

Dairy Business Association: Budget committee action demonstrates commitment to dairy

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MADISON, Wis. — The Dairy Business Association, Wisconsin's leading dairy advocacy group, was pleased to see a number of actions taken Thursday night by the state's budget-writing committee that will help the dairy community thrive economically while protecting natural resources.

"The association appreciates the Joint Committee on Finance for recognizing the important work our dairy farmers do day in and day out to drive a \$46 billion part of the state's economy while at the same time developing innovative solutions to environmental challenges," Chad Zuleger, government affairs director for DBA, said. "The agriculture leaders in the Legislature, Sen. Ballweg and Rep. Kurtz, especially deserve thanks for prioritizing the interests of the farming community."

Noteworthy dairy-related priorities endorsed by the committee as part of the state's 2023-25 budget:

- An additional \$300,000 per year for grants to dairy processors for a total of \$1 million over the biennium
- Continued \$1 million per year for the Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports, which supported a 37% increase in dairy exports during its first year
- Farmer mental health funding of \$100,000 per year
- Increased funding of \$200,000 per year, for a total of \$1 million per year, to support on-farm research projects that reduce nitrate contamination in drinking water
- Doubling of funding to \$800,000 each year to incentivize the planting of cover crops, a practice that builds soil health and helps keep nutrients on the fields

and out of water

- Continued support of \$1 million per year for farmer-led watershed protection programs
- \$1 million to help rural residents rehabilitate contaminated private wells and properly seal up abandon wells

“DBA sees more opportunities for support — especially related to water quality — and will continue to advocate for bold action alongside our partners,” Zuleger said. “The goal is to have water that is clean and farms that are resilient, and Wisconsin needs to keep moving forward with that purpose.”

After the committee completes its work, the Assembly can make changes to the spending plan followed by the Senate. The full Legislature must agree before sending a budget to the governor, who also can make changes. The goal is to have the budget set by July 1.

Images:

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About DBA:

The Dairy Business Association is Wisconsin’s leading dairy lobby group, championing smart and sensible regulations affecting the dairy community. The nonprofit organization is comprised of farmers, milk processors, vendors and other business partners who work collaboratively to ensure that dairy farms of all sizes have the support they need to keep America’s Dairyland strong. More information: www.dairyforward.com.