

# Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association, Feeding Wisconsin: Wisconsin agriculture, hunger relief groups call for action to support FoodShare

Posted on Wednesday, Feb 11, 2026

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Madison, WI – A broad coalition of agribusinesses and hunger relief groups today urged Wisconsin lawmakers to address an urgent need for \$69.2 million in FoodShare funding, in the wake of federal changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) which shifted 75 percent of administrative costs to states. Wisconsin must take action now before the end of the legislative session or face the potential for penalties of up to \$205 million and would put benefits at risk.

“SNAP is one of the most effective tools to reduce hunger. When fewer households are able to access SNAP, food insecurity rises and food banks are forced to fill the gap. This puts significant strain on emergency food systems that were never meant to replace a national nutrition program,” said Jackie Anderson, Feeding Wisconsin Executive Director. “When food access becomes unstable, health outcomes worsen.”

FoodShare is also a critical economic engine for Wisconsin’s food and agricultural sector. Each year, Wisconsin FoodShare participants redeem well over \$1 billion in federally funded benefits at grocery retailers across the state.

“FoodShare is more than nutrition assistance,” said Rebekah Sweeney, Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association Senior Director of Programs & Policy. “Hundreds of millions of federal FoodShare dollars are used to purchase Wisconsin-grown and

Wisconsin-made foods each year, supporting farms, manufacturing businesses, and jobs in every part of our state. Providing stability for FoodShare provides stability for Wisconsin agriculture, as well.”

“Farmer-owned cooperatives are central to Wisconsin’s agricultural economy, and FoodShare helps create reliable markets for their products while feeding Wisconsinites,” said Jennifer Wickman, Director of Government Affairs for Cooperative Network. “FoodShare dollars support local co-ops, strengthen rural economies, and help ensure Wisconsin-grown food is feeding Wisconsinites.”

With the final days of the legislative session rapidly approaching, timely action is critical to avoid compliance risks and ensure continuity of essential services for Wisconsin residents.

“More than 6 out of 10 FoodShare participants are in families with children. Rising costs of housing, health care, and other bills make it harder for families to put food on the table, and hungry kids are less likely to learn in school and grow up healthy,” said William Parke-Sutherland, Government Affairs Director, Kids Forward. “Wisconsin needs to invest now to make sure that families in need keep getting FoodShare benefits. Delays put kids at risk.”

“Many older adults worked hard throughout their lives, but now have low, fixed incomes that have very little wiggle room for rising costs,” said John Schnabl, Executive Director, of the Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources, Inc. “Older Wisconsinites shouldn’t have to choose whether to pay for rent, needed medications, or food.”

“Half of FoodShare participants are elderly, blind, or disabled. Many people with disabilities must remain poor to access the care they need that is only available in Medicaid,” said Tami Jackson, Survival Coalition Co-Chair. “Often, the amount of FoodShare dollars people receive is small, but it makes all the difference when every dollar counts.”

Organizations that support the funding request:

- AARP Wisconsin
- American Heart Association
- Cooperative Network
- Dairy Business Association

- Disability Rights Wisconsin
- Feeding Wisconsin
- Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources
- Hunger Task Force
- Kids Forward
- Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin
- People First Wisconsin
- Survival Coalition
- United Way of Wisconsin
- Wisconsin Association of Local Health Departments and Boards
- Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities
- Wisconsin Catholic Conference
- Wisconsin Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
- Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association
- Wisconsin Council of Churches
- Wisconsin County Human Service Association
- Wisconsin Pork Association
- Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association
- Wisconsin Public Health Association

Additionally, 165 organizations signed on to [a letter to the Wisconsin State Legislature](#) in support of the funding request.