

Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative: Lays out legislative priorities

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GREEN BAY, Wis. — Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative said today it will push in the next congressional session for a new farmworker visa, expanded free trade agreements and a leading role for farmers in developing environmentally focused policies, among other top priorities.

The Midwest-based cooperative, one of the largest dairy co-ops in the country, laid out [five key legislative focus areas](#) during its annual meeting with members: 1) a reliable workforce, 2) better access to global markets, 3) farm policy that works for dairy farmers, 4) farmer-led environmental innovation and 5) accurate representation of dairy products. The priorities came with [a detailed set of objectives](#).

“Edge’s priorities and objectives reflect a broad range of tangible changes that would boost critical support for our dairy farmers,” Edge President Brody Stapel said. “This is a critical time for the dairy community. Ongoing issues, like the worker shortage, have only grown more challenging and call for bold action. And, we need the tools to meet emerging challenges as well.

“Edge is bringing solutions to the table along with a commitment to work together with Congress to get things done. It is important that our elected leaders understand what it’s going to take to ensure that America’s dairy farmers have the ability to meet the growing need for nutritious food while also supporting rural economies throughout the country.”

Summary of key priorities:

- **Reliable workforce** — Dairy farmers need access to a practical agricultural

workforce visa to address critical workforce shortages. Unfortunately, there currently isn't a way for farmers to protect their existing workforce or any practical process to hire new foreign workers who are legally authorized to work.

- **Better access to global markets** — U.S. dairy farmers are the most efficient in the world in providing safe and wholesome dairy products to meet the growing nutritional demands around the globe. And, increasing dairy exports to existing and emerging markets ensures higher and more stable prices for our farmers.
- **Farm policy that works for dairy farmers** — Federal dairy programs can greatly affect farmers' ability to earn a living. Dairy risk management programs need to be effective and be feasible for all types of farmers.
- **Farmer-led environmental innovation** — Dairy farmers have always been leaders in caring for the environment and they continue to lead in addressing changing climate conditions. We believe environmentally focused policies affecting agriculture should be guided by farmers, grounded in science, driven by the market and sufficiently flexible to allow for innovation at the farm level.
- **Accurate representation of dairy products** — Dairy products are safe, wholesome and nutritious and should be accurately represented to customers as such. While there is room for a variety of products in the marketplace, it is wrong to mislead customers. Some non-dairy imitations violate existing labeling laws.