

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Fighting for Wisconsin's Dairy Farmers, urges Senate leadership to strengthen Dairy Margin Protection Program

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - In the face of difficult dairy market conditions in Wisconsin and across the country, U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin sent a letter to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY), Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Thad Cochran (R-MS) and Vice Chairman Pat Leahy (D-VT) urging them to protect the economic security of our nation's dairy farmers and update and expand the Dairy Margin Protection Program in the FY2018 Agriculture Appropriations bill to better support the needs of family farmers.

"Our family dairy farmers are facing extremely challenging times and Washington has failed to respond," said Senator Baldwin. "It is critical that we update the Dairy Margin Protection Program, which is an important tool for the economic security of dairy farmers. I am hopeful that my Senate colleagues will join me and take action to do right by our farm families and the rural communities they support."

The Dairy Margin Protection Program was passed in the 2014 Farm Bill as a tool for dairy farmers to manage the risks they face from market fluctuations in milk prices and feed costs. It is an insurance program that makes payments to dairy farmers when the margin between the price of milk and cost of feed falls below a certain

level. Farmers pay for the insurance, and can choose their preferred coverage level when enrolling. The program has not provided meaningful coverage for dairy farmers and is in need of reform.

A copy of the letter is available [here](#) and the full text is below:

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Chairman Cochran and Vice Chairman Leahy:

I write to ask that you address the urgent challenges facing dairy farmers in Wisconsin and across the country. The past few years have been very difficult for dairy farmers, and many have decided to stop milking. Once again, family dairy farmers are facing yet another year of low prices and uncertain markets. Without prompt action, many more may be forced to stop farming. Washington has neglected this problem for too long and Congress must act to ensure that Wisconsin dairy farmers have meaningful tools to manage their risk in the face of these difficult market conditions.

In particular, I urge you to build on the provisions I helped secure in the Senate's FY 2018 Agriculture Appropriations bill, which was passed unanimously by the Appropriations Committee but has yet to be signed into law. As Congress considers unfinished legislation held over from last year, we should act now and enact these critical reforms. This bill included important reforms to the Margin Protection Program for Dairy (MPP). This program is an essential tool for dairy farmers, but it has fallen short of providing meaningful protection and needs updates that would be effective this year in order to respond to the challenges our family farmers face. I request that you include updates to better reflect the costs of production faced by farmers, as well as the margin needed to provide adequate catastrophic protection. This reform would be an important step forward as we continue our effort to make the Margin Protection Program work better for dairy farmers in Wisconsin and across the country.

I also support longer-term efforts to expand dairy insurance tools, including enhancing the Livestock Gross Margin tool. However, these tools alone will not address the short-term challenges many farmers face.

The health of Wisconsin's rural economy rises and falls with the strength of our dairy industry and our dairy farm families. It is time for Congress to act to put meaningful tools in place immediately. Thank you for considering these requests.



An online version of this release is available [here](#).