

Gov. Walker: Announces \$200,000 grant to the Center for Dairy Research to support entrepreneurship program

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Governor marks Wisconsin Cheese Day by awarding WEDC grant that will support program that assists companies in development of new dairy technologies

MADISON – Governor Scott Walker today visited the Center for Dairy Research (CDR) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison to award the center with a \$200,000 state grant to expand an innovative program that promotes entrepreneurship within the state’s \$43 billion dairy industry.

The grant from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) will enable CDR to continue to provide companies with grants of up to \$20,000 to support the commercialization of unique dairy technologies and products. Launched in 2013, the Tech Transfer, University, Research and Business Opportunity (TURBO) Program has helped 11 companies purchase equipment needed for new products or processes. To date, this program has helped create or retain 29 jobs in rural communities.

“The TURBO program has a proven track record of success in a legacy industry that employs nearly 80,000 people statewide,” said Governor Walker. “We must continue to invest in programs like this to ensure that dairy-related businesses can continue to compete in an ever-changing environment.”

CDR's TURBO program was launched to provide business assistance and technology transfer opportunities to dairy manufacturers and was originally funded through an i6 Challenge grant from the United States Department of Commerce.

WEDC's first \$200,000 grant, awarded in 2012, has helped generate more than \$2 million in private spending by the businesses receiving grants - a tenfold return on investment. Additionally, the cost to create or retain jobs was about \$7,000 per job from this program, which is significantly less than the federal grant average.

"For more than 30 years, CDR has been assisting the dairy industry with product development and technology transfer," said TURBO program manager Vic Grassman. "We have been particularly pleased to assist with and showcase the innovative pursuits of our rural Wisconsin communities. This program has allowed us to expand on that goal and the resulting job retention, creation and capital investment has ultimately benefited not only the awardees but their local communities."

Governor Walker made the announcement as part of the state's second annual Wisconsin Cheese Day, an event that highlights the importance of the cheese industry to the state's economy and acknowledges the cheesemakers' contributions to the industry.

Governor Walker and Lt. Governor Rebecca Kleefisch, Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) Secretary Sheila Harsdorf, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) Secretary and CEO Mark R. Hogan and Tourism Secretary Stephanie Klett, joined legislators and other state and local officials in visiting 13 cheese companies throughout the state today.

In addition to the Center for Dairy Research, Governor Walker visited Great Lakes Cheese, which is opening a new facility in Wausau. Other sites visited by state officials on Wisconsin Cheese Day included Gehl Foods, Germantown; Nordic Creamery, Westby; University of Wisconsin-River Falls; Shullsburg Creamery, Shullsburg; Chalet Cheese Co-op, Monroe; Clock Shadow Creamery, Milwaukee; Emmi Roth, Platteville; Eau Galle Cheese Factory, Durand; and Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery, Ellsworth.

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 2017, Wisconsin produced 3.37 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.

Wisconsin's nearly 1,200 licensed cheesemakers produce over 600 types, styles and varieties of cheese – nearly double the number of any other state.

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.