

Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association: Applauds legislative action to fund FoodShare, clarify PFAS liability

Posted on Friday, Feb 20, 2026

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

MADISON, WI – The Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association (WCMA) today applauded members of the State Assembly for passing legislation to stabilize the FoodShare program and ensure continued access to nutritious dairy products, including high-protein options like dairy-based protein bars, and to clarify PFAS liability standards for food processors.

Bipartisan approval of Assembly Bill 180 (AB 180) advances a \$69 million investment to shore up Wisconsin's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, known in the state as FoodShare. The funding responds to recent federal policy changes shifting 75 percent of SNAP administrative costs to states beginning October 1. Without legislative action, Wisconsin could face federal penalties exceeding \$200 million annually, depending on error rates.

“FoodShare is both a hunger relief program and a powerful economic engine,” said Rebekah Sweeney, Senior Director of Programs & Policy for WCMA. “Spending tens of millions now to avoid losing up to hundreds of millions of dollars later – and to protect more than \$1 billion in annual federal food purchasing power – is fiscal responsibility. It protects taxpayers, families, farmers, and food manufacturers across Wisconsin.”

Each year, more than \$1 billion in FoodShare benefits are redeemed at Wisconsin grocery stores. A substantial share of those dollars – conservatively, hundreds of millions – is spent on Wisconsin-produced and Wisconsin-processed foods, including

dairy products. That spending supports demand for Wisconsin milk, jobs in cheese plants and dairy processing facilities, trucking and cold storage networks, and retail jobs in rural towns and urban neighborhoods alike.

The bill also establishes limits the use of FoodShare dollars to purchase certain products – soda and candy, and via an amendment from bill author Rep. Clint Moses (R-Menomonie), it safeguards dairy-rich protein bars from being inadvertently misclassified as candy under an old statutory definition.

Also today, lawmakers approved AB 131, authored by Rep. Jeff Mursau (R-Crivitz), unlocking more than \$130 million in PFAS remediation funding and providing critical clarity regarding PFAS liability under Wisconsin law. WCMA members strongly support its provisions to ensure that food processors operating in compliance with Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources permits are not unfairly subjected to liability for PFAS contamination they did not cause.

Many Wisconsin dairy processors manage wastewater under permits issued by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, including Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (WPDES) permits that establish strict monitoring and reporting requirements to protect water quality. The Assembly-approved language appropriately exempts farms and food processing facilities from PFAS liability when wastewater management was conducted in compliance with those permits.

“Dairy processors are committed to environmental stewardship and to maintaining the trust of the communities where we operate,” Sweeney said. “This legislation strikes an appropriate balance, protecting water quality while providing regulatory certainty to businesses that follow the rules. Clear standards strengthen compliance, support investment, and sustain the rural communities that depend on dairy processing jobs.”

WCMA thanked Assembly leaders and members from both parties for advancing these measures, as well as the Governor and Senate leaders who engaged in end-of-session negotiations. Members urge swift action in the Senate to send these proposals to the Governor for final consideration.