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Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection: Gov. Evers' proposed budget invests in agriculture

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MADISON – As farmers fight frigid cold and food processors continue to face the day-to-day challenges of COVID-19, we all had something to celebrate when Governor Tony Evers announced his plans to invest more than $43 million in Wisconsin agriculture in his 2021-2023 biennial budget.

This budget proposal demonstrates Governor Evers' roots in rural Wisconsin and food processing and his deep commitment to the state's agriculture industry. These investments build on the strengths of Wisconsin agriculture, and they will enable the industry to continue fueling the state's economy for years to come.

In Wisconsin, we are proud of our quality agricultural products. This budget proposal will allow our farmers, processors, and agribusinesses to expand their markets locally and internationally through new programming and grant funding. To ensure these food products reach those who need them most, the budget proposal includes a significant financial commitment to help Wisconsin food banks and pantries bridge the gap between producers and families.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of our state's food supply chain, including our cheesemakers and our meat processors. As part of the 2021-23 budget, Governor Evers has proposed additional grant funding for our processors to encourage innovation and expand capacity. To ensure the industry's long-term prosperity, the Governor also included funding for workforce development in these critical areas.

I am pleased this budget proposal also includes continued investment in conservation efforts. This includes additional staffing at the county level through their conservation departments and the University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension. The budget also provides grant funding for farmer-led watershed protection efforts that will encourage collaboration and support water stewardship.

Farmers are the foundation of Wisconsin's agriculture industry, and this budget proposal invests directly in resources for their mental health and well-being. The Governor proposed ongoing funding for farmer mental health initiatives, including regional programs to increase farmers' ability to access this support.

This budget proposal is an extraordinary opportunity for Wisconsin agriculture. Our team at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) stands ready to work with policymakers, farmers, processors, agribusinesses, and organizations alike to implement these initiatives. I look forward to connecting the dots to expand market opportunities, bolster processing, promote innovation, and support farmers.

To read the Governor's agricultural budget announcement and learn more about his 2021-2023 biennial budget proposal, visit evers.wi.gov.