

Dairy Business Association: Dairy hub, farmer conservation funds draw praise from state dairy group

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Contact: Jamie Mara
Dairy Business Association
(920) 209-3990 | jmara@dairyforward.com

New budget supports research, on-farm water quality efforts

GREEN BAY, Wis. — Wisconsin's leading dairy lobbying organization said today the new state budget will empower farmers and others to innovate in ways that position America's Dairyland for long-term success.

The Dairy Business Association highlighted two provisions in the budget that Gov. Tony Evers signed today — funding for a Dairy Innovation Hub and more grants for farmer-led conservation work. Both were items the association pushed for aggressively.

The two-year budget invests \$8.8 million in the innovation hub, a new program to be led by the University of Wisconsin System for a broad range of research at its agricultural colleges. The budget also doubles the amount of money to \$1 million for an existing grant program to help farmers find solutions to water quality challenges. The following statements are from Tom Crave, president of the Dairy Business Association and a farmer and cheesemaker in south-central Wisconsin.

Regarding the Dairy Innovation Hub:

“Keeping our dairy community healthy requires investment — by farmers, by processors, by lenders, by the state and by many others who play vital roles in America's Dairyland. Budgets demonstrate priorities. By including the Dairy Innovation Hub in the newly signed spending plan, state leaders have made a

strong statement that our dairy economy, our rural communities and our identity as the Dairy State matter.

“Through next-generation research in areas such as land and water use, health and nutrition and integrating farm businesses, the dairy hub will keep us on a track toward long-term success. We look forward to continuing to work with the UW and lawmakers to bring the hub to life. There are a lot of great things to come for our dairy community.

“Many folks came together to make this happen. We were proud to play a leadership role in a coalition of stakeholders that included Cooperative Network, Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin, the UW, Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association, Wisconsin Farm Bureau and Wisconsin Farmers Union.

“We also want to thank lawmakers on both sides of the aisle for recognizing the importance of this program and making sure it was funded. Among them were Senator Howard Marklein and Representative Travis Tranel, who spearheaded the effort, the members of the Joint Finance Committee, and Assembly Speaker Robin Vos and Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, who ensured that it stayed on track. Governor Evers, of course, has our appreciation for keeping the hub in the final spending plan as he made the difficult decisions that come with finalizing a budget.”

Regarding the conservation grants:

“We applaud Governor Evers and the Joint Finance Committee for recognizing the value of empowering farmers through the Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant Program. This program is one of the best ways the state can support farmers’ efforts to protect and improve water quality. The grants, which nonprofit farmer-led conservation groups must match, will go a long way in supplementing things like cost-share programs for scientific research and innovative manure management practices.

“Wisconsin’s dairy farmers are taking the lead on addressing water quality challenges in our state. A growing number of voluntary watershed-based groups are making remarkable progress in identifying solutions that make sense for their regions. Farmers are challenging each other to continuously improve through innovation and to scientifically measure results. Keeping our water clean takes a community-wide effort, and farmers are demonstrating a commitment to doing their part. We all want clean water.

“Through our involvement with the Dairy Strong Sustainability Alliance, the Dairy Business Association is proud to have helped launch and now closely support several watershed groups around the state. It is exciting to see the passion in these efforts.

Photos:

Click here for a photo of Tom Crave

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About DBA:

The Dairy Business Association is the leading dairy lobby group in Wisconsin, focused on advocating for sensible state laws and regulations that affect the dairy community. The nonprofit organization is comprised of dairy farmers, milk processors, vendors and other business partners who work collaboratively to ensure that dairy farms of all sizes have the support they need to keep America's Dairyland strong. More information: www.dairyforward.com