

# Wisconsin Farmers Union: Voices disappointed in Secretary Perdue's disconnect with family farmers

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**MADISON** – Earlier today, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Sonny Perdue said at the World Dairy Expo that he didn't know if small family dairy farms can survive as the industry evolves. "In America, the big get bigger and the small go out," Perdue told reporters and farmers gathered to meet him.

Wisconsin Farmers Union (WFU), a grassroots family farm organization representing a diverse array of farms, is disappointed in the secretary's comments. This follows not long after Perdue's insensitively [joked that farmers are "whiners" at Minnesota Farmfest.](#)

WFU President and third-generation dairy farmer Darin Von Ruden, whose family runs a 50-cow organic dairy near Westby, stressed that the Earl Butz-era mantra of "bigger is better" has not panned out well for rural Wisconsin in recent years.

"The mindset that has been pushed on farmers to continually grow is ultimately pushing them out of business as overproduction forces market prices down," Von Ruden said.

Accelerated farm loss in recent years is rippling into rural communities, he added. "The impact of the loss of farms and that revenue in our rural areas is reaching our Main Streets, where we're losing banks, post offices, and even grocery stores. This farm crisis will leave a lasting impact on far more than the farmers who become a

part of growing farm loss statistics each year.”

Von Ruden called for political leaders, his fellow farmers, and consumers to envision what future they truly want for agriculture, noting, “We need to look at something that will benefit all of rural America, not just corporate rural America. Secretary Perdue is supposed to represent all U.S. farmers, but I don’t think we saw that here today. It’s time to drive policies that prioritize fair prices for family farmers of all scales. That means managing growth to meet profitable demand. It’s also high-time we address the growing trends toward corporate consolidation and foreign investment that threaten the future of our food system.”

*Wisconsin Farmers Union is a member-driven organization committed to enhancing the quality of life for family farmers, rural communities, and all people through educational opportunities, cooperative endeavors, and civic engagement. Learn more at [www.WisconsinFarmersUnion.com](http://www.WisconsinFarmersUnion.com).*