

Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection: Wisconsin agriculture makes holiday traditions happen

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MADISON, Wis. – The holiday season is almost upon us, and with it comes many traditions; special holiday meals shared with loved ones, gathering together for festive parties and celebrations, reflecting on the things we are grateful for, and setting goals for the year ahead. Many of the traditions and activities that we enjoy this time of year, however, would not be possible without our state's many agricultural producers and processors.

For some, it's not Thanksgiving without a plump, juicy turkey on the dinner table. For others, it doesn't feel like the holidays without a goose, duck, ham, brisket, or prime rib roast as the focal point of their feast. For that, we have Wisconsin's meat industry to thank. Producers and processors work hard year-round, including during the holidays, to meet consumer demand and help ensure our festivities will be full of safe and delicious Wisconsin-made meat products.

To help keep up with that strong consumer demand, DATCP's Meat Talent Development Program was created in 2022 to offer educational and training opportunities to attract people to jobs within the industry. Through initiatives like the High School Meat Science Curriculum, which some Wisconsin high schools have already implemented, and the University of Wisconsin-River Falls Humane Handling Institute, more people across Wisconsin are learning about career pathways within the industry, with many of the courses eligible for tuition reimbursement. These efforts are helping inspire and train the next generation of processors and will strengthen the throughput of our state's meat industry.

Wisconsin's agriculture producers and processors contribute many other commodities to our fall and winter celebrations, too. After all, no holiday table is complete without Wisconsin-grown potatoes, green beans, and corn, or a generous helping of cranberries, of which we are the number one producer in the nation. Consumers can also rely on them to provide the necessary ingredients they need to do their holiday cooking and baking, such as eggs, milk, and butter. From side dishes to the main course, many of the seasonal favorites we enjoy are produced by your neighbors right here in Wisconsin.

But it isn't only food that our state's producers supply for our holiday celebrations. Each year, almost two million Christmas trees are harvested from over 800 tree farms in Wisconsin, contributing \$50 million in sales to the state's economy. Some of these trees are shipped out-of-state while others remain here for Wisconsinites to purchase and enjoy. Every fall, staff from DATCP's Bureau of Plant Industry inspect these trees, helping ensure that, when a consumer buys a Wisconsin-grown Christmas tree, it is high-quality, and pest- and disease-free.

It's clear that Wisconsin agriculture gives us much to be thankful for. However you choose to celebrate the season, I hope you will include Wisconsin-grown and produced products as part of your gatherings and traditions. Happy holidays!