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U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Calls on Trump Administration to implement Farm Bill dairy improvements for Wisconsin dairy farmers

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin and a bipartisan group of dairy state Senators are pressing Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue to prioritize the implementation of the dairy provisions in the 2018 Farm Bill.

Since the beginning of 2017, Wisconsin has lost more than 1,300 dairy farms. As dairy farmers across the country continue to face severe challenges with low prices and market instability, the 2018 Farm Bill dramatically expands support for dairy producers, providing flexible, affordable coverage options through the Dairy Margin Coverage program. Early analysis has shown that the improvements would provide much-needed financial tools to dairy farmers – providing significant benefits for all operations and ensuring the program addresses the particular challenges facing small and medium-sized family farms.

"The situation for dairy farmers is urgent," **the Senators wrote.** *"Although Dairy Margin Coverage is effective as of January 1, 2019, the government shutdown delayed action on 2018 Farm Bill implementation for over a month. During this time, dairy farmers have continued to face market instability and are struggling to survive the fourth year of sustained low prices."*

"The changes to the Dairy Margin Coverage program make it a much more flexible policy that will likely benefit many of the farmers who chose not to participate in the Margin Protection Program. The USDA should strongly encourage these farmers to consider the Dairy Margin Coverage program," **wrote the Senators.**

"In the interim, we request that the USDA invest in outreach, training, coordination with partner organizations, and staffing to ensure that every eligible farmer receives personalized information about the new and improved options," **wrote the Senators.**

Senator Baldwin pushed for several other important changes to the 2018 Farm Bill to address the needs of dairy producers, including: a partial refund or credits from premiums paid under the former Margin Protection Program and a provision that allows producers to enroll in both DMC and Livestock Gross Margin for Dairy at the same time.

The letter, led by Senators Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and Roy Blunt (R-MO), was also signed by Senators Michael F. Bennet (D-CO), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Thomas R. Carper (D-DE), Robert P. Casey, Jr. (D-PA), Susan M. Collins (R-ME), Christopher A. Coons (D-DE), Mike Crapo (R-ID), Joni K. Ernst (R-IA), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Cory Gardner (R-CO), Kirsten E. Gillibrand (D-NY), Charles E. Grassley (R-IA), Margaret Hassan (D-NH), Josh Hawley (R-MO), Angus S. King, Jr. (I-ME), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Jeffrey A. Merkley (D-OR), Jerry Moran (R-KS), Christopher Murphy (D-CT), Patty Murray (D-WA), Gary C. Peters (D-MI), Jim E. Risch (R-ID), Mike Rounds (R-SD), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Charles E. Schumer (D-NY), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ), Tina Smith (D-MN), John Thune (R-SD), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Ron Wyden (D-OR).

The full letter is available here.

An online version of this release is available here.