

Sen. Marklein: Talking cows in the Capitol

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On Tuesday, January 18, 2022, I talked about some of my favorite things on the first floor of the State Capitol rotunda: cows, milk and ice cream.

The Dairy Innovation Hub (DIH) hosted a research poster session at the Capitol to highlight some of their projects at UW-Madison, UW-Platteville and UW-River Falls. It was also Dairy Business Association (DBA) Day at the Capitol, so there were a lot of ag-engaged people to talk to!

As you may recall, I led a legislative effort to fund the DIH in the 2019-21 state budget. This innovative idea was developed by the Dairy Task Force 2.0 and is a top priority for dairy and agriculture in Wisconsin to remain a dairy superpower.

According to the DIH, Wisconsin has 6,700 dairy farms with 1,267,000 cows statewide. We produce 30.7 billion pounds of milk every year, which makes us second in the nation for milk production; but we're #1 for cheese! Every year, dairy generates \$45.6 billion in economic activity and supports 79,000 jobs. Every cow generates about \$36,000 in economic activity every year.

Clearly, the dairy industry is extremely important to our state, and to my Senate district. To support this crucial industry, we allocated \$8.8 million to create the DIH at UW-Madison, UW-Platteville and UW-River Falls to reprioritize and restore focus on dairy innovation in Wisconsin in the 2019-21 state budget. This collaborative effort is working well with researchers and experts on all of the campuses sharing information and data. There is tremendous enthusiasm for the problem-solving, innovation and out-of-the-box thinking taking place among these three campuses.

The research presentation in the State Capitol was one way the DIH is working to

share their work and findings with legislators and stakeholders who support them. I think it is very important for the researchers to tell us about their ideas and engage with the policy-makers in the Capitol.

To date, the DIH has funded more than 100 projects across the three campuses. They have attracted top faculty talent in 11 searches and have published (or are in progress to publish) 26 journal publications. The DIH has produced three patents, one on each campus. The researchers have presented their research at least 51 times.

The presentations on Tuesday included an overview of several key research projects. I am encouraged by the ideas this team is exploring. I firmly believe that these projects are developing strong solutions that solidify Wisconsin as America's Dairy Superpower.

There were several projects presented included benchmarking the nitrogen use efficiency for corn production in Wisconsin, local virtual enclosures to enforce for managed grazing and my favorite: Deliciosity of Ice-Cream: The Saga of Ingredients. Researchers at UW Platteville are studying this very important, delicious product.

The research includes a study of ways the properties of an ice cream sample have a strong correlation to the recipe's ingredients. Changes in cream, sugar and starch content affect food qualities including the body, texture, melt qualities and flavor of the ice cream. Ingredients also affect other properties such as viscosity and elasticity.

The researchers are studying ways to adjust recipes to meet consumer demands and preferences to expand the market. The goal of the DIH was not to expand our production of milk, as we produce milk quite effectively. One of the goals was to increase demand and alternative uses for milk. If consumers eat more ice cream, for example, demand for milk will increase.

This is just one example of how DIH investments are being applied to encourage innovation in the dairy industry. I am impressed by the research that is taking place and the strong commitments that have been made on the three campuses we are investing in. I encourage you to visit www.dairyinnovationhub.wisc.edu to learn more about these initiatives and other accomplishments. I will continue to monitor the progress of the DIH and will keep you posted on new developments.

As always, please do not hesitate to connect with me to provide input, ideas or to seek assistance. Send an email to sen.marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov or call 608-266-0703.