

WCMA applauds Assembly Committee passage of export, dairy processor grant boosts

Posted on Tuesday, Feb 11, 2020

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

MADISON - The Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association (WCMA) applauded today's bipartisan passage of two key dairy industry bills through the Assembly Committee on Agriculture.

Special Session Assembly Bill 6, as proposed by Governor Tony Evers, boosts state dairy export endeavors with an investment of \$1 million, with an amendment from Rep. Tony Kurtz (R-Wonewoc) holding the potential for up to \$5 million in funding. Special Session Assembly Bill 7, as proposed by Governor Tony Evers, increases funding for the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection dairy processor grant program by \$1 million, with an amendment from Rep. Loren Oldenburg (R-Viroqua) directing the agency to prioritize grant allocations to smaller processing facilities, making up to 50 million pounds of finished product annually. Both bills were approved unanimously.

"Lawmakers are working together, across party lines, to provide immediate relief to dairy farmers and processors challenged by trade volatility, a severe labor shortage, poor weather, and a drop in milk consumption," said John Umhoefer, WCMA Executive Director. "Today, we applaud members of the Assembly Committee on Agriculture for their support of targeted investments designed to help us increase specialty cheese sales and sales of all dairy products, stabilizing and strengthening the dairy industry."

WCMA leaders, including President Dave Buholzer of Klondike Cheese Company, Director Paul Scharfman of Specialty Cheese Company, and Ken Heiman of Nasonville Dairy testified in support of Special Session Assembly Bills 6 and 7 prior

to passage.

“Urgent action is needed to boost Wisconsin’s dairy industry,” said Buholzer. “We thank lawmakers for moving quickly to advance programs that will enable cheesemakers to develop value-added products and new relationships with international buyers that will result in a more stable, profitable environment for all.”

“A million-dollar investment in the state’s dairy export endeavors will go a long way to eliminating barriers that have kept many cheesemakers from exploring new international markets,” said Heiman. “With expert resources, cheesemakers will be enabled to navigate the research on viable products and markets, connect with buyers, and complete forms and shipping decisions necessary to access new markets. As we grow our exports, we’ll create a more stable and prosperous environment for Wisconsin’s dairy farm families.”

“The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection dairy processor grant program has been impactful for my business, and supported its expansion, in terms of milk processing volume, sales and job creation,” said Scharfman. “This is a success story that can be replicated, and in boosting available grant funding, the state will see increased private investment and business growth.”