

# Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association: Applauds state Senate action to fund FoodShare, clarify PFAS liability

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MADISON, WI – The Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association (WCMA) today applauded members of the State Senate for advancing legislation that strengthens the FoodShare program and brings needed clarity to PFAS liability standards for food processors. Having cleared the Assembly earlier this year, the bills now head to the Governor's desk, where they are expected to be signed into law.

The Senate approved Assembly Bill 180 (AB 180), authored by Sen. Chris Kapenga (R-Delafield) and Rep. Clint Moses (R-Menomonie), with bipartisan support. The bill allocates more than \$72 million to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services to support the administration of the state's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known as FoodShare. This timely investment helps Wisconsin respond to recent federal policy changes shifting 75 percent of SNAP administrative costs to states beginning October 1. The funding in AB 180 will bolster administrative capacity, strengthen quality control efforts, and help keep FoodShare error rates low, avoiding potential federal penalties that could exceed \$200 million annually.

WCMA has been a strong advocate for this investment, emphasizing that FoodShare is not only a vital nutrition safety net, but also a powerful economic engine. An estimated hundreds of millions of FoodShare dollars are spent on Wisconsin-produced and Wisconsin-processed foods each year, including dairy products, which supports demand for the state's milk, cheese, and dairy manufacturing jobs.

“WCMA applauds the Senate passage of AB 180 as a smart, forward-looking investment in a program that serves both families and the broader economy,” said Rebekah Sweeney, WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy. “Ensuring the state has the resources to effectively administer FoodShare is critical. This program drives economic activity supporting demand for Wisconsin milk and sustaining jobs in cheese plants and dairy processing facilities.”

The legislation also establishes new parameters on the use of FoodShare benefits, restricting purchases of certain items such as soda and candy. An amendment from bill author Rep. Clint Moses (R-Menomonie) ensures that dairy-based protein bars are not mistakenly classified as candy under outdated statutory definitions, protecting access to nutrient-dense food options for program participants.

Also today, lawmakers unanimously approved AB 130 and AB 131 authored by Senator Eric Wimberger (R-Gillett) and Rep. Jeff Mursau (R-Crivitz). This decisive action unlocks more than \$125 million in funding dedicated to PFAS remediation while establishing much-needed clarity around PFAS liability under Wisconsin law.

WCMA members strongly back these measures, which help ensure that food processors operating in full compliance with Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources permits are not unfairly held responsible for contamination they did not create.

Wisconsin dairy processors operating under wastewater permits issued by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, including Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (WPDES) permits, are held to rigorous monitoring and reporting standards designed to protect water quality. The final bill language appropriately acknowledges this strong regulatory framework, ensuring that food processors are not held liable for PFAS contamination when their wastewater management practices fully comply with these permits.

“Dairy processors take pride in their role as environmental stewards and in caring for their land and surrounding communities,” Sweeney said. “This legislation takes important steps to protect water quality while ensuring that businesses, including food processors, following Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources requirements are shielded from unwarranted liability. By establishing clear, consistent standards in law, this measure supports ongoing compliance and enables continued investment in sustainable operations.”

WCMA extends its thanks to Senate leaders for advancing these measures, and for their collaborative work with the Assembly and the Governor to bring this legislation across the finish line. The Governor has indicated he will sign the bills promptly, marking the final step in enacting these important bills into law.