

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Applauds Senate passage of bipartisan farm bill that includes major investments for Wisconsin farmers and rural communities

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Bipartisan legislation includes improved risk management tools for dairy farmers, grants for Dairy Business Innovation, mental health resources for farmers and provisions to combat fraudulent organic imports

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin today voted in favor of the final bipartisan Farm Bill and praised the Senate for passing the legislation with overwhelming bipartisan support. The final 2018 Farm Bill includes several key priorities authored by Baldwin to support Wisconsin farmers and help boost Wisconsin's agriculture economy. The legislation now must pass the House of Representatives before being sent to the President to be signed into law.

“Wisconsin farmers are a key driver of our agriculture economy and the backbone of our rural communities, but right now our farmers are facing a perfect storm of challenges that have threatened their businesses and our communities,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “I’ve met with farmers across Wisconsin and I brought their concerns and ideas to Washington to make sure the Farm Bill works for our Wisconsin farmers. I’ve worked for strong investments and reforms in the 2018 Farm Bill to support our hardworking farmers, and ensure they have the tools to be successful and move our state forward. It’s time for Congress to get the job done

and get this bipartisan legislation to the President's desk.”

Reforms authored by Senator Baldwin and included in the final legislation are summarized below.

Improving Tools for Wisconsin's Family Dairy Farmers

Wisconsin's dairy farmers are facing extremely challenging times with low dairy prices, an oversupply of milk in the region, unfair trade barriers from Canada, market loss in Mexico and broader trade uncertainty. The 2018 Farm Bill makes substantial improvements for dairy farmers, building on the \$1.1 billion investment made in the Bipartisan Budget Act, which assisted farmers facing enormously difficult market conditions.

Senator Baldwin fought to substantially update the dairy tools so that they address the challenges Wisconsin farmers are facing. Baldwin worked with her colleagues and secured bipartisan agreement to sunset the Margin Protection Program and replace it with an updated safety net program, Dairy Margin Coverage. This new program will provide higher coverage levels to better reflect the costs farmers face to produce milk, and provide more affordable rates. Farmers who used the Margin Protection Program when it was failing to adequately respond to the downturn in dairy prices will be eligible for a refund or credit for the premiums they paid.

Additionally, dairy farmers will be able to utilize multiple risk management tools at the same time, making it possible for them to better adjust to changing market conditions. Specifically, farmers may enroll in Dairy Margin Coverage and the Livestock Gross Margin program or other dairy insurance products at the same time. This addresses a key gap in risk management tools for Wisconsin dairy farmers.

In addition, Senator Baldwin's [Dairy Business Innovation Act](#) was included in the Farm Bill to support dairy product innovation and address oversupply by providing resources to help cheesemakers and other dairy businesses get their start, develop new products and expand markets.

Supporting More Resources for Farmers in Crisis

Washington has been slow to recognize the challenges that farmers are facing and the daily stressors that they experience during difficult years. Senator Baldwin's bipartisan [FARMERS FIRST Act](#) was included in the Farm Bill and

will provide funding for local mental health resources and expand access to stress reduction strategies and suicide prevention programs for people who work in agriculture.

Standing Up For Organic Farmers and Consumers by Cracking Down On Fraudulent Organic Imports

Wisconsin is home to over 1,200 organic farms—the second highest number in the country—and our organic farmers work extremely hard to make sure their products meet strict U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) organic standards. Senator Baldwin worked to include her [Organic Farmer and Consumer Protection Act](#) to crack down on fraudulent foreign imports that claim to be organic but do not meet the USDA standard, and also ensure that American consumers are getting the high quality, organic food they expect.

Investing in Rural Economic Development for Wisconsin's Small Towns and Rural Communities

The 2018 Farm Bill includes investments in rural economic development to expand high-speed internet to more rural areas, combat the opioid crisis, support rural emergency medicine, improve rural drinking water and boost rural small businesses.

Safe drinking water is a priority for every community and is essential to the health and economic vitality of Wisconsin's rural communities. Senator Baldwin secured language from her [Rural Water Infrastructure Improvements Act](#) to support more rural areas and make sure they have access to safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation. The Farm Bill reauthorizes USDA's water and wastewater loan and grant program and increases the maximum amount of financing available for these infrastructure projects from \$100,000 to \$200,000.