

## 2025-2026 Policy and Budget Priorities

The Dairy Business Association proudly presents its 2025-2026 budget and policy priorities to strengthen Wisconsin's dairy industry and rural communities. Protecting Wisconsin dairy's integrity remains critical, with policies addressing product labeling, labor stability and next-generation farmer support. Key initiatives also focus on clean water through nitrogen optimization, cover crop incentives and expanded well compensation. DBA also prioritizes regulatory fairness, rural infrastructure and economic development through grants, incentives and market access. Investments in transportation, dairy research and education will drive innovation and sustainability, reinforcing Wisconsin's leadership in dairy and supporting vibrant rural communities.

### Protect the Integrity of Wisconsin Dairy

We support policies that safeguard the dairy industry from disruptive local regulations that could hinder its growth and sustainability. Adequate labor is essential, so policies must focus on attracting and retaining a skilled workforce. Additionally, promoting future generations of farming is crucial, which can be achieved by providing educational opportunities, financial incentives and mentorship programs to encourage young people to pursue careers in dairy farming, thereby ensuring the industry's longevity and innovation.

- Oppose the retail sale and advertising of unpasteurized milk
- Require fair and accurate labeling for plant-based dairy imitation products
- Ensure adequate access to labor; protect existing labor through a non-citizen drivers-card

### Ensure Regulatory Fairness and Enhance Rural Communities

DBA promotes policies that encourage regulatory consistency and fairness while fostering the growth and resilience of rural communities through infrastructure investment and support for agriculture-friendly initiatives.

- Support state preemption of local animal health ordinances
- Support and promote the state's livestock facility siting
- Raise the cap on acreage allowable in Ag Enterprise Zones to 3 million acres

### Promote Economic Support and Development

We support policies that recognize and promote dairy farms as the driver of Wisconsin agriculture and the backbone of Wisconsin's economy.

- Increase funding for the Dairy Processing Grant Program for a total of \$1.2 million over the biennium
- Continue engagement on Wisconsin's Agriculture Exports Program with \$4 million in funding over the biennium
- Develop incentives for beginning farmers to enter through income tax credits
- Facilitate access to low-interest loans and financial assistance programs to help farmers invest in new technologies and infrastructure
- Develop a transparent farm field calculator that gives farmers a tool to engage carbon trading markets to create secondary income streams
- Improve and promote the Nutrient Trading Clearinghouse to provide more energy sustainability and income for dairy farms

## Support Clean Water Initiatives

We support efforts that address concerns about nitrates in groundwater, including existing programs that help farmers improve water quality:

- Maintain Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program with \$2 million in funding over the biennium
- Reapprove Cover Crop Insurance Premium Rebate Program through continued funding of \$1 million annually
- Fully fund Producer-led Watershed Grant Program – with permanent funding of \$3 million over the biennium
- Well Compensation Program – Expand eligibility requirements to participate; increase funding to \$10 million total over the biennium
- Establish a Managed Grazing Pilot Program – with funding of \$1 million over the biennium
- Promote full statutory funding for County Conservation Program staffing to \$20.2 million annually

## Build a Lasting Agriculture Transportation Infrastructure

Supporting policies aimed at bolstering transportation infrastructure for dairy producers in Wisconsin is crucial for enhancing efficiency and competitiveness in the industry. Improving roads, bridges and rail networks can reduce transportation costs and facilitate timely delivery of dairy products to markets across the state and beyond. By investing in infrastructure, policymakers can ensure that dairy producers have reliable access to transportation routes, enabling them to maintain freshness and quality while expanding their market reach. This support not only benefits dairy farmers but also strengthens Wisconsin's position as a leader in dairy production and distribution.

- Continue investment in the Agriculture Road Improvement Program (ARIP) for upgrading transportation infrastructure that is critical to dairy's success - \$150 million over the biennium
- Provide Commercial Driver's License (CDL) grants to promote adequate labor force needs similar to 2023 Act 153 to continue investment in developing skilled drivers to move goods around the state
- Support the creation of a general commodity permit that allows for 91,000 lbs. and six axles on the state's highways only
- Create a Biofuels Incentive Package through grants for biofuels retail infrastructure grants with \$8 million of funding over the biennium

## Encourage Dairy Research and Education

In Wisconsin, dairy farming stands as a cornerstone of our agricultural heritage and economic vitality. Continued state investment in dairy research and education is not just beneficial but essential for our future. By supporting research initiatives, we ensure that our farmers have access to cutting-edge technologies and practices that enhance productivity and sustainability. Education programs foster innovation and equip the next generation of dairy leaders with the knowledge to tackle emerging challenges. Investing in dairy research and education not only strengthens our economy but also preserves our proud tradition of excellence in dairy farming for generations to come.

- Continue support for and promotion of UW Dairy Innovation Hub
- Bolster program offering at UW River Falls, Farm & Industry Short Course with \$350,000 annually to promote and build a lasting course offering for new and future farmers
- Strengthen dairy animal health efforts to address Bovine Tuberculosis, Bovine mastitis, Avian flu, etc. by adding a position at DATCP
- Support state efforts to protect Wisconsin's livestock industry and food safety to mounting threats and recent outbreaks by funding additional positions for DATCP's Department of Animal Health

For more information on DBA's policy priorities visit [dairyforward.com](http://dairyforward.com)