

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection: Secretary Brancel guest column: Impact of dairy reaches beyond the barn doors

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MADISON – *Below is a guest column from Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) Secretary Ben Brancel:*

The benefits of Wisconsin's dairy industry reaches far beyond the barn doors. While our Wisconsin farm families rely on the dairy business for their livelihood, we all rely on dairy for the impact it has on our state's economy, culture and future.

We see America's Dairyland on our license plates every day while driving down the highway, but we likely take what that really means for granted. Dairy contributes \$43.4 billion to Wisconsin's economy annually. That is more than if you combine the value of citrus to Florida, potatoes to Idaho, apples to Washington and raisins to California. These dollars support local communities, businesses and schools.

Our friends and neighbors, in urban and rural areas of the state, have jobs that are related to the state's dairy industry. The dairy industry employs 78,900 people in the state. Jobs created by dairy businesses bring long-term stability to local employment bases. Every job in agriculture supports an additional 1.46 jobs elsewhere in Wisconsin.

Wisconsin's universities and technical schools prepare young people for future careers in the dairy business, from animal science and biotechnology to equipment engineering and marketing. There is a place for everyone who wants to work in Wisconsin's dairy industry.

Wisconsin's dairy industry may be changing but it continues to be strong. Every farm is unique. When you drive down the road, you won't see any two farms that are identical. Some farms are small and rely on robotic technology to get the milking done. Others are large and produce organic milk. Our diversity is our state's greatest strength. With more than 9,000 dairy farms and 400 dairy processors, we all benefit from these beautiful bovines and the quality products created from their milk.

More than a quarter of the nation's cheese is made right here in our state by our cheeseheads. Our dairy processors create more than 600 types, styles and varieties of cheese, and they continue to do research to ensure they are meeting our customer needs in the future. At national and international award events, Wisconsin's cheesemakers are recognized for their quality work, taking home top prizes again and again.

Wisconsin's reputation as a dairy state has spread around the world. Wisconsin sells its agricultural products to 150 different countries. When you say you are from Wisconsin, international government officials and business leaders are immediately engaged in how they can learn from our expertise or buy our products. Wisconsin's cows produce milk every day of the week. One day out of seven, this milk is being made into products that will go beyond our country's borders. Dairy is a worldwide business we are lucky to have in Wisconsin.

It is fitting that the World Dairy Expo calls Wisconsin home. Each fall, the dairy industry comes to Madison to meet for the five-day event. World Dairy Expo features a premier dairy show with more than 2,000 elite dairy cattle. The enormous trade show allows agribusinesses to showcase the latest in technology and research. The business meetings and farm tours that occur during World Dairy Expo build connections that continue to grow throughout the year.

It's June Dairy Month. Let's celebrate. Visit <http://www.dairydaysofsummer.com/> to find a dairy breakfast or event near you. The best thing you can do to support our hardworking family farmers is to come out to the farm, take a tour and enjoy a meal together. Every time you drink a glass of milk, grab a string cheese or have yogurt

with lunch, you are contributing to the continued success and the future of Wisconsin's dairy industry.

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