

# AG Kaul: Cheese factory in Wood County allegedly steals more than \$20,000 from 83 farmers

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WISCONSIN RAPIDS, Wis. – Attorney General Josh Kaul today announced that Michael J. Moran, owner of Wisconsin Dairy State Cheese Company, was charged with felony theft of more than 80 farmers in Wood County.

“Wisconsin’s dairy farmers are in the midst of a crisis,” said Attorney General Kaul. “It’s particularly galling that theft alleged in this case resulted in money being stolen from milk producers during such a difficult time.”

On January 28, 2020, Moran was charged with one count of felony theft. This crime carries a potential maximum sentence of up to 10 years imprisonment and a maximum fine of \$25,000.

Farmers provide milk to Moran’s business, Dairy State Cheese Company in Rudolph, Wis. The complaint alleges that Moran forged the names of farmers on underpayment checks and converted the funds for his own use or the use of others. Processors, such as cheese plants, write underpayment checks to producers, such as dairy farmers, when the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) sets the price of milk higher than what a processor initially paid for the milk. USDA auditors determine the amount of underpayment and order processors to issue the underpayment checks.

The complaint claims that after the defendant would forge the payees’ signatures on the back of the checks, he would then place them in the cash register at the cheese store thereby converting them for his own use, all without the consent of the payees. The checks from the register would then be taken together to the bank at

the end of the week and deposited.

Approximately 83 milk producers are reported to have been victimized. The total losses for these 83 milk producers amounts to \$21,250.97. Of the victims, 21 are over 60 years old.

This case is prosecuted by the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) Division of Legal Services (DLS) Criminal Litigation Unit Assistant Attorney General Dan Lenington. The investigation is led by the DOJ Division of Criminal Investigation, with assistance from the USDA Office of Inspector General.

As in any criminal proceeding, Moran is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

A criminal complaint is attached.

<https://www.doj.state.wi.us/news-releases/cheese-factory-wood-county-allegedly-steals-more-20000-83-farmers>