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Ag coalition calls for more program funding in biennial budget

Posted on Tuesday, Jan 31, 2023

A coalition of Wisconsin agriculture groups is calling on policymakers to boost funding for cover crop insurance premium rebates, dairy processor grants, export grants and other programs in the next state budget.

The ag groups yesterday rolled out their shared policy priorities for the coming biennial state budget, which cover topics such as transportation, commodity exports, foodbanks, the environment, biofuels and more.

Jason Mugnaini, director of governmental relations for the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation, says agriculture contributes $104.8 billion to state industrial revenues per year while supporting 435,000 jobs.

“It is important that a state budget proposal reflects this impact,” he said in a release.

The Wisconsin Ag Coalition is urging Gov. Tony Evers and the Legislature to:

*increase funding for DATCP’s Cover Crop Insurance Premium Rebate Program from $800,000 in the previous budget to $2 million over the 2023-25 biennium. Under this program, the state agency partners with the USDA’s Risk Management Agency to provide insurance rebates of $5 per acre for cover crops, which help reduce farmland runoff.

*boost funding for the agency’s Nitrogen Optimization Grant Program from $1.6 million to $2 million in the coming biennium. The program offers $50,000 grants to farmers for two-year nitrogen conservation research projects conducted alongside UW System scientists.

*provide additional support for the state’s Dairy Processor Grants program, which was funded with $400,000 in the previous budget. Citing the 43 applicants in 2022 requesting $1.7 million in total funding, the coalition is seeking $2 million for the program in the next budget.

*expand the Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports from $2 million in funding to $4 million. This program's goal is to increase exports of dairy, meat, crops and other commodities 25 percent by June 2026.

*provide $10 million in state funding to help the Food+Farm Exploration Center in Plover open this year, after the Farming for the Future Foundation raised $26 million in private sector dollars for the $36 million project.

Along with increased funding for these programs and projects, the coalition is seeking continued funding for the Producer-Led Watershed Grant Program, the Wisconsin Economic Development Corp.'s Wisconsin Cooperative Feasibility Grant Program, the Department of Natural Resources' Agricultural Nonpoint Source Pollution Program and more.

The coalition includes the WFBF, the Dairy Business Association, the Wisconsin Corn Growers Association, the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association, the Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association, the Wisconsin Agri-Business Association, the Wisconsin Soybean Association, the Midwest Food Products Association and other groups.

See the release:
https://www.wisbusiness.com/2023/wisconsin-farm-bureau-federation-wisconsin-agricultural-groups-share-biennial-budget-priorities/

See the full list of budget priorities:
https://wfbf.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2023-25-Budget-Issues-Ag-Coalition-FINAL-Jan-27-2023-003.pdf

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