

Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative: Commends senators' efforts against unfair trade tactics

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GREEN BAY, Wis. — Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative, which represents farmers throughout the Midwest, today commended the efforts of 61 U.S. senators to safeguard dairy exports against unjustified trade barriers in future trade agreements as they relate to names of cheeses.

Sens. John Thune, R-S.D., Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis., Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., and Thom Tillis, R-N.C. led this effort, and just about every senator within Edge's Midwestern footprint joined in.

[The letter](#), dated July 30, urges the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to establish a core policy objective in trade discussions to secure market access assurances for common food names, which is especially important for dairy farmers and cheese processors.

The effort is directed at the United States' leading dairy export competitor, the European Union (EU), which uses trade agreements to block American-produced cheese from using common cheese names like feta, parmesan and gouda in international markets. Instead, U.S. processors are forced to label their cheeses with non-traditional names unfamiliar to customers.

Most of the billions of pounds of milk that Edge members produce each year is made into cheese.

Statement from Brody Stapel, president of Edge and a dairy farmer in eastern Wisconsin:



“Our dairy farmer members continue to emphasize the importance of expanding exports through free and fair trade agreements. The EU’s use of geographical indications to obstruct the use of common cheese names is a direct threat to our ability to increase dairy exports around the world. Establishing stronger safeguards against these anti-competitive tactics will help level the playing field.

“This is why we are extremely pleased that so many senators have endorsed this key objective. We thank each senator who signed on to the letter and we especially commend the work of Sens. Thune, Baldwin, Stabenow and Tillis to elevate this issue on behalf of our dairy farmers and cheese processors.

“As we come off the fresh implementation of the USMCA trade agreement, we look forward to further growing U.S. dairy’s place in the global market. Support like this from those senators will greatly help.”