting of farmers markets
- Regional gatherings to develop farmers market learning communities

### **3. A collective voice for Vermont farmers markets,** advocating for markets statewide and serving as a legislative voice.

### **4. Access to educational opportunities:**

- Discounted registration for 1 member per market at the Direct Marketing Conference or regional workshops.
- Discounted registration at manager professional development trainings and board member trainings (in development)
- Participation in market mentor program (in development)

### **5. Financial assistance for farmers markets**

- Eligible to apply for farmers market mini-grants administered by NOFA-VT
- Discounts on annual bulk order of market supplies (in development).

VTFMA Membership guidelines: There may be one board representative per member market. A member market is defined as any market that meets the membership criteria.  
*Adopted by the VTFMA Board, February 17, 2011*

## **State criteria for defining a farmers markets and membership eligibility in VTFMA:**

- 1) Two or more producers of Vermont agricultural products according to 11V.S.A.991 (Vermont State Statute)
- 2) Market has formal process for participation in the market
- 3) Market meets for five or more regularly scheduled times
- 4) Market participates in submission of annual survey (including annual gross sales, vendor mix, etc.)
- 5) Market has a process for communicating vendor responsibility to comply with all applicable health and safety standards
- 6) Cultivates an awareness of market-wide best practices
- 7) Annual dues paid (see membership fees below).
- 8) All fee paying vendors of the market will sell products that are locally produced (as defined by the Vermont Statute)

### Clarifying notes:

- Local products can be purchased for resale at a farmers market; the VTFMA recommends working towards 100% producer only markets as a best practice. (Written best practices are currently in development.)
- The Vermont Agency of Agriculture are the state regulators and enforcers and farmers markets work in partnership with the state.

*Adopted by the VTFMA Board, March 23, 2011*

## **Membership Categories & Fees**

There are two categories of membership in the VTFMA, market membership and sponsoring members (Friend of the VTFMA).

1. *Market member:* a Market Member is defined as any market that meets the membership criteria. Market membership fees are on a sliding scale from \$50-\$150, with the exception that the fee for new, start-up markets will be waived for their first membership year. We ask markets to pay as they are able, with general guidelines as follows: small markets pay \$50, medium markets pay \$100 and large markets pay \$150. While we understand that this may be out of the reach of some markets, please decide what your market can afford within the sliding scale as we want the VTFMA to be accessible to all. At this time all benefits are available at all levels.
2. *Sponsoring member:* a Sponsoring Member is a person or organization other than a farmers market that pays annual dues and supports the purpose of the VTFMA. The Sponsoring Member may not be a voting member of the VTFMA or a member of the board. Sponsoring memberships are \$25 a year.

**Membership Fees** are due annually on January 15.

VTFMA Board of Directors

Name	Market	Email
<b>Kevin Thompson</b> 3 <sup>rd</sup> term, ending spring, 2015	Capital City	kevin05602@gmail.com
<b>Bushrod Powers</b> 3 <sup>rd</sup> term, ending spring, 2015	South Royalton	bushrod.powers@gmail.com
<b>Sherry Maher</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> term, ending spring 2014	Brattleboro Winter and Townsend	samaher@vermontel.net
<b>Curtis Sjolander</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> term, ending spring 2014	Caledonia	seedy.sjo@gmail.com
<b>Jack Stouffer</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> term, ending spring, 2014	Jay	deceased
<b>Kelly King</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> term, ending spring, 2014	Jericho	jerichofarmersmarket@gmail.com
<b>Steve Hoffman</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> term, ending spring 2014	Norwich	manager@norwichfarmersmarket.org
<b>Brooke Decker</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> term, ending spring 2014	West River	brooke@vermontel.net
<b>Luisse Graf</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> term, ending spring 2015	Groton Growers	mothrnatur@tops-tele.com

**MARKET SAFETY BEST PRACTICES**  
**Vermont Farmers' Market Association**  
**May 2013**

**FOOD SAFTY**

**Farmers' Market: Management, Directors, Staff and Volunteers:**

- Should include in the market guidelines a section that states: “vendors *are responsible for compliance with all* Rules and Regulations of the State of Vermont.”
- Should include in the market guidelines a section that states: “vendors are responsible for compliance/possession of all required licenses. Information about the most common licenses is listed below, by Agency. A complete document of State Rules and Regulations is updated annually and is available here.
  - It should not be the requirement or the expectation of the board or market manager to enforce the health and safety requirements, but the responsibility of the vendors to research and choose to display/sell their product in a safe and legal manner.
- Each year the vendor application should require the signature of the vendor stating they have read and understand the guidelines and agree to adhere to them.
- Should have General Liability Insurance aka Commercial Liability. Policies cover *only* losses associated with the market site.
- Should consider having each farmers' market vendor sign a Hold Harmless Clause/General Release/Product Liability Release form that includes compliance with State Rules and Regulations and for selling their individual food products.
- Market Manager should be aware of the common State Rules and Regulations governing farmers' markets and assist vendors to meet these Standards and Best Practices
  - Refer vendors to State Regulations for Selling at Farmers Markets: A Guide for Market Managers and Vendors.
  - Special cases may require additional rules and permits to be researched by the vendor.

**Vendor:**

- Vendors are responsible for compliance with Rules and Regulations of the State of Vermont and must be in compliance and in possession of any licenses that may apply.” An excerpt of information about the most common licenses is listed below, by Agency.
- Vendors should each have Product Liability Insurance (more info here). This insurance product covers the individual vendor for the products they make/sell, as well as anything that could happen to a customer as a result of their vending stand or space.

**Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets**

- Dairy Products: contact the Dairy Division @ 1-802-828-2433
  - Licenses required:
    - Milk Handler's License for anyone selling dairy products they produce.
    - Retail License to sell prepackaged product.
    - Frozen Dessert License for ice cream and other frozen dairy products.
- Meat Products: except Game Birds, Rabbits and Venison. Contact the Meat Inspection @ 1-802-828-2426.
  - Licenses required:
    - Farmers' Market Retail License for red meat and inspected poultry.

- Uninspected poultry – no license needed, but all labeling requirements of 6VSA #3312 that apply to their product.
- Eggs: contact the Consumer Assurance Section @ 1-802-828-2436
- Scale Certification: contact the Consumer Assurance Section @ 1-802-828-2436
- Labeled Products: contact the Consumer Assurance Section @ 1-802-828-2436

### **Department of Health**

- Baked Goods: contact the Food and Lodging Program @ 1-800-439-8550
  - *Home Baking License*, same requirements as Home Catering License. Unless gross sales are less than \$125 a week, averaged over entire year.
- Prepared Foods: contact the Food and Lodging Program @ 1-800-439-8550
  - Licenses required:
    - *Fair Stand License*: covers those who wish to do the food preparation at the Farmer's Market.
    - *Home Caterers License*: covers those who wish to prepare food at home and bring it to the Farmer's Market, packaged and ready for sale.
- Vendors selling to Restaurants: Contact the Food and Lodging Program @ 1-800-439-8550.

### **GROUNDS SAFETY**

#### **Farmers' Market: Management, Directors, Staff and Volunteers:**

- Have a safe, family friendly environment.
- Consider easily accessed customer traffic aisles.
- Recognize the need for a market common area.
- Have an Emergency Plan for the unexpected incident in the market place.
- Be aware of the boundaries of designated vendor spaces.
- Have solid footing materials for the entrance areas giving special considerations to vehicles, the elderly and small children.
  - Be aware of mud and slippery ground in high-traffic walking areas and mark them appropriately.
- Have a bicycle policy:
  - Consider no riding through the market area.
  - Consider offering designated bike parking space.
- Support clean environment practices:
  - Trash collection containers.
  - Access to bathrooms.
  - Policy for dogs – owners' to pick-up after animals.
  - Recycling containers.
- Examine customer - vendor vehicle intersections.
  - No vehicles should be driven in the farmers' market vending area during market hours.
    - Ensure safe environment for vendors entering and departing the market area.
- Required to have necessary General Limited Liability Insurance (Commercial Liability) (more info [here](#)):
  - Commercial Liability Insurance covers the market site, but does not cover individual vendor space and/or product liability concerns.
  - Strongly suggest that vendors obtain a Product Liability Insurance Policy to cover incidences under the vendor's canopy and product liability concerns.
- Require tents, umbrellas, vendor signs, and displays to be well secured.

- Maintain contact with state and town officials around parking, market access, and traffic flow concerns.

**Vendors:**

- Be aware of the boundaries of the designated vendor space.
- Strongly suggested that vendors obtain Product Liability Insurance Policy to cover incidences under the vendor's canopy and product liability concerns.
- REQUIRE tents, umbrellas, vendor signs, and displays to be well secured.
  - Consider safe and appropriate placement as well as visibility of all tie-downs to safeguard against customer injury.

**MARKETING BEST PRACTICES**  
**Vermont Farmers' Market Association**  
**April 2013**

**Top Considerations**

- What is your market's mission/purpose? Know the details of your market so that you can tell your market's story.
- How is advertising money typically best spent? Market assessments consistently conclude that good signage and word of mouth are the top ways people learn about the market.
- Consider how markets start, grow and sustain themselves. All markets are different with varied budgets and resources available. Make decisions that fit the scale and character of your market.

**Signage**

- Have attractive signage, permanent if possible, at your site and/or directing people to your site.
- Good visibility for people passing by.
- Check NOFA-VT website under Farmers Market Resources for their Market Signage Guidelines document
- Understand the 2009 sign law regarding farmers' market signs passed by the Vermont State Legislature as it pertains to your market and your market's situation (see VT sign legislation summary below).

**Posters & Other Print Materials**

- Places to post: on community bulletin boards, at churches, food coops, coffee shops, bookstores, libraries, banks, other market-friendly merchants, and community partners in your area.
- Mix it up with different looking posters and check back often as many come down after two weeks.
- Take home items – recipes, brochures, ¼ page date reminders with the market logo, refrigerator magnets, etc.
- Encourage Vendors to have take home info about their farms and/or products.

**Press/Media Publicity**

- Build a media list for your area; categorize types, note contacts, deadlines, etc.
- Paid advertising, even if only periodic, will get you more non-paid coverage from media outlets.
- Small papers will often print press releases you send. Make sure to include a photo.
- Use events at the market as reason to send out frequent press releases.
- Build relationships with local editors, reporters and ad sales people.
- Get on regular calendar listings in local print, radio, public-access TV, local informational websites and other outlets.

**Community Engagement**

- Build community partnerships. These bring news attention and new groups to the market.
- Active engagement in the community gets you more press coverage – schools, master gardeners, church groups, photo clubs, gleaning group, etc.
- Think about how your market serves other local groups & businesses?
- Be a joiner – CCC, other community organizations. If you support them, they may also support you.
- Actively create relationships with local officials, ie. Town Govt., Highway Dept., etc.

### **Internet/Social Media**

- Have at the minimum a basic website with days, times, contact info, vendor list and photos.
- Build a social media following via Facebook, Twitter, etc.
- Post photos & video from market day on your website or Facebook page.
- Get vendors to post directly to the market's Facebook page, and get market "Friends" talking about the market to build a following.
- Make good use of opportunities such as Dig In VT or Local Harvest.
- Post on other area business/organization's Facebook pages.

### **Market Features to Promote in Your Outreach**

- A good vendor mix provides customer convenience.
- Demos and other events, contests, kids day and/or events, etc. (however, be cautious not to overshadow the market with big events that draw away customers).
- Think of who and where your different target audiences are that you want to bring into your market. How/where can you best reach them, and what is the message for them? i.e. tourists, second home owners, Farm to Family or 3SquaresVT shoppers, etc.
- Advertise jointly with other area markets held on different days, i.e., lots of collaboration opportunities.
- Encourage vendors to use recommendations from NOFA-VT and VTFMA for attractive display set-ups and tips on how to sell at market.

### **Farmers Market Sign Legislation Summary**

Thanks in part to the dedicated work of the VTFMA, the Vermont legislature amended section 494, in chapter 21, of the Conservation and Development title. The amendment greatly improves the capacity of farmers' markets that are members of the VTFMA to advertise to the public the time and location of the market. The amendment was signed into law on May 12<sup>th</sup> 2009, within act 0051, formally known as "An Act Relating To Encouraging Use Of Local Foods In Vermont's Food System".

**Law # and Name:** Act 0051, "An Act Relating To Encouraging Use Of Local Foods In Vermont's Food System".

**Enacted:** May 12<sup>th</sup> 2009.

**Purpose:** To improve the ability of VFMA farmers' markets to advertise to the public by amending and clarifying existing signage laws.

#### **What You Need to Know:**

- VTFMA farmers' markets can post directional signs informing the public of the market's location, as long as the sign is no larger than six square feet.
- Municipalities and designated downtown districts under the amendment may also provide signage that provides either guidance to, or information about, the VTFMA farmers' market.
- Approved municipal signs cannot exceed 12 square feet, and cannot be more than 12 feet in height. They can be placed in any public right-of-way other than interstates.
- Similarly, approved downtown signs cannot exceed 12 square feet, but the highest point of the sign cannot be more than 12 feet above the ground, road surface or sidewalk. They can also be placed in any public right-of-way other than an interstate highway.
- Downtown signs, however, cannot be erected along highways or in view of highways if they violate federal laws or regulations, and specifically if they affect the allocation of federal highway funds.

## GOVERNANCE & POLICY BEST PRACTICES

Vermont Farmers' Market Association

April 2013

Establishing solid governance and policies promotes the continued health and operation of the market.

### Governance

- Markets should research different legal structures (ie. LLC, sole proprietorship, nonprofit, cooperative) and choose one that best suits their purpose, mission and/or needs.
- Consider an appropriate structure that can hold the necessary liability for the market.
- Check the VT Secretary of State website for more information on different legal incorporation structures.

Your market should consider having a mission or purpose statement and by-laws or guidelines, which should include the following:

- A process for decision-making that is transparent.
- If your market has a governing body such as a steering committee, the following are important topics to consider:
  - Create set meeting and voting structures. (Consider following Robert's Rules of Order).
  - The governing body should have staggered term limits to provide continuity and delegate roles to the different members of the governing body.
  - Define a quorum for regular and annual meetings.
  - Encourage participation of all members/vendors.
  - Try to create a structure that takes into consideration future growth of your market and strategic planning.
- A mission to be a determined balance of agriculture/craft /and prepared food vendor percentage.

Many VTFMA markets have their policies posted on their websites. Consider looking at what other markets do to find models that could work at your market and don't hesitate to reach out to other market contacts to ask them how their bylaws and policies are working out. Click [here](#) for a list of VTFMA markets and contacts.

### Policy

Consider policies that reinforce the mission/purpose of your market.

- Markets should obtain limited liability insurance.
- Obtain a signed document from vendors stating that they have their own product liability coverage; the necessary town, state, and federal licenses; and that they understand that taxes are their responsibility.
- Markets should have clear and transparent policies about what type of vendors/products are allowed at the market and how vendors will be chosen.
- Markets should have clear and transparent policies about who can sell vendor products (producer, family, interns, employees) and what products are allowed.
- Markets should have a clear and transparent procedure to deal with rule violations and grievances.
- Have a reasonable vendor/membership fee.

- Have a membership structure and a framework for member privileges.
- Markets should have a streamlined method to collect market data at each market (ie. vendor gross sales, alternative currency use, attendance). NOFA-VT and Market Umbrella are two good resources for this.
- Markets should create an organized record of useful information for future Market Managers and board members including items such as:
  - Local contacts for outreach
  - Donors and fundraising goals
  - Seasonal check-list of tasks
- Markets should have a policy for volunteers with clearly defined roles and expectations.

## 2014 VTFMA Board

NAME	MARKET	EMAIL
<b>Bushrod Powers</b> 3rd term, ending spring, 2015	South Royalton	<a href="mailto:bushrod.powers@gmail.com">bushrod.powers@gmail.com</a>
<b>Sherry Maher</b> 2nd term, ending spring 2014	Brattleboro Winter	<a href="mailto:samaher@vermontel.net">samaher@vermontel.net</a>
<b>Kelly King</b> 1st term, ending spring, 2014	Jericho	<a href="mailto:jerichofarmersmarket@gmail.com">jerichofarmersmarket@gmail.com</a>
<b>Steve Hoffman</b> 1st term, ending spring 2014	Norwich	<a href="mailto:manager@norwichfarmersmarket.org">manager@norwichfarmersmarket.org</a>
<b>Brooke Decker</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> term, ending spring 2014	West River	<a href="mailto:brooke@vermontel.net">brooke@vermontel.net</a>
<b>Luise Graf</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> term, ending spring 2015	Groton Growers	<a href="mailto:mothrnatur@tops-tele.com">mothrnatur@tops-tele.com</a>
<b>Chris Wagner,</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> term, ending spring 2016	Burlington	<a href="mailto:chriswag31@gmail.com">chriswag31@gmail.com</a>
<b>Charlotte Roozekrans,</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> term, ending spring 2016	Winooski	<a href="mailto:charlotte.rooz@gmail.com">charlotte.rooz@gmail.com</a>
<b>Justin Hannington,</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> term, ending spring 2016	Jay Village	<a href="mailto:jayvillagefarmersmarket@gmail.com">jayvillagefarmersmarket@gmail.com</a>

## Support

<b>Erin Buckwalter,</b> coordinator	NOFA-VT	<a href="mailto:erin@nofavt.org">erin@nofavt.org</a>	434-4122 (office)	PO Box 697, Richmond, VT 05477
<b>Abbey Willard</b>	VAAFM	<a href="mailto:abbey.willard@state.vt.us">abbey.willard@state.vt.us</a>	(h) 828-3829 c – 272-2885	116 State St. Montpelier, VT 05620

## Outgoing Board Members

<b>Curtis Sjolander</b> 2nd term, ending spring 2014	Caledonia	<a href="mailto:seedy.sjo@gmail.com">seedy.sjo@gmail.com</a>
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