

# Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association: Applauds legislative approval of maximum funding for Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports

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MADISON, WI – The Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association (WCMA) today applauded the Wisconsin State Assembly’s unanimous approval of Senate Bill 827, legislation authored by Representative Tony Kurtz (R-Wonewoc) and Senator Joan Ballweg (R-Markesan), which repurposes \$880,000 in unused federal monies to direct full funding of \$1 million in 2022 for the newly-launched Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports (WIAE). The Wisconsin State Senate approved the bill on February 15, meaning that the legislation now advances to Governor Tony Evers, who first proposed export investments in his 2020 State of the State address.

“Our most sincere thanks go to Rep. Kurtz, Sen. Ballweg, agency officials and Gov. Evers for their dedicated leadership and collaborative efforts to boost Wisconsin’s agricultural industry and rural communities through smart, targeted investments in export endeavors,” said Rebekah Sweeney, WCMA Senior Director of Programs and Policy. “Wisconsin dairy processors and farmers are ready to meet the growing international demand for their safe, nutritious and delicious dairy products, and grateful to have the support of the state as they connect with consumers in emerging global markets.”

Administered by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), the WIAE is designed to boost the export of dairy, meat, and other agricultural products by 25 percent. Half the total funds appropriated will be used specifically to increase the export sales of milk, cheese, yogurt, whey, and other dairy products.

In a report issued to the Legislature in December 2021, DATCP officials detailed their WIAE plans, 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.