

Gov. Walker: Announces creation of Wisconsin Dairy Task Force 2.0

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Directs Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection Secretary and University of Wisconsin System President to Appoint Task Force

MADISON – Governor Scott Walker announced today that the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) and the University of Wisconsin System (UW System) will create Wisconsin Dairy Task Force 2.0 that will enable stakeholders to come together to make recommendations on actions needed to maintain a viable and profitable dairy industry in our state. Governor Walker directed DATCP Secretary Sheila Harsdorf and UW System President Ray Cross to appoint the task force.

“We need to work together to develop a strategy to maintain our state’s legacy as the Dairy State,” said Governor Walker. “Dairy farmers are facing challenges due to an extended period of low milk prices and market uncertainty. By creating this task force, industry experts can work together to create real solutions that can help our farmers, processors, and allied organizations, and to ensure that our dairy industry is not only our past, but our future.”

In 1985, the UW System and DATCP Secretary appointed a Wisconsin Dairy Task Force comprised of 31 individuals including dairy farmers, milk processors and allied organizations. The Task Force met numerous times over the course of 14 months, and at its conclusion, unanimously approved an 82-page report that included findings and 75 recommendations for the industry. Many of the recommendations have been implemented over time to retain Wisconsin’s recognition as a dairy leader.

“I look forward to partnering with the UW System to create a Wisconsin Dairy Task Force 2.0 and working with farmers, processors, industry organizations and others to address the challenges facing the dairy industry,” said DATCP Secretary Harsdorf. “I thank the Governor for recognizing the importance of the dairy industry to our state’s economy, and I am pleased to be involved as the industry works together to maintain Wisconsin’s status as a leading dairy state.”

Wisconsin is home to more dairy farms than any other state, and about 96% of the state’s dairy farms are family owned. Wisconsin is also home to a vibrant dairy processing industry, renowned universities and research facilities, extensive network of agribusinesses, and the World Dairy Expo. Wisconsin’s dairy industry creates nearly 80,000 jobs and generates \$43.4 billion in economic impact every year, nearly half of agriculture’s total economic impact.

“The University plays a critical role in the development and growth of Wisconsin’s dairy industry, both as a source of research and as a partner for our farmers,” added UW System President Cross. “This task force is an opportunity for the UW System, the state, and the industry to find new ways to advance Wisconsin’s leadership role as the Dairy State.”

The Task Force will be chaired by Mark Stephenson. Stephenson is the Director of Dairy Policy Analysis at UW-Madison where he is involved in research and outreach in the dairy industry.

“The Wisconsin dairy industry feels as though it is at another turning point, like the one faced in the 1980s—different reasons, but significant challenges and new opportunities,” said Mark Stephenson. “We need to be sure that we chart our direction to change what we can and accommodate what we can’t. The agronomic resources of the state have always been ideally suited to milk production and that is a foundation from which we can build a vibrant future.”

The Task Force will seek to gain consensus on issues facing the dairy industry and release recommendations for the industry going forward. Additional information about the Task Force’s membership and upcoming meetings will be released in the near future.