

# Wisconsin Farm Bureau: Applauds passage of 2018 Farm Bill

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MADISON – Wisconsin Farm Bureau is pleased with the passage of the 2018 Farm Bill. The farm bill supports farmers by protecting crop insurance and conservation programs, investing in efforts to expand foreign markets and prioritizing agricultural research and rural development. The organization is encouraged by more appropriate risk management tools for the state’s distressed dairy farmers.

“Farmers and rural communities continue to struggle with successive years of low prices coupled with increased foreign tariffs and the unpredictability of Mother Nature,” said Wisconsin Farm Bureau President Jim Holte. “The farm bill brings much-needed assurance that programs will be in place to help Wisconsin farmers survive these difficult times.”

Specifically, for dairy farmers the 2018 Farm Bill replaces the unaccommodating Margin Protection Program (MPP) with Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC).

Other changes on dairy policy include:

- Allowing farmers to enroll in both Livestock Gross Margin (LGM) Insurance and DMC without covering the same milk.
- Allowing farmers who were locked out of the improved MPP due to LGM participation to retroactively participate in MPP for the months in 2018 in which they were excluded from participation.
- Allowing each dairy farm that participated in MPP in 2014-2017 to receive a repayment of a portion of premiums paid during that time period as either a 50% direct refund or a 75% credit toward future DMC premiums.

- Requiring USDA to establish at least three regionally-located dairy innovation centers to provide outreach and technical assistance with the goals of diversifying dairy product markets.

Other positive items included in the 2018 Farm Bill:

- Improves Farm Service Agency lending capacity by raising guaranteed loans to \$1.75 million, direct operating loans to \$400,000 and direct farm loans to \$600,000.
- Maintains crop insurance and commodity programs and farm safety nets. While it makes improvements to these programs, it does not reduce spending with a 10-year baseline of \$867 billion and is budget neutral.
- The Conservation Reserve Program acreage cap is lifted to 27 million acres with at least 2 million acres being dedicated to grazing efforts. Rental rates and incentive payments are reduced to address the issue of CRP competing with farmers for access to production lands.
- Legalization and crop insurance coverage of industrial hemp.
- Creation of a vaccine bank to respond to the accidental or intentional introduction of animal diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease which would be detrimental to U.S. agriculture.
- Amends the definition of family members to include non-lineal family members contributing to the farm operation such as first cousins, nieces and nephews.

“This bill is critical to farmers and consumers alike and provides consistent policy for the next five years,” said Holte. “Thank you to Sen. Tammy Baldwin, Rep. Glenn Grothman, Rep. Mark Pocan and Rep. Sean Duffy for voting for the 2018 Farm Bill’s passage and Speaker Paul Ryan’s leadership in getting this critical bill across the finish line.”

[Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation](#) is the state’s largest general farm organization representing farms of all sizes, commodities and management styles. Farm Bureau’s mission is to lead the farm and rural community through legislative representation, education, public relations and leadership development.