

Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection: National Ag Day: Celebrate Wisconsin agriculture

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MADISON, Wis. – Tuesday, March 22, we will be celebrating one of my favorite holidays: National Ag Day. Each year, National Ag Day provides us with the opportunity to recognize and celebrate Wisconsin agriculture and the ways that it connects us to one another.

From milk and cheese to ginseng and maple syrup, Wisconsin remains a strong agricultural leader and provider of high quality, nutritious products for the nation and world. Wisconsin ranks in the top five in the U.S. for the production of more than 17 commodities, producing nearly 60 percent of the nation's cranberries and more than 25 percent of the snap beans, dry whey for human consumption, cheese, and mink pelts produced in the U.S. Home to more dairy farms than any other state and nearly 1,200 licensed cheesemakers, our state produced nearly 3.39 billion pounds of cheese in 2021, ranking first in the production of American, cheddar, and Italian cheeses. Wisconsin remains a the place the world turns to for safe, quality agricultural products, exporting more than \$3.96 billion in agricultural products last year.

Wisconsin agriculture is undeniably strong, diverse, and vibrant. The strength of this industry is rooted in the more than 435,000 Wisconsinites that tirelessly contribute to our state's agriculture story and bring wholesome products from farms to your table.

Our state's agriculture story starts with the farmers that work every day, rain or shine, to provide top-notch care for their animals and carefully cultivate crops. I am proud of the way our state's farmers come together in times of need, care for the

soil and water they utilize, and bring resiliency to our local communities. Recognizing the important role of Wisconsin farmers, Gov. Tony Evers has provided three rounds of the Farm Support Program, providing direct support to more than 20,000 farmers who were economically impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. DATCP's Wisconsin Farm Center also provides no-cost, confidential resources and services to farmers, such as financial consulting, transition planning, mediation, and can connect farmers and their families to mental health services.

We are fortunate that Wisconsin is home to many outstanding food processors that take raw agricultural commodities produced by our state's farmers and turn them into the specialty products we enjoy daily. Our state's food processors use their passion and skills to innovate, improve efficiency, maintain high food safety standards, and create new products to enjoy. Funded by Gov. Evers 2021-2023 biennial budget, DATCP will help fuel this passion for innovation through new meat processor grants and increased funding for dairy processor grants.

Last, but not least, Wisconsin agriculture is connected by many organizations, associations, businesses, and industries, such as transportation and food service. From marketing professionals that promote products to truck drivers that move food from processors to stores, it takes a village to get food into the hands of consumers. DATCP is proud to work together with these important partners to gain critical insight, feedback, and industry knowledge that help guide our initiatives and services.

As I look at our state's agriculture story, I am proud to be a part of this industry and honored that DATCP is able to serve as a resource, help connect the dots along the supply chain, and play a role in bringing food from dedicated farmers to the citizens of Wisconsin. Wisconsin agriculture has and continues to be a part of our state's heritage and has so much to offer to our future. I encourage you, today and every day, to find opportunities to support our state's agriculture industry, including purchasing local, Wisconsin-made products and learning more about where your food comes from. Buying local is just one way to contribute to the strength and resiliency of our economy and communities and support the hardworking people that provide for our state, nation, and world.

For more information and resources on Wisconsin's vibrant agriculture industry, visit DATCP's website at datcp.wi.gov. For more on National Ag Day, visit AgDay.org.