

# Wisconsin Dairy Alliance: Dairymen Confront State of Betrayal

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Wisconsin's heritage as "America's Dairyland" hangs by a thread.

Pounded by trade-war-fueled tariffs, distressed milk prices and extreme weather events, the dairy industry is in the fifth year of a crushing economic downturn that has resulted in the closing of at least two dairies a day throughout the downturn.

When farmers once could turn to the state Department of Agriculture for support, they now find themselves out on an island, miles away from a typically supporting agency who now is seemingly determined to heighten anxiety by putting farmers in the midst of an additional crisis.

Instead of protecting the \$45.6 billion-dollar dairy industry, the very rule which was passed to help maintain Wisconsin as the #1 Cheese producing state is now riddled with troublesome new regulations. Additional costs for compliance and constricting new layers of red tape will affect the future of farm operations of all sizes.

The revised rule moves forward with universal setbacks regardless of adjacent zoning. The proposed new siting rules, for instance, will mean some livestock operations will never be allowed to grow and expand, even if they are in agriculture zoned areas. Under these guidelines, a dairy operation — nowhere near any sort of residence, business or school — could be required to build their manure storage up to a quarter mile away from that property line. This will landlock small- and mid-sized family farms hoping to grow in order to survive or preclude bringing the next generation on board. Government should never be in the position to pick winners and losers based on arbitrary regulations.

There will certainly be winners here ... just not in Wisconsin. While Wisconsin is shutting the door, other states are welcoming farmers to move to their state. As a matter of fact, our next-door neighbor in Michigan is investing nearly \$1 billion into two new cheese processing plants. They — and other states — make no secret of their intent to gladly welcome what Wisconsin is throwing away.

"This is a generational opportunity," said Dru Mitchell, CEO of the Clinton County (Mich.) Economic Alliance, about just one of the state's new cheese plants.

In sharp contrast, Wisconsin faces a generational calamity.

On Nov. 7, DATCP will host a final review of the proposed rule at the DATCP Board meeting in Madison. They will be asking the DATCP Board to approve these new proposed rules. We encourage all farmers to take the time to go to Madison and stop this disaster from moving forward. The future of our dairy industry depends on you.

This is your chance to speak directly to the DATCP Board and explain how devastating this new rule will impact your livelihood and the future generations of dairy farmers. Don't let the DATCP Board decide your future and the fate of your farm and family without you present.