

Gov. Evers, DATCP: Announce investment in statewide meat talent development

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today, together with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP), announced up to \$5 million in meat talent development assistance. This funding will be used to attract and provide financial support to students in Wisconsin meat processing training programs, as well as support program development and connect the meat processing industry with potential employees.

“The last several years have brought challenges to every sector of our agricultural economy, including meat processing,” said Gov. Evers. “This investment will reduce barriers to careers in meat processing, provide new opportunities to workers across our state, and ensure our food supply chain remains resilient and successful well into Wisconsin’s future.”

Wisconsin’s meat processing industry has a long history and a prosperous future with thousands of livestock producers across the state and hundreds of meat establishments, which process safe, high-quality meat products for consumers in Wisconsin and around the world. With more than 500 state and federally inspected meat plants, the meat processing industry has a substantial workforce and role in Wisconsin’s statewide economy.

While Wisconsin’s unemployment rate dropped to a [record-low 3 percent](#) in November—tying with the previous record-low in 2018—the state’s meat industry, like many other industries across the state, has struggled to find workers to fill critical positions. Funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), today’s investment builds on the [governor’s continued commitment](#) to invest in and support programs that reduce barriers to employment, provide skills and job training

opportunities, and ensure growth and retention of Wisconsin's workforce, in addition to building long-term success in the state's food processing industry.

Gov. Evers proposed substantial investments in his 2021-23 biennial budget proposal, including \$2 million for meat processors to expand and modernize their operations, \$2.63 million for a Meat Talent Development Program, and additional meat inspectors to keep up with the industry. During the budget process, the Legislature agreed with the governor on the need for an annual investment of \$200,000 for a Meat Processor Grant Program, as well as four new meat inspector positions at DATCP. Unfortunately, the Legislature did not prioritize long-term, sustainable solutions to the workforce challenges the industry faces by neglecting to provide funding for the talent development program and reducing the funding for the meat processing improvements.

"Gov. Evers recognizes that agriculture is our strength, and he is continuing to invest in our agriculture industry," said DATCP Secretary Randy Romanski. "With up to \$5 million available for meat talent development programming, people across Wisconsin will have the opportunity to access and obtain training they might not otherwise be able to afford, and we will be able to better connect potential employees with the industry. Today's announcement builds on the investments in the 2021-23 budget and strengthens our food supply chain and workforce for years to come."