

# Gov. Walker: Joins state leaders in visiting 13 cheese producers statewide as part of Wisconsin Cheese Day

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*DATCP Secretary Harsdorf, WEDC Secretary Hogan, Tourism Secretary Klett, legislators and dairy industry leaders tour companies to thank them for their contribution to state's economy*

MADISON – Governor Scott Walker, Lt. Gov. 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 will visit 13 cheese companies and facilities throughout the state today as part of the second annual Wisconsin Cheese Day.

“Wisconsin is America’s Dairyland – and since cheese is Wisconsin’s official dairy product, it is only fitting that we visit cheese producers throughout the state to thank them for the contributions they are making to their industry and the state’s economy,” said Governor Scott Walker. “Wisconsin is home to 8,500 dairy farms, the vast majority of which are family-owned. Wisconsin Cheese Day is about celebrating the successes of these companies as well as the family-supporting jobs they create right here in Wisconsin.”

During the tour, Governor Walker, Lt. Governor Kleefisch, Secretaries Harsdorf, Hogan and Klett 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 WEDC Deputy Secretary and COO Tricia Braun, DATCP Assistant Deputy Secretary Keith Ripp and Kaitlyn Riley, the state's new Alice in Dairyland. 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.

Also taking part in the tour are WEDC Vice President of Business and Community Development Barb LaMue, WEDC Vice President of Sector Strategy Development Vincent Rice, DATCP Assistant Deputy Secretary Keith Ripp and Kaitlyn Riley, the state's new Alice in Dairyland. 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.

"I look forward to highlighting the valuable contributions of our dairy industry to our workforce and economy on Wisconsin Cheese Day," said DATCP Secretary Harsdorf. "Through innovative research and new product development, Wisconsin cheesemakers continue to create high-quality, award-winning cheese for consumers worldwide."

"Wisconsin's cheese producers are not only creating award-winning products enjoyed by cheese-lovers all around the world, but also are making a major contribution to our state's economy by creating jobs and purchasing milk from Wisconsin dairy farmers," said Secretary Hogan. "Since 2011, WEDC has awarded more than \$31 million to 29 dairy companies for projects that have resulted in the creation of more than 1,000 jobs around the state and \$783 million in capital investment. We are proud to work with Wisconsin-based cheese producers to provide them with the support they need to continue to grow their businesses."

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

- Great Lakes Cheese, Wausau: Governor Scott Walker
- Center for Dairy Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison: Governor Scott Walker
- Gehl Foods, Germantown: WEDC Secretary Hogan, DATCP Assistant Deputy Secretary Kipp and State Senator Alberta Darling

- Nordic Creamery, Westby: Governor Kleefisch; Kaitlyn Riley, Alice in Dairyland and State Senator Jennifer Shilling
- UW-River Falls Dairy Pilot Plant, River Falls: DATCP Secretary Harsdorf; WEDC Vice President of Sector Strategy Development Vincent Rice and State Senator Patty Schachtner
- Shullsburg Creamery, Shullsburg: WEDC VP Business and Community Development Barb LaMue and DATCP Market Development Specialist Norm Monsen
- Chalet Cheese Co-op, Monroe: Tourism Secretary Klett
- Clock Shadow Creamery, Milwaukee: WEDC Secretary Hogan and DATCP Assistant Deputy Secretary Kipp
- Emmi Roth, Platteville: WEDC VP Business and Community Development Barb LaMue and DATCP Market Development Specialist Norm Monsen
- Eau Galle Cheese Factory, Durand: Governor Kleefisch and Kaitlyn Riley, Alice in Dairyland
- Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery, Ellsworth: DATCP Secretary Harsdorf and WEDC Vice President of Sector Strategy Development Vincent Rice
- Cheese Counter and Dairy Heritage Center, Plymouth: WEDC Secretary Mark Hogan; DATCP Assistant Deputy Secretary Keith Ripp; State Senator Devin LeMahieu and State Representative Tyler Vorpapel
- Schreiber Foods, Green Bay: Governor Kleefisch; Kaitlyn Riley, Alice in Dairyland and State Representative Eric Genrich

The state is partnering with the Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association (WCMA), a non-profit organization representing 98 cheese manufacturing, processing, and marketing companies and more than 500 of their supplier partners in the industry, to celebrate Wisconsin Cheese Day.

“Wisconsin’s rich history of cheesemaking is also a key component to strengthening its economic future,” said John Umhoefer, WCMA executive director. “As new manufacturing and processing plants open and others increase their production, our industry is adding family-supporting jobs and boosting rural communities. Today, we thank all those people – at the Capitol, in the classroom, in research and development labs, and right at the vat – whose work has given us great reason to celebrate.”

Other dairy industry organizations taking part in Wisconsin Cheese Day events include Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin, the Dairy Business Association and the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation.

Wisconsin cheesemakers make 27 percent of the nation's cheese, ranking Wisconsin as the top cheese producing state. If Wisconsin were 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 exported \$134 million in cheese products around the world in 2017, a 22 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 about 8,500 dairy farms throughout the state providing nearly 80,000 jobs, the dairy industry is vital to Wisconsin's economy, culture and heritage.

Governor Walker's proclamations for [June Dairy Month](#) and [Cheese Day](#) are attached.