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SOUTH ROYALTON, Vt., Jan. 16, 2018—The Center for Agriculture and Food Systems (CAFS) at Vermont Law School, Farmers Market Coalition (FMC), and Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT) today launched an online [Farmers Market Legal Toolkit](#), a free resource to support building resilient and accessible markets throughout the United States. The toolkit, created with support from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), is available at farmersmarketlegaltoolkit.org.

“The Farmers Market Coalition and Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont were ideal partners for this project because they work every day with markets and understand their practical needs,” said VLS Assistant Professor [Emily Spiegel](#), a CAFS project team member. “Vermont Law School students worked closely with them to ensure that the toolkit was tailored toward the most relevant legal issues facing market leaders. The toolkit provides market managers with accessible resources to understand the legal issues their market may encounter and plan proactively to minimize legal risk.”

The toolkit responds to recurring questions from farmers market managers as they make decisions to build and grow their markets. Topics covered include how different [business structures](#) would affect their organizations, what types of legal [risks](#) exist and how to manage them, and how to make local food available and accessible for all community members. Included among the toolkit resources are best-practice recommendations for managing common risks and accepting Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program ([SNAP](#)) benefits.

“The Farmers Market Legal Toolkit is a one-stop resource to give market leaders an understanding of legal options before they start making decisions,” said Erin Buckwalter of NOFA-VT. “The toolkit provides a firm understanding of the legal landscape, offering an important overview of resources for farmers market organizers.”

Toolkit users can review [case studies](#) to see how other markets have addressed issues. Featured markets include Webb City Farmers Market in Missouri; Capital City Farmers Market in Montpelier, Vt.; Durham Farmers Market in North Carolina; and Crescent City Farmers Market in New Orleans, La.

“Markets constantly contact us for the type of legal assistance that this toolkit covers,” said Darlene Wolnik, a senior researcher with the Farmers Market Coalition. “Since a primary mission of markets is to offer community spaces open to one and all, it is vital that they are as inviting as possible but also imperative that they are designed to protect the organization, vendors, and shoppers by reducing any risks. We think this site will offer markets that type of help.”

A free webinar about the Farmers Market Legal Toolkit will be held at noon Thursday, Feb. 1. For more information and to register, visit farmersmarketlegaltoolkit.org or email cafs@vermontlaw.edu.

The Center for Agriculture and Food Systems at Vermont Law School supports scholars and practitioners in producing practical, robust scholarship for use by the food and agriculture community. CAFS offers an expanding curriculum in food and agriculture for law and policy students, and training and legal tools to help build sustainable local and regional food systems. In addition to the Farmers Market Legal Toolkit, recent CAFS projects include the [Healthy Food Policy Project](#), [Blueprint for a National Food Strategy](#),

[National Gleaning Project](#), Farmland Access Legal Project, and [Farm Animal Welfare Certification Guide](#). For more information about CAFS, visit vermontlaw.edu/cafs, email cafs@vermontlaw.edu, and follow on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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