

Wisconsin Farm Bureau: Virtual ag day at the capitol event keeps farmers connected

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MADISON – On March 24, more than 250 farmers and agriculturists met virtually for Ag Day at the Capitol. This annual event is for Wisconsin farmers and agriculturists to learn more about state issues affecting agriculture and meet with their state legislators.

Attendees listened to prerecorded welcome messages from Governor Tony Evers and Secretary-designee of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection Randy Romanski.

The governor shared that Wisconsin farmers are the state's past, present and will be the future.

"That's why it is critically important to me and to the success of our state that we invest in and support our farmers and farm families," Evers said.

The governor said that his budget proposal contains new and additional grant funding to encourage innovation, market development and job creation in the meat and dairy sectors, including creating and funding the Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports, which will boost export opportunities for Wisconsin's world-class products.

During the event Wisconsin Farm Bureau President Kevin Krentz addressed the virtual crowd and encouraged members to share their stories with legislators in their meetings and throughout the year.

"It's important that they hear directly from you and how an issue is impacting you,

your farm and your community,” said Krentz.

Secretary-designee Romanski highlighted the governor’s proposal to provide support for Wisconsin’s meat processing industry by providing funding for meat processor grants to help expand and modernize, meat talent and development program to help support the industry’s workforce development and the meat inspection program by funding 6.0 additional full-time state meat inspectors.

“We learned during COVID-19 just how important it is to ensure a resilient meat and dairy supply chain,” said Romanski. “The governor’s budget prioritizes that with programs that will help keep Wisconsin’s meat and dairy supply chains moving, building our processing work force for the future and ensuring that DATCP has resources it needs to keep up with the industry.”

Attendees listened to issue briefings on increased funding for broadband expansion, providing farmer grant programs for nitrogen optimization projects, addressing meat processing infrastructure, transportation funding, well remediation, wildlife damage, truth in food labeling and a host of other bills including farmland preservation tax credit and the Wisconsin initiative for agricultural exports and dairy processor grants.

Another focus of the program was support for agricultural nitrogen legislation. Attendees were asked to encourage legislators to support grants to farmers for the implementation of on-farm projects that are designed to reduce nitrate loading to groundwater. Additional legislative concepts discussed include advocating for improvements to DNR’s Well Compensation Program and creating a Cover Crop Insurance Premium Rebate Program.

Rural Mutual Insurance Company and FS GROWMARK, Inc., were major sponsors of the event. Co-sponsors of the event, with Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation, included the Dairy Business Association, Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Cattlemen’s Association, Wisconsin Corn Growers Association, Wisconsin Hemp Alliance, Wisconsin Pork Association, Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association, Wisconsin Soybean Association and the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association.