

# Rep. Oldenburg: Wisconsin's farmers & rural agricultural communities must remain a priority

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Wisconsin, America's Dairyland. The dairyland title is one the whole state of Wisconsin loves to brag about. Our states rural, agricultural communities, just like those in the 96th Assembly district, are of the utmost importance when it comes to Wisconsin remaining America's Dairyland. That's why protecting our farmers, their farms, and the rural communities that support them is so important. Throughout the 2019-2020 legislative session it has been my honor to work on agricultural issues both at the capitol, and in the counties of the 96th Assembly District.

As a fourth-generation farmer I have experienced the highs and lows of the agricultural economy. Unfortunately, we have been living through the tougher times of the agricultural economy for a while now.

This session Senator Marklein, Representative Tranel and I led the effort to protect meat, milk and dairy products by ensuring that these products are truthfully labeled. Farmers, and others in the agriculture industry work hard to produce the meat, and milk, that the entire world relies on. Protecting the integrity of these products is important for the success of agriculture in our state. For example, under these bills, cell-cultured or plant based imitation meat products would not be allowed to be labeled the same as real beef, chicken, pork and other genuine meat that comes from any mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian, or mollusk. There are two other bills that we worked on throughout the session, one for truthfully labeling milk, and the other for truthfully labeling dairy products.

Earlier this session I served as a member of the Speaker's Task Force on Suicide Prevention. While on the taskforce we traveled throughout the state of Wisconsin to

learn about how families and communities have been affected by suicide. We also learned about what we could do to help. Although all the hearings of the taskforce were helpful, the hearing in Marshfield had the largest impact on me. The Marshfield hearing focused on farmers. Due to this

hearing, and my experience as a farmer, I worked with Senator Olsen to craft a bill. This bill will provide scholarships to farmers for courses at their local technical college in farm, production and business management. Not only is it helpful for farmers to have the opportunity to learn more about these topics with instructors, but they will also be able to create relationships with other farmers. I know from my own experience that having a farmer to farmer relationship is very important. Being able to discuss farming with others who truly understand what is happening on the farm is helpful. Providing these scholarships should help new and seasoned farmers gain new knowledge and build lasting relationships that can be helpful in times of stress.

It is also important to note that our rural communities are very important to the success of farming, and our state in general. These small communities are home to grain bins where farmers do business that impacts the food supply of our nation and world. Our small cities and villages are also home to creameries, dairy processing plants, and cooperatives of all kinds. All though these entities may seem small to some, the ripple effect that they have on our nation and world is important.

Our agricultural industry is vital to the success of our state. Protecting our farmers, the food they produce for us, and the rural communities who support them, has always been important, and will continue to remain a priority.