

U.S. Sens. Baldwin, Blackburn: Introduce bill to support American dairy businesses

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) introduced the *Dairy Business Innovation Act of 2023*, bipartisan legislation that will reauthorize and strengthen the Dairy Business Innovation (DBI) Initiatives to help more American dairy farmers and processors add value to their businesses, including creating new products, expanding their markets, and modernizing their production facilities. Senator Baldwin successfully created the DBI Initiatives through the [Dairy Business Innovation Act in 2018](#), which passed as part of the 2018 Farm Bill and has since delivered almost \$40 million to help Wisconsin dairy businesses innovate and reach new customers.

“Wisconsin Dairy is essential to our Made in Wisconsin economy and our state’s identity. I’ve heard directly from dozens of Wisconsin dairies that have expanded their businesses thanks to the Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives, and I’m proud to lead the charge to ensure this program has the resources it needs to help more businesses innovate and grow for the future,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “Our dairy farmers and producers face unique challenges, and expanding this program will give more small- and medium-sized dairy businesses the tools and opportunity to reach new markets, implement efficiencies, and create world-class products.”

“The dairy industry is an essential part of the American economy. It is crucial that we provide the resources that dairies in Tennessee need to expand and create new products,” **said Senator Blackburn.** “With many small Tennessee dairies struggling to remain open, this bill will allow these businesses to diversify and expand their market competitiveness.”

The DBI Initiatives provide resources to serve prospective and established businesses that produce a product made from milk from a dairy animal, including dairy farms with their own production facilities and dairy processors with cheese, ice cream, and bottling facilities. Since the program was established in 2019, DBI Initiatives have supported over \$150 million in awards through regional centers across the country. Each regional initiative is tasked with providing technical assistance and grants to farmers and processors, including:

- **Supporting new and expanding dairy businesses**—Centers provide assistance with business plan development, accounting, market evaluation, and strategic planning.
- **Promoting innovation in dairy products**—Dairy businesses receive assistance with product innovation, marketing and branding, packaging, distribution, supply chain innovation, food safety training and consultation, and dairy product production training.
- **Assisting with dairy plant modernization and process improvement**—Dairy businesses receive assistance with processing facility improvement, including assistance with plant upgrades, food safety modernization, energy and water efficiency, byproduct reprocessing and use maximization, and waste treatment.

The *Dairy Business Innovation Act of 2023* will increase funding for the DBI Initiatives, authorizing \$36 million per year, up from \$20 million, to help more American farmers and processors modernize, reach new markets, and create economic growth.

In addition to Senators Baldwin and Blackburn, the *Dairy Business Innovation Act of 2023* is co-sponsored by Senator Peter Welch (D-VT). The legislation is endorsed by the National Milk Producers Federation, Organic Valley, International Dairy Foods Association, Midwest Dairy Coalition, and Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association.

“We thank Senators Baldwin and Blackburn for their leadership to ensure the Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives program can continue to grow and thrive,” **said Jim Mulhern, President and CEO of National Milk Producers Federation.** “Dairy has a long history of ingenuity and pioneering cutting-edge advancement, and this program helps support researchers and industry leaders as they work to continue to drive innovation.”

“IDFA applauds Senators Baldwin and Blackburn for introducing the Dairy Business

Innovation Act of 2023,” **said Michael Dykes, D.V.M., President and CEO of the International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA).** “The bill promotes innovation in the dairy processing sector and will help industry members work together to address common challenges and create new market opportunities for healthy and nutritious dairy products.”

“This legislation to resource the Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives is unique in that it helps secure regionally specific dairy infrastructure needed for the future. We at Organic Valley know dairy processors who are doing more with support from this initiative and farmers who are better positioned to bring milk to market because of it,” **said Adam Warthesen, Senior Director of Government and Industry Affairs at Organic Valley.** “Senator Tammy Baldwin and Senator Marsha Blackburn should be commended for a bill that enhances the assets in the dairy industry and builds upon the economic vitality that dairy provides our nation.”

“Senator Baldwin has been an enthusiastic, steadfast supporter of the Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives since she championed the program’s creation in the 2018 Farm Bill. Since then, she’s successfully pushed to keep the focus - and funding - on strengthening the entire dairy supply chain,” **said John Umhoefer, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Cheesemakers Association.** “This \$36 million proposed investment is a welcome boost that will help dairy businesses nationwide pursue new ideas and cutting-edge projects, building a healthier dairy industry for generations to come. We’re deeply grateful for Senator Baldwin’s support for dairy processors and their farmer partners.”

“The Midwest Dairy Coalition greatly appreciates the leadership of Senators Baldwin and Mashburn in introducing the Dairy Business Innovation Act of 2023 to expand resources for four regional DBIA Initiatives. These regional initiatives have been an excellent tool to encourage innovation and diversification in the dairy sector, and to do so in a way that benefits our nation’s dairy farmers,” **said Steven Etko, Policy Director of the Midwest Dairy Coalition.**

“FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative is appreciative of Senators Tammy Baldwin and Marsha Blackburn for their work in securing additional funding for the Dairy Business Innovation Act,” **said Jeff Lyon, General Manager of FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative.** “It is imperative that we continue to support the advancement of dairy businesses through innovation, foster the development of new dairy products and enhance the efficiency of dairy plants through modernization. The increased funding for grants is crucial to address the never-ending challenges to grow the

dairy industry and provide vital support to dairy farmers.”

“As one of only four Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives in the country, Tennessee’s grants to dairy businesses go a long way to help producers diversify products and markets, as well as increase the use of locally-produced milk,” **said Charlie Hatcher, D.V.M., Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Agriculture.** “The initiative puts more money in dairy farmers’ pockets to create more jobs and strengthen local economies. The Tennessee Department of Agriculture supports the reauthorization of the Dairy Business Innovation Act and the recommended increase in funding through SDBII that will allow for success for dairy processors and producers.”

“Since its passage, the Dairy Business Innovation Act has been a major catalyst in increasing revenue for rural dairy businesses and in overcoming impediments to their expansion. As the program manager for the Southeast region, the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture (UTIA) strongly supports the continuation and expansion of this valuable assistance to producers and the dairy industry. These grants, totaling more than \$38.7 million in five years with more than \$19.3 million focused on grants for dairy businesses, have had an historic impact on our industry in Tennessee and in the surrounding states, and we are grateful to Senators Blackburn and Baldwin for their support,” **said Dr. Elizabeth Eckelkamp, Southeast Dairy Business Innovation Initiative program director and dairy Extension specialist with UTIA.**

A one-pager for this legislation is available [here](#). Full text of this legislation is available [here](#).

An online version of this release is available [here](#).