



November 8, 2015

Dear Minnesota and Wisconsin Farmers:

**Farm Commons 2016 Legal Services Application is now open!**

Many farmers have a hard time finding expert legal help on issues relating to their direct-to-consumer or sustainable farm business. Farm Commons was founded to address that problem. As a nonprofit organization, Farm Commons focuses primarily on educational resources such as workshops, webinars, and print guides.

Sometimes, education isn't enough. **Farmers often need one-on-one help from an expert attorney. From reviewing farmer-drafted documents to negotiating agreements or interpreting specific rules and regulations, Farm Commons offers individual help to sustainable farm businesses in Minnesota and Wisconsin.**

Farm Commons' Executive Director and Attorney, Rachel Armstrong, is a national leader in how the law affects direct-to-consumer and sustainable farm businesses. She uses her farm background to help farmers preserve their values and build a stable, resilient business.

*"An application for legal services? How does this work?"* As a nonprofit organization, we serve a limited number of farm-clients and we want all farmers to have the chance to be served. While our services are not free, they are very valuable. We charge a below-market rate (\$100 per hour or a flat fee for select services), and we work closely with clients to limit costs as much as possible. Helping farmers help themselves is a part of our core mission. Clients know exactly what to expect for total fees before we begin and we only bill for work after it is performed.

*"Who can apply for legal services?"* We work with farmers who meet one of the following three criteria: 1) the farm is certified organic, 2) the farm is small to mid-sized, or, 3) the farm sells primarily into local and regional markets. We generally define a mid-sized farm as one having gross revenue under \$500,000.

*"What can you help farmers accomplish?"* We create solutions in many areas of sustainable farm business law: land use and leasing issues, sales contracts, organizing the farm business, farm employment law, volunteers and interns, food safety and liability management, Community Supported Agriculture programs, and farm financing

issues. We don't work on matters that involve personal wills or trusts, family or marital law, or non-employment tax matters. Our mission is to serve farm businesses, so we are not able to work with food businesses that aren't directly related to a farm.

**For example, we can help farmers achieve the following:**

1. Draft a lease that accommodates their unique land use goals and needs.
2. Write a sales contract that protects their investment in production capacity.
3. Create farm LLC documents that protect personal assets and foster cohesion among farm owners.
4. Advise farmers on their employment law obligations towards regular, seasonal, and volunteer workers.
5. Assemble a salaried, in-kind, or non-cash wage plan that meets detailed employment law regulations.
6. Develop secure access to farmland through land contract or loan arrangements, especially with a peer-to-peer focus.
7. ...and much more!

*"How do I begin?"* Complete the attached application and submit it to Farm Commons. You will receive a response to your application around mid-December. Farm Commons staff will work with accepted clients to set goals, anticipate total fees, and schedule communications in late December and early January. We plan to complete all our legal services between late January and May of 2016. We find that once the production season is in full force, neither farmers nor Farm Commons can complete anything more! We want to get things done quickly so participants can move forward as soon as possible.

Get your application in today! **The deadline to apply is December 1, 2015.**

Please contact us with any questions. We look forward to visiting with you. And don't forget to visit our website for webinars, guides, and resources on all aspects of sustainable farm law.

Sincerely,



Rachel Armstrong  
Executive Director and Attorney  
Farm Commons



## **Farm Commons 2016 Legal Services Application**

Thank you for your interest in legal services from Farm Commons! Please read the attached cover letter for more information about our services. If you'd like to apply, please complete this form and send it to Farm Commons via email or post before December 1, 2015.

*First, let's confirm that you are a good fit for our legal services program.*

Yes No

Are you located in Minnesota or Wisconsin?

Are the legal services you seek for a farm business, rather than for personal or non-farm-business purposes?

Are you comfortable with paying the below-market-rate of \$100/hour or other negotiated fees as we might agree together?

Can you commit to communicating with Farm Commons staff regularly and in a timely manner between January and May so we can complete the services before the production season begins?

Farm Commons does not draft personal wills or trusts, litigate or advise once a lawsuit has been filed, or handle family/marital law matters. Are you okay with those limitations?

If you checked "yes" to each of these questions, you are a good fit. Let's keep going.

*Tell us about you and your farm.*

Your Name:

Your Farm Name:

Farm Address:

Mailing Address, if different:

Email:

Phone:

Please select the box that best describes your farm operation:

Farmer: Diversified

Farmer: Livestock

Farmer: Row crops

Farmer: Vegetable, Fruit

Beginning Farmer/Farm Employee

## Farm Commons 2016 Legal Services Application

How long has your farm been in operation?

- 0 years or not operational yet
- 1-5 years/seasons
- 6-10 years/seasons
- Over 10 years/seasons

*We'd like to hear about your legal needs.*

Please select a general subject category for the legal need(s) you have identified for your farm:

- CSA
- Land Use
- Farm Financing
- Sales and Contracts
- Business Organization
- Workers and Employees
- Food Safety
- Other (Please describe)

Please describe the legal services you are seeking. (Do not reveal any confidential information in your description. This application does not create an attorney-client relationship.):

If everything went perfectly, how would your farm business be improved if you received these services? In other words, what is the ideal outcome from receiving these services?

Have you accessed Farm Commons' resources in the past, including attending a workshop or reading our online material?

The next step is to send in this application. The deadline to apply is December 1, 2015.

We look forward to hearing from you. Please send us this completed form one of two ways: 1) Email it to [Rachel@farmcommons.org](mailto:Rachel@farmcommons.org) or 2) print and send a paper copy to Farm Commons, 302 W Austin St, Duluth, MN 55803.

If you have any questions, please email [Rachel@farmcommons.org](mailto:Rachel@farmcommons.org) or call 608 616 5319.