

Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association: Cheers lawmakers working to streamline dairy regulations, supporting farmers and processors

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MADISON, WI – The Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association (WCMA) today thanked Wisconsin State Senators André Jacque (R-De Pere) and Jeff Smith (D-Eau Claire), and State Representatives Travis Tranel (R-Cuba City), Dave Considine (D-Baraboo), and Gary Tauchen (R-Bonduel) for introducing LRB 5012 to streamline dairy industry regulations.

“Dairy farmers and processors have suffered great strain due to trade instability, a labor shortage, and poor weather conditions,” said John Umhoefer, WCMA Executive Director. “In eliminating some of the bureaucracy of running a dairy business, Sens. Jacque and Smith and Reps. Tranel, Considine, and Tauchen are taking meaningful action to sustain and spur industry growth. We thank them for their strong leadership.”

The bipartisan proposal addresses state regulation requiring dairy cooperatives, proprietary handlers, and milk contractors to obtain a signed and notarized affidavit each year attesting that milk does not contain synthetic bovine growth hormone, commonly called rBST. The annual gathering of thousands of notarized affidavits has been a costly and redundant exercise, as affidavits are legally valid across years.

In addition, more than 90 percent of all the milk in Wisconsin is rBST-free, making the annual requirement a major effort for a minor farm practice.

“Wisconsin farmers have been struggling, and I’m happy to help them by authoring this bipartisan bill,” said Sen. Jacque. “Working with groups like the Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association, this is a perfect opportunity to cut red tape for farmers with no impact on consumers.”

The nonpartisan Wisconsin Dairy Task Force 2.0 recommended to the Legislature earlier this year that the annual requirements for rBST affidavits be removed, and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP), at the direction of Governor Tony Evers, started the rule-making process to address this issue in July. LRB 5012 stands to expedite this process.

“This commonsense initiative will encourage efficiency for cooperatives working with small family farms. Consumers want hormone-free, locally-sourced family farm produced milk. This bill ensures quality and promotes Wisconsin’s legacy of dedicated family farmers,” said Sen. Smith.