

MARKETING BEST PRACTICES
Vermont Farmers' Market Association
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What is your market's mission/purpose? For market partners, shoppers, and vendors, clarity about the market's fundamental purpose can be very helpful. It is also recommended that the market board and managers remain "on mission." Use the language from your mission to tell your market's story.

Market Site Signage

- Have attractive, highly legible signage, including a permanent sign if possible. Update the signage regularly so it is not worn out or faded.
- Check the NOFA-VT [Market Signage Guidelines](#)
- Market feedback consistently concludes that good signage and word of mouth are the main ways people learn about the market. Check out the [data that has been collected on VT farmers markets](#) to assess your marketing strategy.
- 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, food pantries, coffee shops, bookstores, libraries, banks, campgrounds, 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 info about their farms and/or products each week.
- Consider printing bags, hats, t-shirts or other merchandise with your market logo to sell.

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 the press releases you send. Make sure to include a photo.
- Use events at the market as a reason to send out frequent press releases.
- Build relationships with local editors, reporters, and ad salespeople.
- Get on regular calendar listings in local print, radio, public-access TV, local informational websites, and other outlets.

Community Engagement

- Active engagement in the community gets you more press coverage – communicate with schools, master gardeners, church groups, photo clubs, gleaning groups, etc.
- Think about how your market serves other local groups & businesses
- Be a joiner – of Chambers of Commerce, 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 a basic website or Facebook page with days, times, contact info, a vendor list, and photos. Make sure the information is up to date.
- Build a social media following via Facebook, Instagram, etc.
- Use a Facebook Page for your market rather than a Group or other designation.
- Post photos and videos from the market day on your website and social media sites.
- Encourage vendors to be active on their own social media sites, and tag the market in their posts.
- Get vendors to post directly to the market's Facebook page and encourage market followers to post about the market on their own pages.
- Make good use of marketing opportunities such as [DigInVT](#) or [Local Harvest](#)
- The first *full* week of August is always National Farmers Market Week and is a great time to remind people about your market and to seek new community members. The national farmers market organization, Farmers Market Coalition, [offers a toolkit each year](#) that has messaging, templates, and graphics for all markets to use.
- Update the market information on the [USDA's Local Food Directories](#) regularly. This site is where a lot of new shoppers, vendors, and funders might be searching for markets.
- Post on other area business/organizations' Facebook pages.
- Only post market-related information on the market's Facebook page.

Market Features to Promote in Your Outreach

- Demos and other events, contests, kids' day and/or events, etc. However, be cautious not to overshadow the market with big events that impede shopping.
- If your market takes SNAP benefits, be sure to mention this frequently, along with the use of Crop Cash and Farm to Family benefits.
- 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? Eg. tourists, second homeowners, Farm to Family or 3SquaresVT shoppers, etc.
- Advertise jointly with other area markets that are held on different days.
- Encourage vendors to use recommendations from [NOFA-VT](#) and [VTFMA](#) for [attractive display set-ups](#) and tips on [how to sell at the 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 51, formally known as "An Act Relating To Encouraging Use Of Local Foods In Vermont's Food System".

Law # and Name: [Act 51, "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

- 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 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.