



Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund[®]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Fund Announces New Affiliate Membership Program In Celebration of National Farmer's Market Week

*Offering Legal Services to Rapidly Growing and
Increasingly Regulated Direct-to-Consumer Groups*

Falls Church, Virginia (August 7, 2009) – Even as the USDA commends Farmer's Markets in the week-long National Farmer's Market Week, August 2 – 9, 2009, State and local health and agriculture departments are making participation difficult and expensive by cracking down on participating farmers.

Some Farmer's Markets have become a victim of their own success, as regulators swarm over these events and nit-pick the farmers for fees, licenses and permits.

“We are seeing farmers quit the markets because they are besieged with burdensome regulations and overlapping licensing requirements that make doing business at the farmer's market too costly,” said Fund President Pete Kennedy, Esq. The Fund seeks to support Farmer's Markets and other direct-to-consumer food outlets with a new Affiliate Membership program that provides affordable, accessible legal guidance for these organizations.

“When Farmer's Markets are open early in the morning or on the weekend, their Market Manager can call our Emergency Hotline to talk directly with legal counsel about a market problem” says Kennedy.

“When I joined the Fund I never thought I would ever need to call to the Emergency Hotline. In less than thirty seconds there was Pete Kennedy calling me back”, says Pam Lunn, owner of the Dancing Goat Dairy in Tampa, Florida. Pam had been ordered to stop selling milk by a misinformed inspector at the Saturday Market. “The money I spent on joining was the best money I have ever spent in a lifetime!”

Farmer's Markets are the flagship of the innovative and rapidly expanding direct-to-consumer food trend fueled by the public demand for fresher, more nutritious food that is produced closer to home. Millions of food-savvy consumers are bypassing the grocery stores and flocking to innovative outlets like Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), Cow-Share Programs, Private Buyers Clubs and Food Co-ops to access food for their families which is not available elsewhere in their communities. Because of the many recent food recalls, the draw to these outlets is fresh, safe, nutritious and non-toxic foods from known sources – local sustainable farmers.

The USDA reports that direct-to-consumer market is the fastest growing sector of the agricultural economy: “Over the past decade, the growth of direct-to-consumer food marketing across all regions far exceeded the growth of total agricultural sales. From 1997-2007, direct-to-consumer food marketing grew by 104.7 percent in the United States, while total agricultural sales increased by only 47.6 percent.” (USDA Facts on Direct-to-Consumer Marketing, May 2009).

“As our name suggests, the Fund was originally created to support the Farmer and the Consumer. Now, we feel it's essential to support the “to” in our name, the non-profit groups and local food entrepreneurs who are recreating the way that America shops for food,” says Kennedy.

“Our Affiliate Membership Program is the next critical step in our mission to expand and encourage direct-to-consumer trade and ultimately provide our neighbors and communities with easy access to local, fresh and safe sustainably farmed products.” Candidates for Affiliate Memberships include Farmer's Markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs), Cow or Goat-Share Programs, Private Buyers Clubs and Food Co-ops.

The Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund defends the rights and broadens the freedoms of sustainable farmers, and protects consumer access to raw milk and local, nutrient-dense foods. Concerned citizens can support the Fund by joining at www.farmtoconsumer.org or by contacting Fund at 703-208-FARM (3276).

The Fund's sister organization, the Farm-to-Consumer Foundation works to promote consumer access to raw milk and local, nutrient-dense food, and support for farmers engaged in sustainable farm stewardship. Visit www.farmtoconsumerfoundation.org.

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