



Center for Agriculture
& Food Systems
VERMONT LAW & GRADUATE SCHOOL

YEAR IN REVIEW

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS | JULY 2024 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2025



We equip students with professional expertise, create broadly accessible resources, and provide law and policy support on food and agricultural issues.

The Center for Agriculture and Food Systems (CAFS) is a research-based center at Vermont Law and Graduate School that produces original scholarly research in the field of food and agricultural law and policy to serve the broadest range of food system stakeholders.

With local, regional, national, and international partners, CAFS addresses challenges related to food and nutrition security and affordability, farmland access, food system workers, farm viability, local economies, and public health, among others. CAFS works closely with its partners to provide support and services and develop resources that respond to their needs. Through CAFS's Food and Agriculture Clinic and Research Assistant program, Vermont Law and Graduate School students work directly on projects alongside partners nationwide, engaging in innovative and practical work that spans the food system.

Visit us at cafs.vermontlaw.edu to learn more.



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NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear CAFS community,

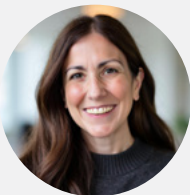
It's an honor to be able to share this Year in Review with you all. At the Center for Agriculture and Food Systems, our work is guided by values that define both who we are and how we engage with the food system community. Last summer, our team took some time to reflect on how these values are reflected in our work, individually and collectively. Not surprisingly, the values that rose to the top of those conversations were *collaboration, integrity, and service*.

This past year, those values came to life in so many ways. In “Seeds for Rent: The Farmers’ Guide to Technology Use Agreements” (page 4), our team spoke with farmers and seed growers about the dense, complex contracts they sign with seed companies so that we could produce a resource farmers can actually use and understand. The updated “State Farm to School Policy Handbook: 2002-2023” (page 5) was built with insight from people who work on farm to school issues across the country to understand their challenges and hear about the policy solutions their communities have implemented, exemplifying the collaborative spirit that drives this work. “Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production: A Guide to Local Policy” (page 8) is based on a two-year research project in which members of our team scanned policies from cities across the country and spoke with more than 120 stakeholders, including farmers, community organizers, city officials, and policymakers, to create a comprehensive look at the urban agriculture policy landscape. Our work providing technical assistance and engaging in outreach across the food system is in service of the needs we hear about and hope to assist with. And through our Food and Agriculture Clinic (page 10) and summer honors internship program (page 12), we pair students with partners to teach them about working in community to provide workable options for pressing legal and policy issues—grounding their learning in service.

These values are also our aspirations. Looking forward, we are eager to deepen collaboration, to ensure our work remains well researched, transparent and trustworthy, and to use our legal and policy expertise in service to the food system community. Exciting opportunities lie ahead: new scholarships for students, collaborative projects on farmworker wellbeing and the seafood sector, and expanded legal and policy support for our partners in the field.

Thank you for being part of this journey with us and please let us know how we can support you on yours.

Warmly,



Laurie Beyranevand

Director, Center for Agriculture and Food Systems,
Pescosolido Professor of Food and Agricultural Law and Policy,
Vermont Law and Graduate School



NEW RESOURCES

FEATURED RESOURCE

Seeds for Rent

The Farmers' Guide to Technology Use Agreements

Prior to 1970, crop varieties were developed through public plant breeding, which allowed farmers to save seed year to year. This started to change with the 1970 Plant Variety Protection Act, when new plant varieties became subject to intellectual property protections and crop development became lucrative for private companies, particularly for commodity crops like corn, soybeans, and cotton.

Today, the seed industry is highly consolidated. In the United States, four companies—Corteva, Bayer, AgReliant, and Syngenta—account for 80 percent of corn seed sales and 75 percent of soybean seed sales. This has significant impacts for farmers, who now sign complicated contracts or technology use agreements with seed companies to purchase and use their seeds according to the contract terms.

“Seeds for Rent: The Farmers' Guide to Technology Use Agreements,” a guide by **CAFS Director of Research and Senior Research Fellow Emily Spiegel** and summer interns **Julia Wickham JD'26** and **Aija Zamurs**, explains the fine print in technology use agreements—including requirements and restrictions—and how these contracts compare among the largest seed companies in the U.S.

 [VIEW THE GUIDE](#)



“ By understanding their legal obligations, commodity growers can better protect themselves from inadvertently breaching their contracts and jeopardizing their relationships with seed companies.”



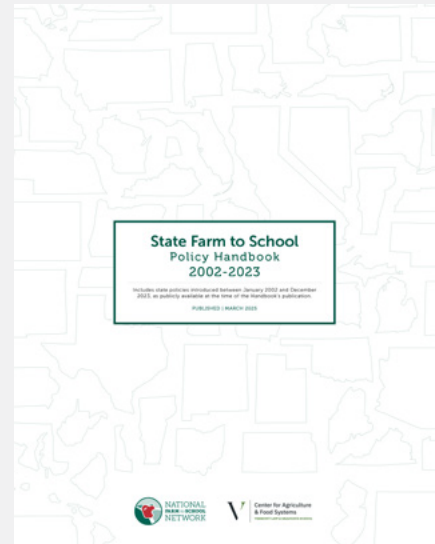
FEATURED RESOURCE


State Farm to School Policy Handbook

2002-2023

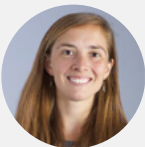
Farm to school has become increasingly popular among state-level policymakers in recent years, and it's clear why. School gardens teach our kids about food and where it comes from. Locally grown, high-quality food provides a nutritious option for school meals. Cafeterias can open their doors as an institutional market for farmers, fishers, and ranchers, and boost local agricultural economies and communities.

Earlier this year, CAFS worked with the National Farm to School Network (NFSN) to release the “State Farm to School Policy Handbook: 2002-2023,” a tool for those working to improve the food system through the ways kids eat and learn about food. Co-authored by **CAFS Deputy Director and Senior Researcher Lihlani Nelson**, **Staff Attorney Wendy Chen**, and NFSN Policy Specialist Cassandra Bull, the Handbook builds on previous editions and provides a snapshot in time of the current farm to school policy landscape by identifying, summarizing, and analyzing bills and resolutions introduced in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories. This edition also introduces an interactive [State Farm to School Policy Database](#)—making it easier to search policies by state, year, and topic.



 [VIEW THE REPORT](#)

“Farm to school is really a win-win for our communities. School kids learn and grow, while farmers can find a local market for their produce. It’s easy to see why state lawmakers are supporting farm to school through legislation and funding for positions, grant programs and purchasing incentives.”



Lihlani Nelson

CAFS Deputy Director
and Senior Researcher



FEATURED RESOURCE

Optimizing Food Distributor Contracts to Achieve Local Food Procurement Targets

Considerations for State and Local Public Sector Entities

In recent years, many states have set ambitious targets to increase the purchase of local food by public institutions like schools, hospitals, and prisons. State policies often present these local food purchasing targets as aspirational goals or specific mandatory quotas. Maine, for instance, set a goal that, by 2025, 20 percent of food served at state institutions is produced within the state.

But how can public sector procurement teams better meet those targets? “Optimizing Food Distributor Contracts to Achieve Local Food Procurement Targets,” a guide from CAFS’s [Healthy Food Policy Project](#) (HFPP), focuses on the food distributor contracting process as a pathway to procure more local food. Authored by attorney, food systems policy advisor, and **CAFS research affiliate Amanda Karls**, this guide explores options for public institutions to optimize their distributor contracts—particularly through contract drafting, negotiating, and monitoring—to support their state local food goals. The guide also includes an appendix with sample contract solicitation and drafting language that emphasizes local food sourcing as well as a list of state statutes or executive orders that set local food targets.

CAFS produced this guide as part of **HFPP’s Local and Regional Food Systems Policy Technical Assistance Lab**. More information about this lab can be found on page 11.

 [VIEW THE GUIDE](#)



“Local food procurement supports local farmers and businesses—creating jobs, stimulating the local economy, and reducing dependency on external markets or imports.”



FEATURED RESOURCE

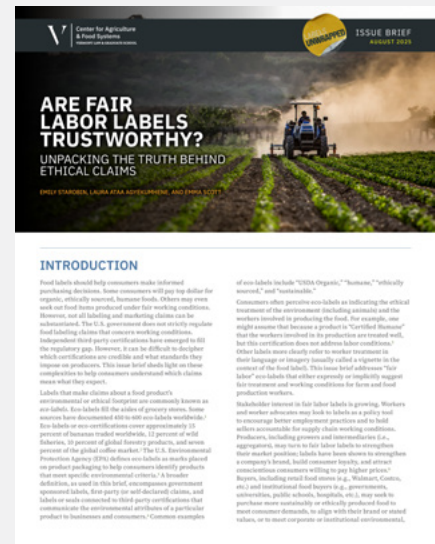
Are Fair Labor Labels Trustworthy?

Unpacking the Truth Behind Ethical Claims

Many consumers will pay top dollar for food products with eco-labels that claim the product is “ethically sourced” or “sustainably grown.” These labels inform consumers’ purchasing decisions—ensuring that the food they eat matches their values. Increasingly, consumers have shown an interest in “fair labor” labels that expressly or implicitly suggest fair treatment and working conditions for farm and food production workers. However, not all labeling and marketing claims can be substantiated. The U.S. government does not strictly regulate food labeling claims that concern working conditions. As a result, independent third-party certifications have emerged to fill that regulatory gap.

“Are Fair Labor Labels Trustworthy? Unpacking the Truth Behind Ethical Claims,” an issue brief from CAFS’s [Labels Unwrapped](#) project, sheds light on which certifications are credible and the standards they impose on producers. Co-authored by **Food and Agriculture Clinic Director Emma Scott** and student clinicians **Emily Starobin JD’25** and **Laura Ataa Agyekumhene LLM’25**, this resource analyzes a few prominent fair labor certification programs to help consumers understand the standards behind the label.

 [VIEW THE ISSUE BRIEF](#)



“Stakeholder interest in fair labor labels is growing. Workers and worker advocates may look to labels as a policy tool to encourage better employment practices and hold sellers accountable for supply chain working conditions. Producers may turn to fair labor labels to strengthen their market position. Finally, consumers are increasingly interested in purchasing ethically sourced products.”




FEATURED RESOURCE

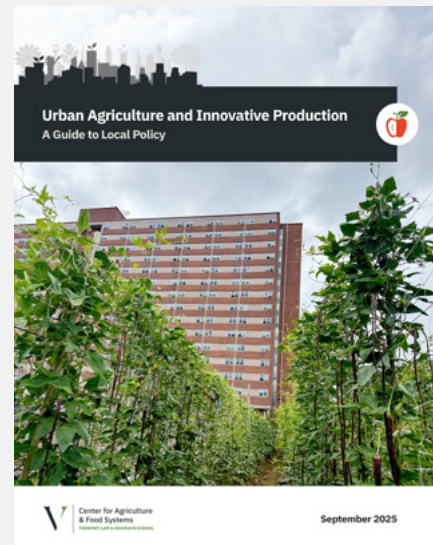
Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production

A Guide to Local Policy

Across the United States, city residents have embraced urban agriculture to reconnect their communities with the food they eat. Urban food production—ranging from community gardens on vacant lots to multi-acre for-profit farms to high-tech indoor hydroponics operations—has the potential to expand access to fresh and nutritious food, support farmer wellbeing, create green space, increase biodiversity, and stimulate local economic growth. Yet urban food producers often face barriers as they navigate their city’s complex local policy landscape. Many cities have outdated or inconsistent policies that make it difficult for urban agriculture to thrive.

“Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production: A Guide to Local Policy” helps city policymakers, farmers and food producers, and community organizations navigate the local policies that shape food production in U.S. cities. Coauthored by **Visiting Assistant Professor Liz Turner**, **Deputy Director and Senior Researcher Lihlani Nelson**, **Director of Research and Senior Research Fellow Emily Spiegel**, and former intern **Margaret Kaniecki**, with support from the USDA Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production, this guide examines how 17 cities designated by USDA as “urban agriculture hubs” address challenges related to land access, zoning and land use, city governance, water access, soil health, and innovative production. Drawing on insights from farmers, city leaders, community organizers, and other stakeholders, this resource provides practical strategies for both producers and policymakers to develop and implement local policies that boost urban food production.

 [VIEW THE GUIDE](#)



“While each city’s historical and contemporary context is unique, we aimed to highlight proven policy strategies that may help foster urban food production in cities across the country.”



Liz Turner

Visiting Assistant Professor
at Vermont Law and Graduate School





Arizona H.B. 2518

Easing the Journey from School Garden to Cafeteria

School gardens provide a valuable opportunity to incorporate fresh produce into school meals, but some areas prohibit the use of school garden produce in school cafeterias due to food safety restrictions. This is where state-level policies can step in to provide support. This case study, authored by **Raina Goldstein Bunnag MFALP'24** in partnership with the National Farm to School Network, tells the story of Arizona's H.B. 2518, which established a statewide food safety certification program for school gardens and made it possible for Arizona schools to serve their own produce.

[VIEW THE CASE STUDY](#)



Boston's Good Food Purchasing Policy, Part 2

Assessing the Implementation of the City's Values-based Procurement Requirement

In March 2019, Boston City Council passed an ordinance requiring city departments to adopt Good Food Purchasing Standards as a framework for food procurement decisions. These standards value local and community-based economies, environmental sustainability, valued workforce, animal welfare, and community health and nutrition. This case study from CAFS's Healthy Food Policy Project (HFPP), authored by **Matthew Ellison LLM'23**, tracks how the city's largest food purchaser, Boston Public Schools, has updated its procurement process according to the new ordinance.

[READ THE CASE STUDY](#)



Heirs' Property

Understanding the Legal Issues by State

Heirs' property is land that is passed to family members through inheritance, often without a will or estate plan, which can lead to structural and legal obstacles for landowners that can sometimes result in their losing land. CAFS's Farmland Access Legal Toolkit (FALT) continues to build on its series of state-by-state fact sheets that examine specific state laws relevant to heirs' property and outline steps landowners can take to resolve property issues. This year, FALT published fact sheets on Massachusetts, New York, and West Virginia.

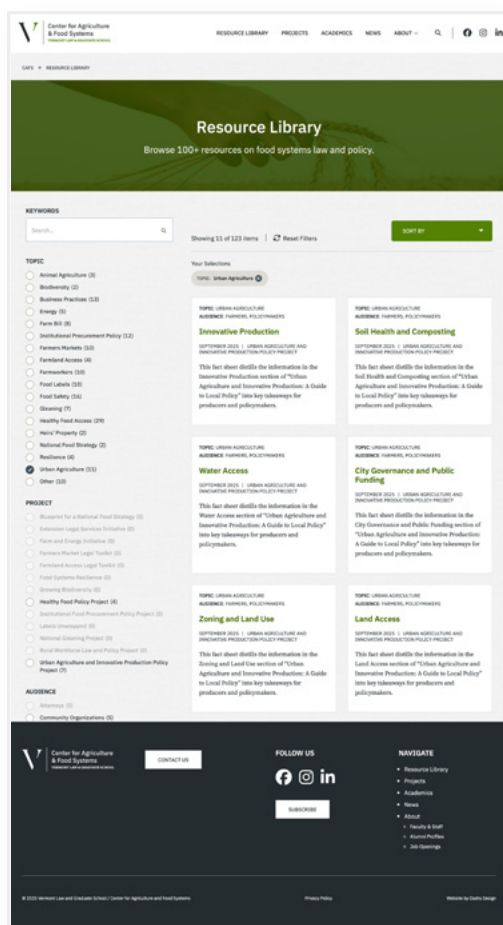
[READ THE FACT SHEETS](#)

NEW RESOURCES

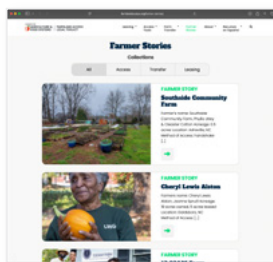
New CAFS Website and Digital Resource Library

In April 2025, CAFS launched its new website, which includes a digital library that catalogues more than 130 (and counting) open access resources—reports, issue briefs, legal guides, toolkits, and fact sheets, among others—that respond to a broad range of challenges throughout the food system.

Visit the CAFS Resource Library at cafs.vermontlaw.edu/resource-library.



To view all CAFS resources, visit cafs.vermontlaw.edu



Farmer Stories in the Farmland Access Legal Toolkit

In North Carolina, Southside Community Farm rallied to preserve its half-acre garden from development, while in Virginia, Just Harvest secured a zero-dollar lease with the county board to create a community garden and food distribution hub. This year, FALT published new “Farmer Stories” to highlight examples like these, showing the many ways farmers access—and often fight to retain—farmland.

[READ THE STORIES](#)



Training Market Managers to Develop Legacy Folders

In any given year, about 20 percent of Vermont farmers markets report leadership turnover as a major risk to the markets’ continued operation. Without recordkeeping, departing staff or board members may take with them critical institutional knowledge. This case study in CAFS’s Farmers Market Legal Toolkit describes a two-year pilot program run by the Vermont Farmers Market Association to help farmers market managers create legacy folders to strengthen and support the longevity of Vermont’s farmers markets.

[VIEW THE CASE STUDY](#)



What is Food Policy?

Food policy relates to the various public policy decisions that directly shape our food system, including the ways food is produced, processed and manufactured, distributed, marketed, consumed, and disposed of. This HFPP fact sheet provides an overview for food policy, including the local, state, and federal laws and regulations that impact every sector of the food system.

[READ THE FACT SHEET](#)

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

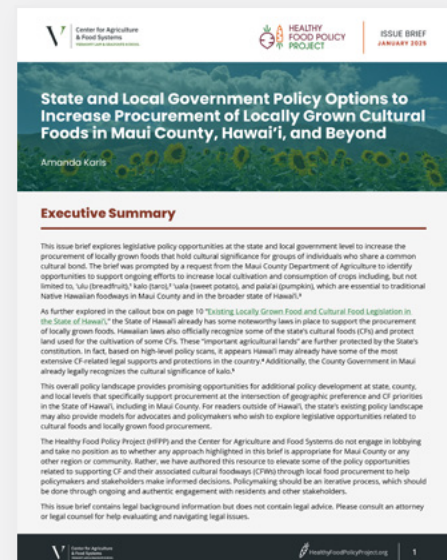
CAFS provides free direct legal and policy assistance to organizations and entities throughout the food system. This assistance often entails providing information to partners who generally do not have easy access to legal services, or who benefit from the specific food and agricultural law and policy expertise of the CAFS staff. Here are a few examples from the past year.

- **Visiting Assistant Professor Liz Turner** and **Staff Attorney Fran Miller LLM’17** worked with Vermont-based grassroots hub **Community Resilience Organizations (CROs)** to develop a land-use agreement template for its land-based projects.
- **Liz Turner** helped a new nonprofit called **Rutland Commons** in Rutland, Vermont, with its strategic vision, organizational documents, and application for nonprofit status.
- **Staff Attorney Wendy Chen** provided technical assistance to the **Fair Food Network** through the Local and Regional Food Systems Policy Technical Assistance Lab (described below) about how farmers and food hubs could meet inventory-related eligibility requirements to participate in SNAP, especially the SNAP Online Purchasing Pilot.
- **Liz Turner** worked with Virginia-based **RhizeHome** to understand compliance with state zoning and housing laws for low-impact options for farmworker on-site housing.

Healthy Food Policy Project’s Local and Regional Food Systems Policy Technical Assistance Lab

CAFS also provides research and policy support through the Local and Regional Food Systems Policy Technical Assistance Lab. Through the lab, food systems organizations, agencies, and stakeholders can submit questions through an intake form. Select organizations then meet with a member of CAFS’s team of attorneys, researchers, and affiliates who provide background legal information, which is often delivered in the form of a published resource.

For instance, **the County of Maui’s Department of Agriculture** in Hawai’i requested support on the state’s cultural food laws related to the local production and consumption of local, cultural foods like ‘ulu (breadfruit) and kalo (taro). This research resulted in a published resource, **“State and Local Government Policy Options to Increase Procurement of Locally Grown Cultural Foods in Maui County, Hawai’i, and Beyond”** authored by **CAFS research affiliate Amanda Karls**, that showcases Maui as a model for policymakers and program leaders in other locations who want to explore legislative opportunities to support procurement of locally grown, culturally significant foods.



STUDENTS AND ALUMNI

Food and Agriculture Clinic

CAFS's **Food and Agriculture Clinic (FAC)** at Vermont Law and Graduate School offers students hands-on experience in food system law and policy research. Student clinicians collaborate with local, regional, and national partners to research, develop, and share tools and resources that serve a wide range of stakeholders—farmers and food enterprises, farmworkers, consumers, administrators, legislators, and community organizations.

The clinicians provide direct law and policy counsel to food system organizations and frequently collaborate with CAFS staff. Ongoing clinic projects focus on farmland access and stewardship, farm business structures, food security, labor laws and worker protections, animal welfare, public health, plant breeding and the seed industry, local and regional food system development, and compliance with complex federal and state laws.



Student clinicians collaborate with local, regional, and national partners to research, develop, and share tools and resources that serve a wide range of stakeholders.

Student Clinician Projects

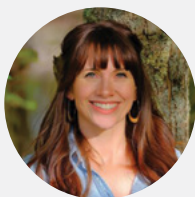
- **Emily Starobin JD'25, Laura Ataa Agyekumhene LLM'25, and Kiel Parker JD'25** researched issues related to farm and food system workers for CAFS's Rural Workforce Law and Policy Project. In the fall, Emily and Laura co-authored an issue brief on "fair labor" food labeling claims. In the spring, Laura and Kiel researched state laws and regulations to prevent heat illness for farmworkers.
- **Elijah Zwick JD'27, Christina Reiter LLM'25, and Joseph Pius Ubenyi LLM'25** partnered with Rural Vermont, a farmer- and community-driven organization, to research legislative issues like Vermont's "30 by 30" land conservation target, right-to-farm laws, and regulations on accessory on-farm businesses.
- **Whitney Roth JD'25 and Christina Karem JD'25** supported CAFS's Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Policy Project by researching local policies that impact urban farming, writing city snapshots, and conducting interviews with stakeholders across the country.
- **Andrew Hockenberry JD/MFALP'25** collaborated with CAFS staff and the North American Marine Alliance to conduct legal research and interview small scale fishers for a forthcoming CAFS resource on consolidation in the seafood sector due to catch shares programs.
- **Anette Sikka LLM'26** conducted research and analysis on food purchasing in the carceral sector as part of CAFS's Institutional Food Procurement Policy Project.

NOTE FROM THE FAC DIRECTOR

It's been such a privilege to join the VLGS community this year and work with our passionate students. I have deeply appreciated learning about our students' interests and designing the Food and Agriculture Clinic seminar to deepen their knowledge and enhance their skills so that they'll be ready to join the farm and food policy community upon graduation. Even students who don't plan to go into food law and policy gain a lot of practical knowledge to apply in their careers.

I've especially enjoyed finding ways to integrate students into the broad range of work of our CAFS's team members. Having the clinic housed at CAFS means students get to learn from staff with different areas of expertise and focus areas.

There's truly no better place to work on food system law and policy than Vermont! We have such a robust community dedicated to these issues in the state. My hope for the future is to continue building relationships with these Vermont-based organizations so students can gain more boots-on-the-ground experience and deepen their understanding of the myriad ways policies impact food system actors and stakeholders. Pairing that with the national-level law and policy work we do at CAFS gives students a dynamic, well-rounded, and fun experience that I hope will be formative as they start their legal careers.



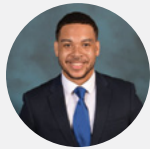
Emma Scott
Food and Agriculture Clinic Director,
Vermont Law and Graduate School



Summer Honors Internship Program

CAFS works with a cohort of summer honors interns who join project teams and contribute to law and policy research. This competitive program brings law and policy students from across the country to work alongside CAFS faculty, staff, and project partners on pressing food system law and policy issues.

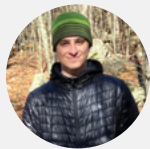
2025 Summer Honors Interns



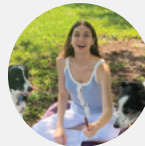
Keith Gauff (Southern University Law Center) Contributed research on aquaculture law and policy for a new collaborative project with VLGS's Animal Law and Policy Institute.



Jill Reynolds (VLGS) Conducted research on alternative land access models, such as community land trusts and conservation easements, for the Farmland Access Legal Toolkit.



Seth Israel (Temple University Beasley School of Law) Researched Los Angeles's recycled water program and New Orleans's new Urban Agriculture Liaison position as case studies for CAFS's Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Policy Project.



Nicole Sharifi (Southwestern Law School) Created a management tool for food systems nonprofits focused on fiscal sponsorship and contributed to urban agriculture local policy research.



Grace McGuire (VLGS) Researched Detroit's new animal keeping ordinance and Phoenix's urban soil remediation initiatives as case studies for the Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Project.



Mollie Wodenshek (Brooklyn Law School) Researched seed industry law, including the Bayh-Dole Act's impact on publicly funded seed research.

Looking Back: Former Interns' Accomplishments

Past summer honors interns continue to make important contributions to CAFS projects and food and agricultural law and policy. In October 2024, **Olivia Guarna** won the "Law Student Program of the Year Award" from the American Bar Association's Section of Environment, Energy, and Resources. **Julia Wickham JD'26** won *Vermont Journal of Environmental Law's* Notes Competition. Additionally, many of the resources CAFS published this year benefited from the contributions of former interns, including **Olivia Bayne JD'26**, **Emily Collins MFALP'24**, **Nicole Renna JD/MFALP'25**, and **Aija Zamurs**.

ALUMNI UPDATES

During the past year...

- **Danielle Brodsky MPP'25** worked as a Food Policy Research Consultant in the New York City Office of the Mayor. She then became a Programs Associate for Citymeals on Wheels.
- **Andrew Hockenberry JD/MFALP'25** started working as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the College of Agriculture, Consumer and Environmental Sciences at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign with **Jonathan Coppess**, a long-time partner and colleague of CAFS who teaches the summer session course on the farm bill.
- **Nicole Renna JD/MFALP'25** became an Assistant Law Clerk at New York State Unified Court.
- **Emma Bliss MFALP'24** started working as a Technical Assistant for Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education's Farming Communities Grant Program. Emma also became a Community Food Project Coordinator for the Institute of Social and Economic Development and joined the board of Food Connects.
- **Emily Collins MFALP'24** became a Land Use Coordinator for Town of Woodstock, Vermont.
- **Samantha K. Ellis JD/MFALP'24** joined Rincker Law, PLLC as an Associate Attorney.
- **Veronica Gassert JD/MFALP'24** became a Law Clerk at the Ocean County Superior Court.
- **Raina Goldstein Bunnag MFALP'24** was promoted to Food Security Coordinator for Durham County, North Carolina.
- **Heather A. Francis JD/MFALP'22** started a job as an Assistant Attorney General in the Litigation Division for the Office of the Maine Attorney General.
- **Ashely Monti JD/MFALP'22** started a position as a Staff Attorney with Legal Impact for Chickens.
- **Ashleigh Angel JD/MFALP'20** started a Postdoctoral Fellowship in Policy Research at Johns Hopkins University.

Congratulations, award winners!

Several graduating CAFS students received awards at VLGS Commencement this year:

- **Laura Ataa Agyekumhene LLM'25** received the Shirley Jefferson Perseverance Award.
- **Andrew Hockenberry** received the John Delemarre Award.
- **Nicole Renna** received the Lex Pro Urbe et Orbe Award.

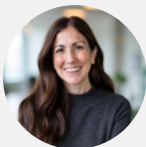
Stay in touch!



If you are a CAFS alum with an update to share, let us know! We'd love to hear from you at CAFS@vermontlaw.edu, or visit us in the Old School House on the VLGS campus.

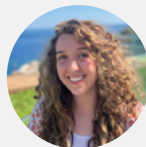
CAFS TEAM

CAFS STAFF AND FACULTY | JULY 2024 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2025



Laurie Beyranevand

Director, Pescosolido Professor of Food and Agricultural Law and Policy



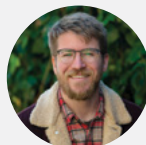
Bella O'Connor

Legal and Policy Fellow



Wendy Chen

Staff Attorney (departed CAFS May '25)



Austin Price

Communications Manager



Lindsey Connolly

Project Manager and Research Fellow



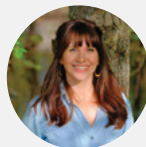
Haley Rowlands

Legal and Policy Fellow



Erika Dunyak

Staff Attorney (departed CAFS July '24)



Emma Scott

Food and Agriculture Clinic Director, Associate Professor



Callum LaFrance

Legal Fellow (departed CAFS August '25)



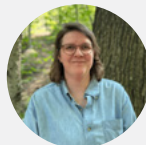
Emily Spiegel

Director of Research and Senior Research Fellow



Francine Miller

Senior Staff Attorney



Liz Turner

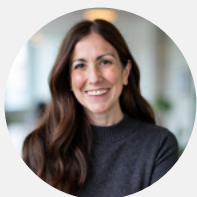
Visiting Assistant Professor, Food and Agricultural Law and Policy Fellow '23-'25



Lihlani Nelson

Deputy Director and Senior Researcher

Team Updates



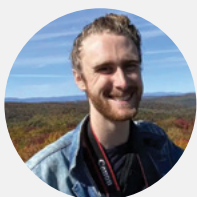
Laurie Beyranevand Receives VLGS Named Professorship

In January 2025, Vermont Law and Graduate School (VLGS) awarded its first-ever named professorship, the Pescosolido Professorship of Food and Agricultural Law and Policy, to **CAFS Director Laurie Beyranevand JD'03**. This five-year term professorship was made possible by a generous pledge and gift from VLGS alumna Pamela Pescosolido JD'90. "I'm honored to have been awarded this professorship, and I hope to honor the legacy of the Pescosolido family's strong agricultural heritage," Beyranevand said. "I see this as a call to advance the future of food and agricultural law and policy through strong education and training of future food system leaders."



New Communications Manager

In August 2024, **Austin Price** joined the team as CAFS's new communications manager. Austin previously worked at the Berkeley Food Institute, a food and agriculture research center at the University of California, Berkeley, where he collaborated with faculty and students to connect California food and ag research with policymakers and community organizers. Before that, he spent some time living and farming in Canada's Northwest Territories. He has a background in environmental journalism, covering policy, wildlife, fisheries, and agriculture as a writer and photographer for publications like *Bay Nature*, *Sierra*, *Yale Environment 360*, and *Earth Island Journal*, where he worked as a contributing editor.



Legal Fellow

Callum LaFrance JD'24 joined the team as a legal fellow in a joint appointment with the Environmental Justice Clinic in August 2024. Callum had previously worked as a CAFS summer honors intern, supporting CAFS's partnerships with Rural Coalition and the Natural Resources Defense Council. As a fellow, Callum researched laws and policies addressing food and nutrition for individuals who are incarcerated. His work built on "**The State of Prison Food in New England**," a report CAFS developed in partnership with Farm to Institution New England, for a forthcoming resource from CAFS's Institutional Food Procurement Policy Project.

Other Updates

In July 2025, **Liz Turner** completed her two-year term as Food and Agricultural Law and Policy Fellow and joined the faculty at Vermont Law and Graduate School as a visiting assistant professor. She will continue working with CAFS while teaching Introduction to Food and Agricultural Law and Policy and the Law and Policy of Urban Agriculture.

In September 2025, **Emily Spiegel** was promoted to director of research to reflect her leadership on CAFS's research projects. As director of research, Emily will play a prominent role in maintaining the integrity of the team's research methods and output.

CAFS IN THE FIELD

This timeline highlights presentations, media appearances, and other key moments for the CAFS team from July 2024 to September 2025.

July 2024

Senior Staff Attorney Fran Miller LLM'17 moderated a panel on the Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act in a webinar hosted by the International Farm Transition Network.

Director of Research and Senior Research Fellow Emily Spiegel spoke with The Herald about CAFS's updated "Housing and Employment Rights for Vermont Dairy Workers" handbook.

Fran Miller appeared on the Agriculture of America podcast to discuss heirs' property and the history of inherited land.

Urban Ag News highlighted the partnership between CAFS and the USDA Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production.

Staff Attorney Wendy Chen discussed the Farmers Market Legal Toolkit resource "Volunteers at Farmers Markets: Managing Legal Risks" on an episode of the farmers market podcast Tent Talk.

Fran Miller presented "Rural Lawyers on the Frontline: A Discussion with the Heirs' Property Practitioner Network" at the Rural Sociological Society 86th Annual Meeting in Madison, Wisconsin. At the same event, **Food and Agriculture Clinic Director Emma Scott** presented "Precarious Protection: Analyzing Compliance with Pesticide Regulations for Farmworker Safety" and was a panelist on "Rural Sociology Beyond Academia: Public Scholarship for Students and Early-Career Professionals."

August 2024

Food and Agriculture Fellow Liz Turner and **Deputy Director and Senior Researcher Lihlani Nelson** attended and exhibited at the National Urban Agriculture Conference in Detroit, Michigan.

September 2024

Laurie Beyranevand spoke with Investigate Midwest on farmworkers' fears of deportation and retaliation in light of the presidential election.

A reporter for LAist mentions the **National Gleaning Project's** map of California food recovery organizations in their fruit gleaning mission in the San Fernando Valley.

Laurie Beyranevand presented a legal overview at the "Mycotoxin Detection Speaking Event & Wikipedia Edit-a-thon" hosted by the USDA National Agriculture Library.

The Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic interviewed **Emma Scott** as she transitioned from Harvard into her new role at CAFS.

Fran Miller presented "Developing a Regional Governance Framework for New England's Food System: Insights from the New England Integrated Policy Program" at the UVM Food System Research Summit in Burlington, Vermont.

Laurie Beyranevand spoke with NBC News about the FDA's slow response to the high levels of heavy metals like lead found in food products meant for children.

DC-based nonprofit Beyond Pesticides cited three CAFS reports and a companion report published by the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future—"Essentially Unprotected" (May 2021), "Essential and In Crisis" (May 2021), "Exposed and At Risk" (September 2022), and "Precarious Protection" (December 2023)—in an article on a recent study that links pesticide exposure with disproportionately high DNA damage in Latinx children from rural, farmworker families.

Fran Miller presented at Rally 2024: The National Land Conservation Conference, in a panel that discussed conservation, its history in the U.S. and globally, how Indigenous people define it, and how land trusts might aspire to do better with Indigenous communities.



Fran Miller with fellow Rally 2024 panelists: Jean Willoughby and Nathan Galaviz (Agrarian Trust), Kristin Wyman (an enrolled member of the Nipmuc tribe in Massachusetts) and Luis Marcos (CEO of the Maya Economic Development Corporation in Nebraska).

October 2024

VermontBiz highlighted several VLGS programs, including the **Farmland Access Legal Toolkit** and CAFS's partnership with the USDA Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production.

USDA mentioned CAFS in a press release summarizing its broad investments in urban agriculture and innovative production.

Emma Scott discussed issues, policies, and programs relevant to migrant agricultural workers in a webinar hosted by the Agricultural Law Institute at the Southern University Law Center.

Fran Miller participated on a panel "Imagining a Different Future: Law Reform Possibilities to Deal with Highly Fractionated Land" at the National Consumer Law Center conference in Orlando, Florida. Fran also toured the southeast to present on heirs' property at workshops and conferences in North Carolina, Florida, and Alabama, including a presentation at the Professional Agricultural Workers Conference at Tuskegee University.

November 2024

A writer for the *Daily Yonder* points to the **National Gleaning Project's** network of food recovery organizations while explaining the role of gleaning in her farming community in rural Wisconsin.

Laurie Beyranevand spoke with *Quartz* about corporate price fixing among the largest meatpackers in the U.S. and how consumers will continue to pay the price (literally) without government intervention to reduce consolidation.

CAFS IN THE FIELD

Wendy Chen presented two sessions—“Managing Common Legal Risks for Farmers Markets” and “Avoiding Common Legal Pitfalls for Farmers Markets”—at the Mid-Atlantic Farmers Market Conference in Richmond, Virginia.

In a *Marketplace* article, **Laurie Beyranevand** discussed the FDA’s new traceability rule, which will require some food companies to keep additional records to improve food safety.

An article in *Sentient* quoted **Laurie Beyranevand** as it lays out the argument for using the term “food apartheid” rather than “food desert.”

Following the nomination of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to lead the Health and Human Services Department, the *New York Times* talked with **Laurie Beyranevand** on the likelihood RFK Jr. would be able to reverse Food and Drug Administration approvals.

Laurie Beyranevand spoke with a reporter for *VT Digger* about concerns among Vermont’s immigrant farmworkers in anticipation of President-elect Donald Trump’s deportation plans.

Fran Miller attended the American Agriculture Law Association conference in Memphis, Tennessee, alongside VLGS students, who won the student trivia contest (as the “Vernmonsters”) for the second year in a row.



VLGS students Andrew Hockenberry, Emily Starobin, Laura Ataa Agyekumhene, Christina Kareem, Nicole Renna, Julia Wickham, and Christina Reiter with CAFS Senior Staff Attorney Fran Miller at the American Agriculture Law Association conference in Memphis, Tennessee.

Laurie Beyranevand and **Director Emma Scott** presented on the panel “Precarious Protection: Analyzing Compliance with Pesticide Regulations for Farmworker Safety” at the National Farmworker Law Conference in Atlanta, Georgia.



Tomás Rogel Gonzalez (Southern Migrant Legal Services), Laurie Beyranevand, Emma Scott, Lisa Palumbo (Legal Aid Chicago), and Tessa Pulaski (Southern Migrant Legal Services and former CAFS summer honors intern) after their panel at the National Farmworker Law Conference in Atlanta, Georgia.

January 2025

Laurie Beyranevand and **Emma Scott** participated in the Academy of Food Law & Policy's Third Annual Conference in Chicago, Illinois. Laurie was the moderator for "Strategic Visioning for the Academy of Food Law and Policy," and Emma was a panelist for "Deep Dive Panel: Opportunities for Food System Change in the Farm Bill."

Fran Miller spoke on community land trusts in a webinar hosted by the USDA National Agricultural Library.

Laurie Beyranevand talked with a reporter for *Sentient* on U.S. agriculture policy predictions under the Trump administration.

Laurie Beyranevand was quoted by *Better Homes & Gardens* after the Food and Drug Administration officially banned Red No. 3, a food color additive linked to cancer and behavioral problems among children.

Laurie Beyranevand spoke with *Grist* on the issue of agricultural overproduction and how gleaning organizations illuminate the need for systemic solutions to food waste.

February 2025

After a farmworker died after pesticide exposure on a Michigan asparagus farm, MLive.com spoke with **Laurie Beyranevand** on how protections for farmworkers typically do not receive the full attention of the regulatory agencies designed to protect workers.

Fran Miller presented two sessions on heirs' property at the annual conference of the Southern Rural Sociological Association in Irving, Texas.

Wendy Chen presented "Managing Common Legal Risks for Farmers Markets" at the virtual Indiana Farmers Market Forum.

Emily Spiegel presented on defensive publication at the Organic Seed Growers Conference in Corvallis, Oregon.



CAFS Director of Research and Senior Research Fellow Emily Spiegel at the Organic Seed Growers Conference in Corvallis, Oregon.

CAFS IN THE FIELD

March 2025

Emma Scott gave a presentation called “Encouraging Expanded Producer Responsibility in Agricultural Labor Relations” at a virtual symposium organized by *William & Mary Law School Environmental Law & Policy Review*.

Wendy Chen presented resources from the Farmers Market Legal Toolkit on rules and procedures for risk management as part of the virtual Virginia Farmers Market Association Market Manager Certification Course.

Laurie Beyranevand and **Emma Scott** participated in a panel at Climate Justice LIVE, a symposium at Vermont Law and Graduate School organized by the *Vermont Journal of Environmental Law*. Laurie moderated a panel discussion called “Legal Protections for Immigrants and Farmworkers” which featured Scott, Migrant Justice’s Will Lambek, and attorney Claudia Quintero as panelists.

April 2025

Lihlani Nelson and National Farm to School Network (NFSN) Policy Specialist Cassandra Bull co-presented the session “Exploring Farm to School Legislative Trends: What Can State Policy Do for You?” at the Northeast Farm to Institution Summit in Portland, Maine.

An op-ed in the *Concord Monitor* quoted **Fran Miller** to discuss some of the ways farmers can access farmland when land ownership is out of reach.

The New Jersey Food Democracy Collaborative hosted **Liz Turner** in its Food Democracy Lunch and Learn webinar series to discuss urban agriculture and how local policies can better support it.

Fran Miller presented on clinical approaches to heirs’ property at the Association of American Law School’s Conference on Clinical Legal Education in Baltimore, Maryland.

May 2025

Laurie Beyranevand presented on common legal issues for gleaning organizations at the Association of Gleaning Organizations’ Annual Gleaning Symposium in Providence, Rhode Island.

June 2025

Fran Miller presented on family land and property inheritance in a webinar organized by the American Farmland Trust as part of its Land Transfer Navigator program.

Lihlani Nelson co-presented the webinar “Exploring Farm to School Legislative Trends: What Can State Policy Do for You?” alongside NFSN Policy Specialist Cassandra Bull.

Fran Miller led an heirs’ property workshop training at the National Association of Community Development Professions conference in Charleston, West Virginia.

July 2025

The White River Valley Herald spoke with **Laurie Beyranevand** on a \$10 million anonymous donation to Vermont Law and Graduate School that contributes to environmental law and policy research and education, including research on animal protection policy, a seafood and aquaculture project, and scholarships and expanded experiential learning opportunities to support students.

Fran Miller explained some of the tools to transfer property without having to go through a will in an [article on understanding heirs' property](#) from the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy.

Laurie Beyranevand presented on a panel called "Enhancing Experiential Learning in Environmental, Energy, and Sustainability Law and Policy Education" at the Southeastern Association of Law Schools (SEALS) conference in Amelia Island, Florida.

Fran Miller participated in a roundtable discussion called "Family Land and Housing Preservation" at the Housing Assistance Council in Detroit, Michigan.

Fran Miller presented on property inheritance and family land transfer in a series of webinars for members of the National Association of Latino Community Asset Builders (NALCAB).

August 2025

Lihlani Nelson was invited to join the Network Advisory Council for Farm to Institution New England.

Director Laurie Beyranevand JD'03 spoke with *Delish* on how the meaning of "expire by" dates on product labels isn't often clearly defined.

September 2025

Liz Turner and **Fran Miller** attended the Land Trust Alliance's Rally 2025: The National Land Conservation Conference in Cleveland, Ohio, where Fran moderated a panel on expanding access to farmland and housing through conservation easements.

Fran Miller went on the road to present on issues around property inheritance and farmland transfer. First, she presented at the NALCAB conference in Nashville, Tennessee. She then presented on heirs' property in trainings in Louisville, Kentucky, and Charlotte, North Carolina.

Laurie Beyranevand spoke on a panel addressing state legislative trends at the Food and Drug Law Institute's Food Advertising, Labeling, and Litigation Conference.



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