

# Gov. Evers, Sen. Pfaff, Rep. Considine: Introduce legislative package to invest in agricultural industries and farm families

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers was joined today by State Sen. Brad Pfaff (D-Onalaska), State Rep. Dave Considine (D-Baraboo), and Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) Secretary-designee Randy Romanski at the 2021 World Dairy Expo to introduce a package of legislation to invest in Wisconsin's agricultural industries, rural communities, and farm families.

“From putting food on the tables of families across the globe to supporting countless jobs, Wisconsin's agricultural industry has been and always will be essential to the success of our state, and supporting the industry, our rural communities, and farm families has always been a top priority for me,” said Gov. Evers. “I was glad of all we accomplished in the budget—creating a new meat processor grant program, assisting farmer mental health programs, and supporting the Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports—but there is more work left to do to ensure Wisconsin farmers and producers don't just recover from the pandemic but thrive for years to come.”

Building off the success of Gov. Evers' 2021-23 biennial budget investments in farmers and Wisconsin's agricultural economy, this package advances several initiatives previously proposed by the governor to bolster the agricultural workforce, promote and build local markets for Wisconsin products while combatting food insecurity and hunger, and establish a new program to better support the mental health and well-being of farmers and their families.

“Agriculture tells an important part of our state’s story: hard work, determination, and building strong, healthy communities. I’m proud to introduce these bills alongside my colleagues to benefit Wisconsin’s agriculture community,” said Sen. Pfaff. “This package will provide direct support to our farmers, strengthen their ties to our communities, and creates new markets. Agriculture is our state’s past, present, and future. These bills ensure that farmers will continue to play an integral role in Wisconsin’s success.”

“As a former farmer and the ranking member of the Assembly Committee on Agriculture, I am proud to propose these investments in our farmers and our state. Agriculture is the heart of our rural communities, and these investments are critical to ensuring a prosperous future in our communities,” said Rep. Considine. “The pandemic has only heightened concerns from farmers about access to meat processing facilities and mental health support. The bills I introduced today with my colleagues would respond directly to these concerns.”

The package introduced today includes:

- [LRB-4244](#): Invests \$20 million to help connect Wisconsin food banks and pantries with Wisconsin producers to provide food to families experiencing food insecurity.
  - These grants will help Wisconsin food banks and other eligible non-profit organizations purchase Wisconsin food products for distribution to people experiencing food insecurity.
  - This investment will bolster Wisconsin’s food supply chain by cultivating and strengthening local markets, from producers and processors to food banks and consumers.
- [LRB-2865](#): Creates a Meat Talent Development Program, which provides more than \$2.6 million in grants to specifically target meat industry workforce development and help spur growth in Wisconsin’s meat processing industry.
  - This program provides financial support to students enrolled in a Wisconsin meat processing educational or training program.
  - This bill would allow DATCP to provide grants to universities, colleges, and technical colleges to reimburse the tuition costs of students enrolled in a meat processing program.
  - Each tuition reimbursement covers up to 80 percent of the tuition cost for enrolling in a meat processing program, with a maximum reimbursement of \$7,500.
- [LRB-4243](#): Provides additional funding for Something Special from Wisconsin™ ,

a branded marketing program available to businesses who can attribute at least 50 percent of their ingredients, production, or processing activities to Wisconsin.

- The bill creates a new continuing appropriation and provides \$400,000 in fiscal year 2021-22 from the general fund to support efforts to strengthen marketing of Wisconsin-made products.
- Over the years, this program has offered consumers worldwide a unique and respected Wisconsin brand identity. Whether participants are marketing locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally, this program helps build upon Wisconsin's reputation for providing world-class products.
- [LRB-2867](#): Creates a new Regional Farmer Mental Health Program to help increase farmers' access to mental health support services, coordinate local and regional peer support programs, and provide counseling and assistance to Wisconsin farmers.
  - This bill provides a biennial investment of \$784,000 and an additional 5.0 GPR positions to serve as regional farm support agents within DATCP's Farm Center and increases funding for these positions.
  - Creating a new Regional Farmer Mental Health Program would increase farmers' access to mental health support services, bolster coordinated local and regional peer support programs, and enhance counseling and assistance to Wisconsin farmers.
- [LRB-4328](#): Provides funding for the Farm-to-School program to get fresh, nutritious, locally-produced foods onto kids' plates in school cafeterias across Wisconsin. It also creates the Farm-to-Fork program to build connections between farmers and businesses, hospitals, and higher ed facilities interested in purchasing local food for their cafeterias.
  - This bill creates the farm to fork program, providing \$553,300 over the biennium, to connect entities that have cafeterias but are not school districts with nearby farms to provide locally produced foods in meals and snacks, to help the public develop healthy eating habits, to provide nutritional and agricultural education, and to improve farmers' incomes and direct access to markets.
  - The bill also provides an additional \$400,000 over the biennium in funding for DATCP to award grants for creating and expanding farm to school programs and requires that in awarding grants under the farm to school programs, DATCP must give preference to school districts that have a high percentage of students who are eligible for free or reduced-price

meals under federal law.