

# U.S. Rep. Kind: Joins Reps. Pocan and Moore in introducing bipartisan legislation to help dairy farmers while reducing hunger

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**La Crosse, WI** —Last week, **Rep. Ron Kind (WI-03)** joined **Reps. Mark Pocan (WI-02)** and **Gwen Moore (WI-04)** in introducing the bipartisan *Farmer's Milk in Low-Income Kitchens (MILK) Act*, which would expand the existing U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Milk Donation program to help get milk into the hands of the food insecure. The bill authorizes the USDA to act as a matchmaker between dairy producers with excess milk with food banks that can distribute that milk to those in need. It also authorizes an additional \$4 million a year for the program.

After suffering years of low milk prices and reeling from the effects of President Trump's disastrous trade war, dairy farmers nationwide are now feeling the strain of the coronavirus pandemic. The crisis has disrupted supply chains and decreased demand for dairy products. As a result, dairy farmers have been forced to dispose of millions of gallons of milk per day because there is nowhere for it to go.

"Our nation is facing an economic crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and as a result, demand at food banks is on the rise as many Wisconsinites struggle to feed their families. At the same time, our farmers are being forced to dispose of excess milk due to disrupted food supply chains," said **Rep. Ron Kind**. "This bill will provide an important link between food banks and farmers to ensure that Wisconsin families in need are receiving nutritious, high-quality food and farmers facing a steep drop in demand for their products get relief."

“Dairy farmers have faced significant headwinds due to a collapse in demand wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic, and Americans from all walks of life are enduring massive economic pain,” **said Jim Mulhern, President & CEO, National Milk Producers Federation.** “Dairy farmers and their cooperatives want to do everything possible to maximize the potential of milk donation and provide much-needed assistance to food insecure populations. We thank Rep. Pocan for authoring legislation to enhance this potential at a time when it is critical, and commend Rep. Kind for his cosponsorship and support as well.

The USDA’s current Milk Donation program requires dairy farmers to seek out food banks and apply for reimbursements to cover expenses. The *Farmer’s MILK Act* would give the USDA authority to pair up dairy producers that have excess supply with food banks in need. The current program is authorized at a yearly budget of \$5 million, but this bill would almost double that to fund and expand the program at \$9 million annually.