

Dairy Business Association: Calls for legislative action

Posted on Tuesday, Jan 18, 2022

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

Group hones in on water quality, food labeling among other bills

MADISON, Wis. — The Dairy Business Association (DBA), Wisconsin's leading dairy advocacy group, today laid out key bills and other changes the organization will push for and against during the remaining months of this year's legislative session.

The association is honing in on further addressing the state's water quality issues, blocking untruthful labeling of plant-based foods, protecting a shrinking farm workforce and improving the program that regulates large livestock farms.

DBA members, leaders and staff called for action on these and other priorities today in meetings with lawmakers and aides during the group's annual Dairy Day at the Capitol.



“DBA is focused on common-sense ways to continually protect and improve not only the livelihoods of our members, but also the future of our rural communities and the well-being of our state,” DBA President Amy Penterman said. “By identifying solutions and threats, and helping lawmakers understand the impact, we are demonstrating to our state leaders the opportunities they have to bring about wide-ranging benefits.”

“Our members drive these efforts,” Penterman said. “We are proud of them for stepping up, and we are proud to stand up on their behalf.”

DBA’s key bills and programs:

CLEAN WATER:

- Support AB 727/SB 677, which would spend a modest amount of money on clean water initiatives, including the creation of a nitrogen optimization pilot program, providing crop insurance rebates for cover crops and funding a new hydrogeologist position.
- Support AB 728/SB 678, which makes changes to help improve water quality without spending money. This bill changes aspects of the well compensation program, farmer-led conservation grants and two other Department of Natural Resources water grant programs to make sure existing resources are used as efficiently as possible.
- Support AB 54/SB 68 that would make improvements, including more funding, to the Farmland Preservation Program.

TRUTH-IN-LABELING FOR DAIRY/MEAT:

- Support AB 73/SB 81, AB 75/SB 82 and AB 74/SB 83, which seek to ban the labeling of food as milk or as a dairy product or ingredient if the food is not made from the milk of a cow or another hooved mammal, and would essentially do the same for meat products.
 - Consumers are being misled by this false labeling that uses terms like milk, cheese and ice cream. The use of such terms suggests that plant-based products have the same nutritional content of milk and other dairy products, which is not true.
 - The plant-based industry uses dairy terms to ride on the marketing coattails of dairy farmers and processors. This practice is inherently unfair as money paid by dairy farmers into the dairy checkoff is used to promote milk, cheese and other dairy products.
 - The same labeling protections should be offered to meat products. There is a rise in plant-based products that imitate meat, and lab-cultured meat products

are just around the corner.

AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE:

- Oppose AB 601/SB 579 and other measures that could hurt the farm workforce. This bill would require police to ask for documentation that someone is lawfully present in the state if they are arrested or even stopped for a traffic ticket. People who cannot show adequate proof would be reported to immigration officials.
- Labor shortages have plagued the dairy community for decades, and the pandemic has only made things worse. Farmers and processors need all the workers they can get.
- A large proportion of the workers on our farms and in our dairy plants are recent immigrants.
- These bills would contribute to racial profiling and mistaken detentions. They would also send the message to some workers that they are not welcome here at a time when they are needed the most.

CAFO PROGRAM:

- Support improvements to the CAFO program that would provide an efficient and effective way to permit and regulate larger farms.
- The current system is known for unreasonable delays, high staff turnover and an unproductive focus on permitting over long-term compliance. We can have a system that saves staff time, relies more on private industry and focuses on continuous and quantifiable environmental improvement.
- Increased CAFO fees and more staff are often offered as solutions to the program's problems. DBA is not opposed to that but only if those changes are part of a broader package of improvements.