

# U.S. Reps. Kind, Gallagher: Introduce bipartisan legislation to support family farmers and preserve the future of Wisconsin dairy

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**Washington, DC** — Today, **Reps. Ron Kind (D-WI)** and **Mike Gallagher (R-WI)** introduced bipartisan legislation to establish a Dairy Pricing and Policy Commission to evaluate the difficulties facing Wisconsin dairy farmers and recommend solutions needed to secure the future of Wisconsin dairy. Wisconsin has led the nation in farm bankruptcies for the past two years, underscoring the need to take substantive steps toward identifying and implementing critical reforms and ensuring dairy farmers have the tools they need to succeed.

The Dairy Pricing and Policy Commission would consist of a broad coalition of dairy farmers, dairy processors, and other industry experts who would provide recommendations on some of the biggest challenges facing our dairy farmers today, including options on how to:

- Respond to periods of heightened dairy production during low prices by considering better supply chain coordination
- Evaluate and identify challenges and opportunities for new markets for dairy exports
- Consider Federal Milk Marketing Order (FMMO) reforms

“Wisconsin dairy farmers have been facing difficult conditions for years, with two farms a day closing even before the COVID-19 crisis,” said **Rep. Ron Kind**. “This week we were reminded that the status quo policies are not working for family farmers – with the nonpartisan GAO finding that USDA has dumped huge amounts

of trade aid in response to the Administration's trade wars toward large agribusinesses, particularly in the south, at the expense of our family farmers. It's clear that we need to take a hard look at the factors creating struggles for our dairy industry, and then take action. To that end, I'm proud to introduce bipartisan legislation to create a commission and bring everyone to the table to identify the best options available to make sure our family farmers can succeed. Wisconsin dairy farmers are the heart of our rural communities, and I will continue to fight to ensure the future of America's Dairyland is bright."

"While the Coronavirus exacerbated the challenges facing many Wisconsin dairy farmers, problems like low milk prices and declining farm income predated the pandemic," said **Rep. Mike Gallagher**. "Now more than ever, it's important that Congress does all it can to better evaluate these issues and improve the economic environment for these hardworking men and women. Bringing together experts across the agricultural, academic, and dairy industries is an important first step to help us do so, and I'm proud to join Rep. Kind in this bipartisan effort."

"Wisconsin Farm Bureau applauds Congressman Kind for authoring this bill to allow the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture to establish the Dairy Pricing and Policy Commission," said **Wisconsin Farm Bureau President Joe Bragger**. "For too long Wisconsin dairy farmers have struggled with low and unfair milk prices. Additionally, this has had a harsh impact on rural communities. Farmers pride themselves on continuously improving their businesses. The same mindset should be put in place for the entire dairy economy. Our members support federal milk marketing reform, transparency in dairy pricing and would appreciate a close examination into our supply chain needs and possible disruptions. The Dairy Pricing and Policy Commission is needed to do just that."

"We must take a serious look at the factors driving low milk prices and dairy farm loss in Wisconsin, such as oversupply, an uncoordinated dairy supply chain, and an opaque pricing system that is subject to manipulation. The Dairy Pricing and Policy commission will bring key stakeholders together to find ways to move the industry forward on a path to profitability. We thank Congressman Kind for his leadership and continued support for Wisconsin dairy farmers," said **Wisconsin Farmers Union President Darin Von Ruden**.

Rep. Kind has been a long-time advocate for expanding export opportunities, protecting farmers from market volatility, and ensuring accurate labeling for plant-based products marketed as dairy alternatives, [priorities he outlined](#) for the 2018

Farm Bill. Additionally, last year Rep. Kind [wrote](#) to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Sonny Perdue urging him to take measures to level the playing field after initial trade aid payments went disproportionately to large agribusinesses. Instead, the Administration doubled payment limits for massive agribusinesses, particularly in the south. The nonpartisan Government Accountability Office recently released a [report](#) that found the increase allowed the largest farming operations to collect an additional \$519 million for the 2019 version of the Market Facilitation Program, which USDA has used to compensate farmers for retaliatory tariffs, and left family farmers behind.

In April, Rep. Ron Kind released his Family Farm Rescue Plan, which focused on five concrete steps that the Administration could take to support family farmers during the COVID-19 pandemic, including ensuring farmers are eligible for all small business relief programs like the PPP. He also called for using Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) funds to directly support family farms, purchasing excess food supply and delivering food banks, reopening the Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) program, and ending the Trade War and implementing USMCA.

**Read the bill [here](#).**