

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 12th 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 12th 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.