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STATE SENATOR • 17TH SENATE DISTRICT

Capitol Update
By Senator Howard Marklein
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What's the Dairy Hub-bub?

I recently visited the Dairy Innovation Hub (DIH) operations at UW-Platteville for an update on their projects and progress. As you may recall, I led a legislative effort to fund the DIH in the 2019-21 state budget. This innovative idea was developed by the Dairy Task Force 2.0 and is a top priority for dairy and agriculture in Wisconsin to remain a dairy superpower.

In the 2019-2021 budget, we allocated \$8.8 million for UW-Madison, UW-Platteville and UW-River Falls to reprioritize and restore focus on dairy innovation in Wisconsin. This collaborative effort is working well with researchers and experts on all of the campuses sharing information and data. There is tremendous enthusiasm for the problem-solving, innovation and out-of-the-box thinking taking place among these three campuses. I am very optimistic that this collaboration will continue to produce strong results.

Dr. Tera Montgomery, Professor of Dairy and Animal Science and the UW-Platteville campus liaison for the DIH, introduced me to several researchers, discussed their projects and took me on a tour of Pioneer Farm. As the Senate lead on this important initiative, I have been monitoring the progress of the DIH to ensure that our tax dollars are wisely invested and productive.

According to Dr. Montgomery, the long-game for the DIH is to “make a significant difference for Wisconsin’s land/water, cow health and the well-being of the dairy farmer and their business.” Their four priority areas include land and water sustainability, animal health, uses for milk beyond food and growing farm businesses and rural communities for the future.

I was impressed by the creative thinking and research taking place on all three campuses. Dr. Montgomery told me about several of the ideas they are studying and questions they are asking, including:

- Can we feed cows a specific diet to produce milk for people with allergies, dietary restrictions and niche markets?
- Are there ways to add value to the waste coming from the farm? Alternative uses for waste?
- Dairy farming has become very technological. How do we protect the technology and data on the farm from cybersecurity threats?
- Are there ways for farmers to make money off of all of the data they are collecting?
- Plant-based proteins are currently used in 3D printing; can we use the proteins in waste milk for the same purposes?
- Can we use evaporators on the farm to reduce the amount of water (in the milk) that we are hauling to cheese plants, rather than transporting heavy tanks of product that is then disposed of as waste?
- How can farmers market their product more directly to consumers and what would that take?

- How can we use technology to help us do the jobs we WANT to do and fewer of the jobs that we struggle to fill (milking, cheese-making, cleaning and other labor-intensive jobs), as we see a decline in the number of young people in rural communities?
- ...and more.

These are the types of questions and projects that will continue to make Wisconsin a dairy superpower. I am also encouraged by the collaboration among the campuses. Dr. Montgomery told me that the connections among researchers is uniquely productive and open. They are sharing files, data and ideas across campuses, which doesn't always happen. I am very happy to know that everyone involved in the DIH is pulling in the same direction.

I will continue to monitor the DIH and provide updates on its progress. Please visit <https://dairyinnovationhub.wisc.edu/> to discover more about the projects and dig into their ideas.

For more information and to connect with me, visit my website <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/17/marklein> and subscribe to my weekly E-Update by sending an email to Sen.Marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov. Do not hesitate to call 608-266-0703 if you have input, ideas or need assistance with any state-related matters.

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