

Farmland Access Legal Guide

Vermont Law School's Center for Agriculture & Food Systems (CAFS), funded by the USDA's National Agricultural Library, is creating a Farmland Access Legal Guide – a free online resource meant to help farmers, landowners, and advocates navigate key legal issues related to accessing and transferring farmland, including leasing.

Leases are indispensable for beginning farmers and farmers without capital to buy land. Landowners who don't farm can use leases to advance their values through provisions facilitating environmentally sustainable practices. Unfortunately, many lease arrangements are based on handshake deals, which can be legally unenforceable and lead to unnecessary misunderstandings.

While there are some regional resources educating farmers and landowners about leasing, CAFS and its project partners BCM Environmental & Land Law, PLLC (New Hampshire) and Jambor Heyman Lawyers for Good Food (Minnesota) are producing a guide that is national in scope. Further, CAFS is partnering with Vermont Law School's Center for Legal Innovation (CLI) to develop a Farmland Lease Builder app that will provide farmers and landowners with tailored legal guidance and/or draft leases to be used in conversations with attorneys and in lease negotiations.

CAFS is working with farmers and lawyers to learn how our project can best serve the farming community. Our goal is to provide a useful legal resource that helps advance environmentally sustainable practices and promotes social and economic justice by increasing access to needed legal information.

