

Gov. Walker: State leaders celebrate success of Wisconsin Cheese Industry

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Contact: Tom Evenson, [\(608\) 266-2839](tel:6082662839)

DATCP Secretary Brancel, WEDC Secretary Hogan join Governor Walker in visiting cheese companies statewide as part of "Wisconsin Cheese Day" tour

MADISON - Governor Scott Walker, Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) Secretary Ben Brancel, and Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) Secretary and CEO Mark R. Hogan will visit six cheese companies throughout the state today as part of the Wisconsin's Dairy Month activities.

During the "Wisconsin Cheese Day" tour, Governor Walker, Secretaries Brancel and Hogan, and other officials are visiting the companies to highlight the importance of the cheese industry to Wisconsin's economy and to acknowledge the cheesemakers' contributions to the industry. Also taking part in the tour are DATCP Deputy Secretary Jeff Lyon and WEDC Deputy Secretary and COO Tricia Braun. They are being joined by leaders from the dairy and cheese industry, local and regional economic development organizations, state legislators, and the University of Wisconsin. "Now that cheese is the official dairy product of Wisconsin, it's only fitting that we visit some of the more than 140 cheese producers in the state to acknowledge their role in keeping Wisconsin a world leader in the industry," Governor Walker said. "The state's 1,200 licensed cheesemakers work hard every day to produce more than 600 varieties of cheese that are sold around the world, and Wisconsin Cheese Day is a chance for us to celebrate their successes."

The companies that are part of the tour and the state officials taking part are:

- **Klondike Cheese, Monroe** - Governor Walker, UW-Extension Chancellor Cathy Sandeen, and Dean Karl Martin.
- **Great Lakes Cheese Inc., La Crosse** - DATCP Secretary Brancel, WEDC Deputy Secretary Braun.
- **Masters Gallery Foods, Plymouth** - WEDC Secretary Hogan, DATCP Deputy Secretary Lyon.
- **Rosewood Dairy, Algoma** - WEDC Secretary Hogan, DATCP Deputy Secretary Lyon.
- **Westby Cooperative Creamery, Westby** - DATCP Secretary Brancel, WEDC Deputy Secretary Braun.
- **Biery Cheese Co., Plover** - WEDC VP of Business and Community Development Barb LaMue and Norm Monsen, DATCP Agriculture Market Development Specialist.

"Wisconsin's dairy processors have invested hundreds of millions of dollars into their plants, creating greater efficiencies, adding capacity, and expanding product varieties," said Secretary Brancel. "Dairy processors take quality milk from Wisconsin farms and transform it into a value-added, safe, nutritious, and affordable product that meets the needs of consumers around the globe."

"Wisconsin's cheese producers are doing more than making award-winning products that are recognized worldwide - they are also creating jobs and helping to boost the state's economy, particularly in rural regions of the state," said Secretary Hogan. "WEDC is proud to work with cheese producers around Wisconsin to provide them with the support needed to continue to grow their businesses."

Wisconsin cheesemakers make 27 percent of the nation's cheese, ranking Wisconsin as the top cheese producing state. If Wisconsin was a country, it would rank fourth in the world in overall cheese production, behind the United States, Germany, and France. In 2016, Wisconsin produced 3.2 billion pounds of cheese. Wisconsin cheese producers also exported more than \$127 million in cheese products around the world in 2016, a 16 percent increase since 2010.

On June 1, Governor Walker signed into law a bill that designates cheese as Wisconsin's official dairy product. Cheese joins a list of state symbols, including the dairy cow, which was designated the state's domestic animal in 1971, and milk, which has been Wisconsin's official state beverage since 1987.

Governor Walker also has declared June as "Dairy Month" throughout Wisconsin. With more than 9,000 dairy farms throughout the state providing nearly 80,000 jobs and generating \$43.4 billion in economic impact annually, the dairy industry is vital to Wisconsin's economy, culture, and heritage.

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