

Sen. Marklein, Rep. Tranel: Introduce Dairy Innovation Hub legislation to address dairy crisis

Posted on Wednesday, May 1, 2019

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Madison, WI – State Senator Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green) and Representative Travis Tranel (R-Cuba City) introduced Senate Bill (SB) 186 to establish a Dairy Innovation Hub at UW Madison, UW Platteville and UW River Falls today.

“The dairy industry and agriculture is in crisis,” Marklein said. “Declining milk prices and financial hardship are a constant worry for our farmers. As a result, we are often asked to ‘do something’ about the ag-industry crisis! I believe the *Dairy Innovation Hub* bill has real potential to answer this call.”

“Wisconsin has long been known as a dairy superpower worldwide,” Tranel said. “We have always been on the cutting edge of dairy innovation, research and technology. And we have been proud of this distinction. It is time to reinvest and reprioritize innovation in dairy research.”

SB 186 allocates \$7.9 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.

This idea is drawn from a recommendation made by 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. The Dairy Innovation Hub idea is one of the top recommendations by the Dairy Task Force, which is made up of farmers, milk

processors and marketers, allied organizations, legislators and university leadership.

The Dairy Innovation Hub bill appropriates \$7.9 million annually to fund a *Dairy Innovation Hub* at UW-Madison, UW-Platteville, and UW-River Falls. This investment represents less than 0.02% of Wisconsin's dairy economy. UW-Madison will receive 52% of the money, while UW-Platteville and UW-River Falls will each receive 24%.

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

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

"It is important to point out that the *Dairy Innovation Hub* is NOT about increasing production," Marklein said. "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."

"The goals of the Dairy Innovation Hub is to develop new markets, find non-food use for dairy, address water issues and discover new ideas," Tranel said. "Innovation will restore vitality and hope for Wisconsin dairy."

Dairy Innovation Hub research will address:

- water quality issues,
- develop new and unique dairy products,
- examine new, non-food uses for dairy products,
- apply dairy research to real-life issues,
- open new markets for Wisconsin dairy products,
- and actively deploy research discoveries to the dairy industry.

Each campus will be given flexibility to use the funding in their own way to achieve the goals of the *Dairy Innovation Hub*. This can include hiring faculty and staff researchers, empowering students to conduct research, and providing support for research facilities and infrastructure.