

## **Vermont Farmers' Market Association**

### ***2005 Work Plan drafted by NOFA-VT***

The goals of the Vermont Farmers' Market Association are to enhance direct marketing opportunities for market vendors, to build direct connections between farmers/crafters and local consumers, and to maintain the viability of rural communities through farm-based economic development. These goals will be reached through the following activities:

*Statewide Coordination:* The Association will have one central contact person/organization who can answer technical questions, is familiar with the markets and can serve in an information sharing capacity, and can represent the "voice of Vermont farmers' markets" in Montpelier.

*Information Sharing/Networking:*

- Create a list of managers, with all contact information, and the "communications contact" for the market, if not the manager.
- Develop a more complete database of the market boards and vendors. Facilitate vendor swapping/sharing with different markets.
- Organize an annual farmers' market gathering. In 2006, host a direct marketing conference, including farmers' markets, community supported agriculture and farm stands – with technical workshops for both management and farmers.
- Pilot a regional farmers' market discussion group – so market management and vendors and interested community members can meet regionally to share ideas and plan joint initiatives.
- Create a new section(s) of the Farmers' Market Manual detailing best practices, including the most successful market promotion ideas.

*Data Collection/Research :*

- Economic analysis: assist markets to collect data in 2005. Complete an economic analysis of the value of farmers' markets to the state and communities where markets are held. Once the data has been collected, we will develop an outreach program for community leaders and business people documenting how farmers' markets can increase the vitality of downtowns, and provide examples of how municipalities and merchants have assisted markets.
- Research the opportunities for discounted insurance if markets pooled their resources. Inform markets on different insurance options/requirements.
- Look at the most strategic placement of farmers' markets statewide.
- Develop criteria to help towns evaluate the cost/benefit of market start-up. Document how farmers' markets can increase the vitality of downtowns and how municipalities and merchants have assisted markets.
- Research regulatory requirements for farmers' markets – provide updated information to all markets and be an advocate for regulatory change, if necessary.
- Research markets being able to accept Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards (electronic food stamps) and opportunities to increase market access to low income customers.

Promotion:

- Vermont Agency of Agriculture will take the lead on promotional efforts, through their buy-local program, with an emphasis on:
    - Print: Supply buy-local materials to all markets
    - Radio: VPR, and local radio station
    - TV: ETV, across the fence
- Outstanding promotion needs:* standardized print ads, press release templates; story outlines and targeted, regional promotional efforts, state highway signs with farmers' market logo.
- Expand promotion/outreach contacts within the state. Meet with Department of Tourism to identify cross marketing opportunities, VT Farms! Association, Chambers of Commerce; farmers' market pamphlets and displays at Welcome Centers.

Technical Assistance:

- Web-site – at this point, maintain up to date farmers' market information on existing web-sites (NOFA-VT, VAA, link to tourism and Chamber of Commerce) while seeking funds to build an independent site and have the farmers' market manual searchable, on-line.
- Provide technical support to market start-ups, by providing the Farmers' Market Manual, attending organizing meetings and seeking financial support.
- Market manager technical support: create a list serve for market managers that highlights FM training available, including resources on board development and management; vendors who are available for different markets; and mentors that can serve in a support role for markets, especially market start-ups. Hold technical workshops at direct marketing conference in response to identified priorities (i.e. fundraising, community outreach, increasing customers, attracting and maintaining vendors)

Leadership: Develop an advisory committee of managers, vendors and representatives from sponsoring organizations.

Fund raising priorities (outside of state appropriation for buy local promotion):

- Web-site development
- Financial support for start-up markets
- Overall coordination
- Support for markets to conduct Rapid Market Assessment (RMA)