

WFB: Fund Established to Help Wisconsinites

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Rural Mutual Insurance Company and Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation have established the Wisconsin Food and Farm Support Fund to raise money for established non-profits that can help Wisconsinites during the COVID-19 pandemic. The initiative brings together two additional key partners, Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin and The Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

Under the campaign each entity is taking a focus on a different need.

“We wanted to do something on a state-level that would not only help people in need but also our farmers,” said Wisconsin Farm Bureau President and Rural Mutual Insurance President Joe Bragger. “In order to provide help in a variety of ways, each entity took one initiative to focus on so that we could assist a larger base of people.”

Rural Mutual Insurance will focus on collecting funds for [Feeding Wisconsin](#). Feeding Wisconsin is the statewide association of the Feeding America food banks that sources, warehouses, and provides food to over 750 affiliated agencies and 1,000 local food programs throughout the state.

“Over the past six weeks, demand at the local food pantries have more than doubled, but the donations to the pantries have slowed to half of their normal collections,” said Rural Mutual VP Customer Acquisition and Service Jason Feist. “We wanted to partner with an organization that would keep supplies moving while helping families in need.”

This effort will include Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin, the non-profit organization representing the state’s dairy farm families, and the Wisconsin Department of

Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. Through the joint effort, the partners will work on connecting processors to make dairy-specific donations. The partnership will provide movement/consumption of milk and other Wisconsin agriculture products to ensure farmers continue to have a place to sell their products, and provide Wisconsinites access to these nutritious, high-quality products. DATCP will also continue its work to connect dots with producers in a variety of other commodities. This will not only benefit the state's farmers by keeping product moving, but also help feed Wisconsinites in need. Producers, processors, and distributors of non-dairy commodities who are interested in finding ways to get their products to consumers experiencing food insecurity should contact DATCP by emailing Bradford.Steine@wisconsin.gov.

Since the Safer at Home order, Wisconsin dairy farmers, processors and communities have joined forces to provide more than 10 million pounds of dairy products on a milk equivalency basis (representing more than 1.2 million gallons of milk) to the state's growing number of individuals in need of assistance.

Wisconsin Farm Bureau will focus on collecting funds and create awareness for [Harvest of Hope](#). Harvest of Hope provides financial help to Wisconsin farm families in times of need. The Harvest of Hope Fund provides grants to farm families who need financial assistance to meet emergency needs for food, home heating fuel, medical or veterinary expenses, electric power cut-offs, climatic conditions (drought, floods, frost, hail), feed for cattle, machinery repair, retraining or other immediate situations. Funding is also available to purchase seed, fertilizer, fuel, and other supplies needed.

"It's been a tough climate for our state's farmers the last five years, and now we have been hit by this unannounced pandemic," said WFBF's Interim Chief Administrative Officer Dave Daniels. "Harvest of Hope is a unique organization that grants money to farmers who need assistance in unprecedented times. It's an appropriate time to support this well-respected organization."

Learn more about the Wisconsin Food and Farm Support Fund by visiting ruralmutual.com/about/donations or wfbf.com/wisconsin-food-and-farm-support-fund.