

# DBA: Association sets legislative priorities for 2021

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Clean water initiatives, truth-in-labeling among the items

MADISON, Wis. — The Dairy Business Association, Wisconsin's leading dairy advocacy group, today announced its top legislative and budget priorities for this year's session.

Among the group's [areas of focus](#) are improving the program that regulates larger farms, protecting customers with truth-in-labeling bills for dairy products and meat, and responding to challenges posed by COVID-19. The announcement came just before the start of DBA's annual Dairy Strong conference.

DBA will also continue to champion clean water initiatives. In December, the association announced a joint policy effort with three environmental organizations that is aimed at improving water quality while also supporting farmers. Clean Wisconsin, The Nature Conservancy and the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association are the other partners.

"DBA's legislative priorities reflect the complexity of the dairy community. While each of these wide-ranging issues is important on its own, they all fit into a larger approach to supporting our farmers and processors as well many other connected businesses," Amy Penterman, president of DBA and a farmer in northwestern Wisconsin, said. "We urge the governor and legislators to put the pieces together as they move their agendas forward and shape the next budget.

"We realize this is a very difficult time for our state, as it is for others. The pandemic continues to take a toll, including on the economy. For Wisconsin to rebound the way we all want it to, it's essential that the dairy community is successful. Billions of

dollars in economic value, thousands of jobs and the production of wholesome food depend on it.”

## **SUMMARY OF LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

John Holevoet, DBA’s director of government affairs, laid out the priorities. (More details are available on [DBA’s website](#))

**Improving the CAFO program:** We can have a system that saves staff time, relies more on private industry and focuses on continuous and quantifiable improvement. Increased CAFO fees and more staff are often offered as solutions to the program’s problems. We are not opposed to either of these things, but only if they are part of a package of broader improvements to the overall program.

**Funding the Dairy Innovation Hub:** Lawmakers and Gov. Evers made a commitment to the next generation of dairy research in the last budget by funding the creation of a Dairy Innovation Hub at three University of Wisconsin campuses. We want to maintain annual funding of \$7.8 million per year.

**Supporting clean water initiatives:** Last session’s water quality taskforce bills were just the beginning of the discussion. Among other aspects, we need more funding for groundwater mapping, well testing, the non-point program and farmer-led watershed conservation groups.

**Helping dairy processors be successful:** We continue to support funding for a Wisconsin Initiative on Dairy Exports and added funding for dairy processor grants.

**Passing truth-in-labeling bills for milk, other dairy products and meat:** The plant-based industry uses terms like milk, cheese and ice cream to ride on the marketing coattails of dairy farmers and processors. Customers are being misled and farmers and processors are being treated unfairly.

**Fixing the transportation funding problem:** We need a long-term, sustainable fix for our state’s transportation funding needs. We want a proposal that will take care of funding needs for years to come and remembers the importance of rural roads to our state’s economy.

**Providing driver’s permits for non-citizens:** Properly trained and insured motorists should be able to drive legally regardless of their immigration status. From our perspective, this is a public safety and economic development issue.

**Addressing targeted performance standards for nitrates:** The state is working on creating new targeted performance standards to address nitrates in groundwater. Any new rules must outline the criteria for an area to be subject to the new standards and should allow for an area to be removed from the zone if it makes the necessary improvements. The standards should also require all farms to be treated fairly, regardless of size or type.

**Promoting innovative farming practices:** We need to provide farmers with more opportunities for innovation in farming practices. This will require regulatory flexibility, but it will ultimately make farms more environmentally and economically sustainable.

**Providing flexibility for UW-Extension teaching requirements:** We want to allow UW-Extension faculty to be able to count their time instructing farmers toward their teaching hour requirements. This is critical to the economic success of rural Wisconsin.

**Responding to challenges created by COVID-19:** The state should provide basic liability protections for businesses, include agricultural and food processing workers among the first to be vaccinated, and allow for flexibility for businesses whose normal business practices have been disrupted.