

# Howard Marklein: Wisconsin: Dairy superpower

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The Joint Finance Committee (JFC), on which I serve, approved the plan and funding for the Dairy Innovation Hub at the University of Wisconsin on Wednesday, October 2, 2019.

I was honored to lead the Dairy Innovation Hub initiative through the state budget and I am thrilled that it is moving forward into reality. The UW has worked hard to craft an implementation plan and has set great goals. I am optimistic that this future-focused plan will be a true asset to the dairy and ag economy.

The JFC released \$8.8 million to create a Dairy Innovation Hub at UW-Madison, UW-Platteville, and UW-River Falls to reprioritize and restore focus on dairy innovation in Wisconsin. The universities will use the funds for faculty positions, postdoctoral fellows, research farms, labs and equipment. UW Platteville and UW River Falls will also direct some of the funds to support research fellowships for existing faculty. UW Madison is planning to fund graduate student research assistantships.

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This Dairy Innovation Hub is a direct result of the hard work of the Dairy Task Force 2.0, which was revived by Governor Scott Walker in June 2018 to maintain a viable and profitable dairy industry in Wisconsin. Task Force membership includes farmers, milk processors and marketers, allied organizations, legislators and university leadership. This initiative is the top recommendation of this Task Force.

The goal of this investment is to attract and support world-class researchers to lead focused research in four sectors in order to design plans and initiatives to support

and grow the agriculture economy. The UW has set goals in the following areas:

1. Steward Land and Water Resources
2. Enrich Human Health and Nutrition
3. Ensure Animal Health and Welfare
4. Grow Farm Businesses and Communities.

The Dairy Innovation Hub is NOT about increasing production. We are already really good at this. Instead, we will be dedicating the same caliber of effort, research and innovation we have given to production to new priorities to support farmers and the dairy economy overall. We want Wisconsin to be the international leader in dairy innovation.

UW Platteville, the major campus in the 17th Senate District, will receive \$2.1 million of the funding. They plan to replace robotics, recruit faculty and staff and begin work on Human Health and Nutrition, Stewardship of Land and Water Resources and continuing work at Pioneer Farm within the next year. They also plan to have an advisory board with representation from the dairy industry and the university system.

I will continue to work on ways to support the dairy farmers and the ag economy in Wisconsin. Recently, I authored bills to enforce the Truth in Food Labeling, which will hopefully encourage the Federal government to enforce existing food labeling laws. I have also authored a bill to increase access to capital for ag production facilities. I want to maintain Wisconsin's reputation as a Dairy Superpower and am excited for the potential of the Dairy Innovation Hub toward this goal.

*- Marklein, R-Spring Green, represents the 17th Senate District.*