

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Introduces new legislation to spur innovation, support Wisconsin cheesemakers and dairy businesses

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Legislation would promote dairy product innovation, provide technical assistance and grants to dairy businesses

Baldwin effort would support increased dairy processing capacity, responding to oversupply of milk that is threatening livelihoods of Wisconsin farmers

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin today introduced legislation to support dairy product innovation and provide resources to help cheesemakers and other dairy businesses get their start, develop new products and expand markets.

The *Dairy Business Innovation Act* would establish regional initiatives to spur innovation in dairy businesses, which can help add more value to the milk farmers produce and expand uses for milk to address oversupply and depressed milk prices. The legislation will also foster the development of new and innovative dairy products, modernize existing dairy plants and support new dairy entrepreneurs.

“Wisconsin’s dairy businesses are a key driver of our state’s economy, but recently our dairy farmers have faced very challenging times with an oversupply of milk and low milk prices. It’s critical that farmers, cheesemakers and dairy processors have tools to innovate and develop new Made in Wisconsin dairy products to build a brighter future for our dairy farms and drive our rural economy forward,” **said**

Senator Baldwin. “I’m proud to introduce this legislation to create new initiatives and expand resources for our dairy businesses to foster innovation, improve their manufacturing practices and reach new markets so Wisconsin’s dairy industry can continue to lead the nation.”

The *Dairy Business Innovation Act* would provide resources to serve prospective and established businesses that produce a product made from milk from a dairy animal, including farms with their own dairy production facilities and dairy processors including cheese plants, ice cream manufacturers and milk bottlers.

“In an increasingly competitive global marketplace, the U.S. dairy industry must work hard to maintain its position on the leading edge of product development and marketing. Senator Tammy Baldwin’s *Dairy Business Innovation Act* would target federal support for cheesemakers and other dairy manufacturers and processors in ways designed and proven to increase sales both domestically and abroad,” **said John Umhoefer, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association.**

“These are tough times for dairy farmers in the Upper Midwest and across the country. The Midwest Dairy Coalition greatly appreciates Senator Baldwin’s many efforts to address the needs of dairy farmers in the short term and the long term. The *Dairy Business Innovation Act* will help the dairy industry diversify to expand market opportunities for dairy farmers, and will provide assistance directly to farmers in their efforts to make on-farm improvements to meet new market opportunities as well,” **said Steven Etko, Coordinator of the Midwest Dairy Coalition.**

“We appreciate Senator Baldwin’s continued efforts on behalf of dairy farmers and the cooperatives they own, in Wisconsin and throughout the country. This legislation could provide important new opportunities for dairy sector innovation in today’s economy,” **said Jim Mulhern, President and CEO of the National Milk Producers Federation.**

“We are delighted to support the *Dairy Business Innovation Act*. This legislation will promote innovation in the dairy sector and help industry members work together to address common challenges,” **said Michael Dykes, D.V.M., President and CEO of the International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA).**

“The dairy farmer-owners of AMPI thank Sen. Baldwin for her continued support of

the nation's dairy industry. She understands the important role dairy farmers have long played in our nation's economy, producing nutritious food and generating jobs. This bill would provide welcome support as we look to the future, identifying new opportunities and responding to consumers' growing interest in how their food is produced," **said Steve Schlangen, dairy farmer from Albany, Minn., and AMPI Chairman of the Board.**

"The number of dairy farms in the United States has declined by nearly 98% since 1950," **said Nora Weiser, Executive Director of the American Cheese Society (ACS).** "ACS values the hard work of cheesemakers, and recognizes that artisan and specialty cheeses are an important economic driver supporting struggling dairy farms in rural communities across the United States. These products can play a critical role in keeping American dairy farmers in business, and these producers need support in order to innovate and thrive."

Many dairy farmers and processors support Senator Baldwin's *Dairy Business Innovation Act*, including the International Dairy Foods Association, Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association, Wisconsin Specialty Cheese Institute, National Milk Producers Federation, Midwest Dairy Coalition, Associated Milk Producers, Inc., Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery, and First District Association.

Specifically, the regional initiatives created by the legislation would provide technical assistance and grants for the purpose of:

- **Supporting new and expanding dairy businesses**—Initiatives would provide assistance with business plan development, accounting, market evaluation, and strategic planning.
- **Promoting innovation in dairy products**—Dairy businesses could get assistance with product innovation, marketing and branding, packaging, distribution, supply chain innovation, food safety training and consultation, dairy product production training.
- **Assisting with dairy plant modernization and process improvement**—Dairy businesses could get assistance with processing facility improvement, including assistance with plant upgrades, food safety modernization, energy and water efficiency, byproduct reprocessing and use maximization, and waste treatment.

More information about the *Dairy Business Innovation Act* is available [here](#).