

the Sustainable Economies Law Center

2012 Annual Report of Accomplishments

In 2012, the Sustainable Economies Law Center expanded the breadth and depth of our work, continuing to develop innovative programming for resilient communities, connecting with new audiences both nationally and locally, and growing our organizational capacity. Our most significant accomplishments include:

The California Homemade Food Act

SELC drafted California's recently enacted AB 1616 - the Homemade Food Act - and shepherded it through the legislature. This law opens doors to micro-enterprise by removing legal barriers to the sale of homemade food.

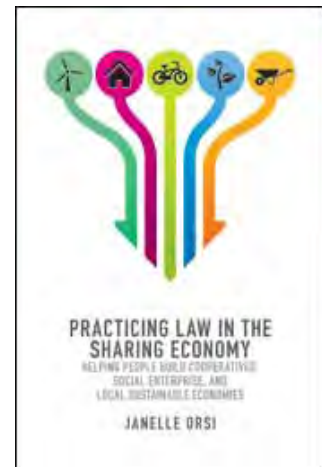
SELC is providing ongoing input on the implementation of the Homemade Food Act and has created a set of online resources for cottage food enterprises. (For more information, see CottageFood.org.)



In advocating for the passage of AB 1616, SELC built relationships with over 70 organizations and stakeholder groups, including the California Conference of Directors of Environmental Health (CCDEH), Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF), the California State Grange, and the California Department of Public Health. SELC also built and communicated with an online network of 6,442 supporters of the Homemade Food Act.

SELC Published a Book

[*Practicing Law in the Sharing Economy: Helping People Build Cooperatives, Social Enterprise, and Local Sustainable Economies*](#), by Janelle Orsi. This book was an immediate American Bar Association bestseller! [Read book summary and reviews.](#)



Workshops for Community Food Enterprises

In partnership with the Green Collar Communities Clinic (GC3), SELC taught two workshops called "Legal Eats," covering critical legal issues for food enterprises. Each workshop had over 60 attendees, and one workshop offered simultaneous Spanish translation. The workshops were offered in Richmond, in partnership with the City of Richmond, and in East Oakland, in partnership with Youth Uprising.

Legal Advice for Worker Cooperatives

SELC and GC3 provided free hour-long legal advice sessions to 19 clients contemplating the formation of worker-owned cooperatives.

Paving the Way for Local Currencies

SELC researched and wrote about the history of legal barriers to the creation of local currencies in the state of California. We plan to use our findings to introduce legislation that removes California's Corporations Code Section 107, and opens opportunities for complementary community currencies.

Workshops for Worker-Owned Enterprises

SELC and GC3 taught two 4-hour legal workshops for worker-owned businesses. Each workshop had over 70 attendees. The workshops were offered in Richmond, in partnership with the City of Richmond, and East Oakland, in partnership with Communities for a Better Environment. One workshop offered simultaneous Spanish translation. The presentation portion of the Richmond workshop is available as a series of videos on the SELC website.



The Urban Agriculture Legal Resource Library

SELC launched *UrbanAgLaw.org*, an online wiki-based legal resource library on urban farming. The library covers a variety of topics, including zoning, land access, liability, soil contamination, employment law, and food/ag regulations. Twelve volunteers participate in the development and maintenance of this website.

Homegrown Food Laws

SELC researched prior legislative proposals nationwide, and drafted a proposal for a new form of legislation called a Homegrown Food Law, which will remove legal barriers to the sale of homegrown food, and remove barriers to the use of urban land for community gardens and commercial urban farms. SELC is seeking to introduce this law in California in 2013. (For more information, see *HomegrownFoodLaw.org*.)

Supporting Hmong and Lao Farmers in Fresno

To begin to address employment-law related barriers for farmers, SELC presented at the National Hmong American Farmers conference in March. We provided substantial legal resources to farmers, including educational handouts and sample documents. SELC also interviewed 21 farmers at the conference, collecting information about how each farm manages labor needs. SELC continues to research legal and policy solutions for family farms.



"A group of volunteers from SELC presented at the conference of the National Hmong American Farmers and have also prepared materials and sample documents that will be of great use to farmers. SELC's presentation was very well received both by farmers and by agents from the California Department of Industrial Relations. I believe that SELC has laid important groundwork in addressing the needs of the Hmong and Lao farmers in our community."

-- Richard Molinar, Farm Advisor, UC Cooperative Extension in Fresno

Supporting Chinese Farmers in Santa Clara County

SELC is helping to appeal citations and fines imposed on four Chinese vegetable farmers in Santa Clara County. The fines were primarily for minor employment law violations related to the involvement of family members in the farm work. SELC is collaborating with the Cooperative Extension and the Bay Area Chrysanthemum Growers Cooperative, a support organization for the farmers.



Workers Compensation for Farmers

SELC researched the legal requirements for workers compensation insurance on family farms, and created a two-page guide called "Workers Compensation and Family Farms." SELC also drafted a memo analyzing the feasibility of state legislation to broaden the workers compensation insurance options for farmers.

The *Legal Eats* Handbook

SELC and GC3 published a 60-page handbook called *Legal Eats: Resources for Food Justice Enterprises*, covering 20 different legal topics of relevance to food enterprise.

The *Think Outside the Boss* Handbook

SELC and GC3 published a 100-page handbook called *Think Outside the Boss: How to Start a Worker Owned Cooperative*, which includes substantial legal materials and sample documents for worker cooperatives.



Training the Next Generation of Food Justice Lawyers

SELC worked with 21 law students to present our Legal Eats workshops for community food enterprises, and to manage client intakes for legal advice sessions. Law students learned legal basics for food enterprises, practiced basic skills of transactional lawyering, and had the opportunity to learn from legal advice sessions provided to clients.

Legal Advice for Farmers and Food Entrepreneurs

SELC and GC3 provided free hour-long legal advice sessions to 18 farmers and food entrepreneurs in the Bay Area.

Employment Laws and Cooperatives

SELC did extensive legal research on California employment laws, in order to advise cooperatives on this complex legal area.



Paving the Way for Housing Cooperatives

SELC partnered with the CA Center for Cooperative Development and various community land trusts to draft legislation which removes significant barriers to the creation of cooperatively owned housing in California. Now we're looking for a legislator to author this bill in 2013.



Workshop on Legal Tools for the Sharing Economy

SELC developed and offered a two-day workshop called "Legal Tools for the Sharing Economy." This workshop provides foundation legal knowledge for sustainable food enterprise, social enterprises, and organizations focused on the sharing economy.

The Cooperatives Legal Resource Library

SELC launched *Co-opLaw.org*, a wiki-based online legal resource library for cooperatives of all kinds. This website already contains hundreds of pages of resources. In partnership with the GC3, we are continually adding information to this collection of resources and sample legal documents for co-ops.

Barter and Local Currencies Legal Resource Library

SELC launched a new online Resource Library on Barter and Local Currencies, at *BarterLaw.org*.

Community Ownership of Local Enterprise

SELC was instrumental in the 2012 passage of the federal CROWDFUND Act, which removes significant legal barriers to local investing. SELC attorney Jenny Kassan was present when President Obama signed the law. In 2013, SELC will guide enterprises on how to use the new law to obtain loans and investments from local community members.

