

# WCMA: Applauds Gov. Evers' action to fully fund the Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports

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MADISON, WI – The Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association (WCMA) today applauded Governor Tony Evers for signing Senate Bill 827 into law as Act 207. The legislation, authored by Senator Joan Ballweg (R-Markesan) and Representative Tony Kurtz (R-Wonewoc), repurposes unused federal monies to boost funding in 2022 and 2023 for the Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports (WIAE) within the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

The WIAE aims to boost Wisconsin's agricultural exports – including cheese, yogurt, butter, and other dairy products – by 25 percent over the next five years. Governor Evers took action to fully fund the initiative at Sartori Company's cheese caves in Plymouth, Wisconsin, which touts itself as the Cheese Capital of the World.

“We’re darn proud to be America’s Dairyland, and I’m glad to be celebrating National Agriculture Day right here in Plymouth—the Cheese Capital of the World—to sign bipartisan legislation to help continue supporting Wisconsin dairy,” said Gov. Evers. “Our dairy industry is not only core to our economy, but it’s core to who we are as a state. This bipartisan legislation builds on our work to expand and increase our dairy exports so folks around the globe can experience the high-quality dairy products we know and love produced right here in Wisconsin.”

“Our state’s dairy processors and farmers are excited to answer the global call for more of their high-quality, safe, and nutritious dairy products, and this program will offer the resources and support they need to reach consumers around the world,”

added WCMA Executive Director John Umhoefer. “We’re deeply grateful to Governor Evers, Senator Ballweg, Representative Kurtz, and state leaders for their collaborative leadership in making these purposeful, worthwhile investments in Wisconsin’s agricultural industry.”

“With household incomes and demand rising in emerging international markets, now is an ideal time to make these smart, targeted investments,” said Jeff Schwager, CEO of Sartori Company. “Governor Evers’ action today will provide valuable assistance to help Wisconsin dairy processors navigate the complex logistics of exporting and build their businesses abroad for years to come.”

Governor Evers first proposed the creation of a dairy exporting program in his 2020 State of the State address and included funding for an agricultural exports program in his 2021-2023 biennial budget proposal. Following Senator Ballweg and Representative Kurtz’s introduction of legislation to provide \$5 million to boost Wisconsin’s agricultural exports, including \$2.5 million for dairy products, the WIAE swiftly received strong bipartisan support in the Wisconsin Legislature.

In a December 2021 report to lawmakers, state agency officials detailed their plans for administering the WIAE, which include participation in key international trade shows, reverse buyers’ missions, consultative and educational resources for new exporters, marketing campaigns, and direct-to-industry grants.