

WCMA News

Your source for the latest in dairy processing

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NEWS

USDA Proposes Significant Changes to SNAP Eligibility Requirements



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) on November 10 released two new proposed rules that would significantly narrow eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), potentially reducing participation by as many as 6.3 million people nationwide by fiscal year 2029.

One proposal, titled **SNAP Reforming Categorical Eligibility**, would limit Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) to households receiving traditional cash assistance through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

This would eliminate automatic SNAP qualification based on certain non-cash or in-kind TANF benefits, such as job training, childcare assistance or informational services.

Under the proposal, households in the 46 states currently using BBCE would face stricter federal eligibility requirements, including a gross income limit of 130% of the federal poverty level and applicable asset tests. USDA estimates the changes would affect approximately 16.9% of SNAP households and reduce federal spending by $44.6 billion over fiscal years 2027–2031. The agency also anticipates potential downstream effects on eligibility for free school meals and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

Another proposed rule, also released November 10, outlines **changes to work requirements for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents** participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Under the proposal, adults ages 18–64 would generally be required to work, participate in qualifying work activities or engage in workfare for at least 20 hours per week (80 hours per month) to maintain SNAP eligibility. Individuals who do not meet the requirement and do not qualify for an exemption would be limited to three months of SNAP benefits within a 36-month period.

The proposal also changes several existing exemptions. The exemption for parents and other adults responsible for dependent children would generally be limited to those caring for children under age 14, rather than under age 18. Previously exempt categories, including veterans, individuals experiencing homelessness and certain former foster youth, would no longer receive automatic exemptions. The

proposal also revises geographic waiver criteria, generally limiting waivers to areas with unemployment rates above 10%, and changes certain definitions and data requirements used to administer the program.

Reduced SNAP participation is expected to put additional pressure on household food budgets and affect consumer purchasing power, potentially including demand for dairy products such as milk, cheese and yogurt. Because SNAP benefits support grocery purchases, changes to eligibility could have implications for dairy sales, particularly among price-sensitive consumers and in communities with higher rates of program participation.

Neither proposed rule is in effect. If finalized, full implementation would not be required until October 2029. Public comments are being accepted through December 10, 2026, through **Regulations.gov**.

WCMA members who wish to provide input on potential comments from WCMA should contact **Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney** by December 3, 2026.

WCMA Joins New Wisconsin Coalition Advancing Food Access and Nutrition Priorities, Sends Message to Incoming Governor



WCMA this fall joined the Wisconsin Food Access and Nutrition Coalition, serving as a leading business voice alongside organizations representing hunger relief, school nutrition, public health and the medical community. The coalition is working to build a shared statewide vision for improving access to nutritious, affordable food and strengthening food security across Wisconsin.

In a **letter to Governor-elect Crowley** sent this week, the coalition outlines opportunities for the incoming Administration to make nutrition and food security priorities. Citing data showing that more than 804,000 Wisconsin residents experience food insecurity, the letter recommends several investments and policy actions, including:

- **Healthy School Meals for All**: Invest $150 million annually to provide healthy school meals to all Wisconsin students, regardless of family income. The coalition estimates this could save the average family $1,800 annually while leveraging $380 million in federal funding each year for Wisconsin's school meal programs.
- **Food Security and Wisconsin Products Grant Program**: Increase annual funding to $15 million to support the purchase, transportation and distribution of Wisconsin-produced foods for families experiencing food insecurity. WCMA helped advance the creation of this program through state advocacy, recognizing its potential to address hunger while creating reliable markets for Wisconsin food producers and processors.
- **Additional nutrition investments**: Strengthen SNAP, expand access to EBT equipment at farmers markets, increase support for the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program and Tribal Elder Food Box Program, and ensure adequate funding for senior meal services.

Strong nutrition programs are also good economic policy for Wisconsin's dairy industry. School meal programs create significant institutional demand for nutritious foods, including milk, cheese and yogurt. Food procurement initiatives help connect Wisconsin dairy processors with food banks and other distribution partners, creating markets for locally produced dairy products while keeping food dollars circulating within the state's economy. Meanwhile, SNAP and other nutrition assistance programs help families maintain purchasing power at grocery stores and other food retailers, supporting demand throughout the food supply chain.

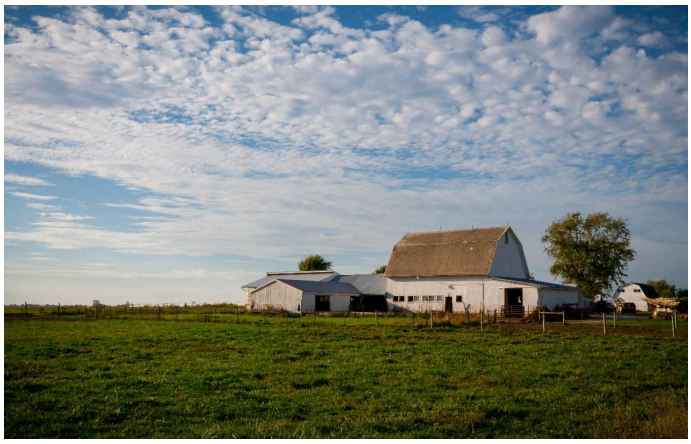
Members with questions – or interest in engaging in this policy area – may contact **WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney**.

White House Withdraws FDA Commissioner Nomination

The White House last week withdrew President Donald Trump's nomination of Dr. Heidi Overton to lead the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), just one day before a scheduled Senate committee vote, due to bipartisan scrutiny. The FDA will operate under Acting Commissioner Kyle Diamantas, who previously served as Deputy Commissioner for Food, overseeing the agency's Human Foods Program and food safety and nutrition priorities.

WCMA has maintained productive communication with Diamantas, providing opportunities to share industry perspectives and raise issues affecting dairy processors. The administration has not yet announced a replacement nominee. **READ MORE...**

WCMA Monitoring Planned Lead Azide Detonation in Iowa



WCMA is closely monitoring developments surrounding the U.S. Army's planned detonation of lead azide in Iowa tomorrow, which could pose potential risks to nearby livestock and dairy operations.

Although President Donald Trump announced Monday that he had ordered the Army to pause the operation pending court approval and agreement from Iowa Governor-elect Rob Sand, following a court ruling, the Army now reportedly plans to proceed with the detonation.

The potential release of lead dust raises concerns for nearby agricultural operations, particularly dairy farms. If lead dust contaminates pastureland or uncovered feed, cattle could ingest the lead, potentially resulting in elevated lead levels in milk. Because lead binds to milk proteins, cheesemaking may further concentrate lead in finished products. Research also indicates that lead exposure in cattle can have prolonged effects, with elevated levels potentially appearing in milk for months or longer.

WCMA is reaching out directly to members in Iowa to better understand their concerns and identify resources or assistance that may be needed. The Association has also contacted the Iowa Department of Agriculture and will continue monitoring developments and communicating with affected members as more information becomes available. Members with questions may contact **WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney**.

The detonation is also receiving significant attention in the news.

READ MORE:

- Food Safety Magazine: **Iowa tells farmers to protect livestock, test soil ahead of army's planned lead ammo detonation**
- Beef Magazine: **Army's planned lead detonation in Iowa poses risks for livestock**
- New York Times: **Army will blow up ammunition cache in Iowa on Wednesday**

Pennsylvania Advances Higher Weight Limits for Milk Hauling



Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro yesterday signed **Senate Bill 481** into law, increasing the maximum weight for milk hauling trucks from 80,000 to 95,000 pounds. The new limits bring Pennsylvania in line with neighboring Ohio and New York. The legislation marks the first increase in Pennsylvania's milk hauling weight limits in a decade.

WCMA members may recall Wisconsin secured similar improvements in early 2024 through WCMA advocacy, creating a permit for 98,000-pound hauling allowance for six-axle milk trucks to include all liquid dairy products, including whey. WCMA championed the legislation alongside industry partners, helping processors improve transportation efficiency, reduce costs and advance sustainability goals. Pennsylvania will be increasing weight limits for milk hauling trucks, a change expected to improve transportation efficiency and help the state's dairy industry accommodate increased demand associated with a major new processing investment.

New York Governor Vetoes GRAS Legislation

New York Governor Kathy Hochul has vetoed the **Food Safety and Chemical Disclosure Act**, which would have established the nation’s first state-level regulatory review process for Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) food ingredients. The legislation could have created significant new compliance costs for dairy manufacturers, delayed product innovation and contributed to a patchwork of conflicting state regulations.

Several WCMA Members Win AMS Purchase Awards



USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) announced purchase awards for 1.43 million pounds of **cheddar**; several WCMA members are awardees, including **Cedar Valley Cheese, Inc.**, **Masters Gallery Foods, Inc.**, and **Winona Foods, Inc.**

USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) announced purchase awards for 1.55 million pounds of **mozzarella string cheese and kosher process cheese**; two WCMA members are awardees, including **Bongards Creameries** and **Great Lakes Cheese**.

USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) announced purchase awards for 8.73 million pounds of **mozzarella**; WCMA member **Leprino Foods Company** is one of the awardees.

USDA Announces 2027 Agribusiness Trade Missions



USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) announced six 2027 trade missions to assist U.S. companies in gaining access to global markets. FAS's 2027 trade missions will be to Costa Rica, Ecuador, Poland, South Korea, Thailand, and Venezuela. More information can be found at **www.fas.usda.gov**.

Headlines

Wisconsin

- eDairy News: **ATCP 65 regulations | Wisconsin political shift puts focus on small and mid-sized dairy farms**
- Telegraph Herald: **Farmers, researchers talk dairy concerns, innovations at UW-P**

National & Global

- Reuters: **Trump pressures Congress to pass farm bill this year**
- Financial Times: **Whey too much cheese**
- Dairy News Today: **GLP-1 use accelerates dairy-protein demand, with whey leading gains**
- Brownfield Ag News: **Mid-November cyber-attack forces shutdown of some USDA services**
- Reuters: **Hackers breached U.S. Department of Agriculture, NBC News reports**
- Reuters: **Trump touts Asia trade deal wins, but U.S. agricultural exports disappoint**
- Stateline: **New bird flu cases appear in dairy herds as state ag, vet officials seek vaccine urgency**
- PBS: **Americans will pay more for Thanksgiving dinners this year, says Farm Bureau survey**
- Food Dive: **Saputo invests $600M to expand high-protein dairy**

FEATURED: MEMBERSHIP

Learn more about WCMA's programs & services in this special rotating section! This week, we spotlight WCMA's membership services and new Association members.

Welcome New Members

Join WCMA in welcoming new supplier members **AmTrade Systems, Inc.**, **Argelith Ceramic Tiles Inc.**, **Evertis USA**, **Industrial Air Products dba IAP Inc.**, **NeoCeram**, **OHLY**, **Porter Pipe and Supply**, **Precision Piping and Fabrication LLC**, and **Zurn Elkay Water Solutions**. View these and hundreds of other WCMA members now in our **searchable online directory**. Have questions about WCMA membership? Contact **WCMA Membership Director Sara Schmidt**.

Your WCMA Team is Here to Help



WCMA is growing — both in services and membership — and it's all because of you! This year, we hired two new staffers: Morgan Eder and Rachael Piper Kolanczyk! Morgan is the Association's Communications Coordinator, working on various communications initiatives, including member communications, video storytelling, and social media. Rachael is WCMA's Coordinator of Association Services and assists in keeping the Association's daily operations running smoothly and in supporting the events team.

To navigate a turbulent economy and challenges with workforce, you've spoken clearly to WCMA about how our team can work to assist your businesses. The results are on **our website** — a **members-only directory** offering an in-depth dive into our membership from coast to coast. An overview of our services, a calendar of our **events**, and a list of the free member **committees and groups** you can join to plug in with your colleagues and the **Association team**. Members are always welcome to reach out, so please never hesitate to pick up the phone and give us a call. Not sure who to contact? We'll help point you in the right direction.

WCMA Closed for Upcoming Holidays



WCMA will be closed for Thanksgiving on November 26 and November 27. We will resume normal business operations on November 30. We hope everyone has an enjoyable holiday.

EVENTS & CONNECTION

Join Upcoming WCMA "Export Paperwork & Certifications: A Practical Guide for Dairy Processors" Meeting, December 2



Build your network, get updates on the latest dairy export trends, and learn strategies to start or grow your exporting business at the next **virtual meeting of WCMA's Dairy Export Group** on December 2 from 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. (CT). The meeting will begin with an update on dairy and cheese exporting, followed by the latest developments in federal trade policy.

The rest of the meeting will be spent on practical guidance on the paperwork and certifications needed to successfully export dairy products to international markets. Sponsorships of this meeting are **available now**. Don't miss this opportunity to show your support for the dairy processing industry's efforts to stay updated on export trends and grow export knowledge and networks. Questions about this event can be directed to **Director of Sustainability & Grants Danica Nilsestuen**.

Sign Up Now for WCMA 2027 Economic Forecast Webinar



Join WCMA on December 10 at 1:00 p.m. (CT), for a **free, members-only webinar** focused on what's ahead for dairy pricing in 2027.

This meeting features an expert look by Kathleen Noble Wolfley, Vice President of Insights at EA Risk, into the dairy industry's economic forecast — covering domestic and international dairy buying power; protein trends; milk, cheese, and non-fat market updates; as well as the industry's continued processing capacity growth and what that means for milk demand. This webinar will include time for a live Q&A with presenters. Questions can be submitted in advance to **WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney**.

Thanks go to meeting sponsor **BW Packaging**. Additional **sponsorships** of this meeting are available now through December 7, and include written mention in a promotional email to WCMA members, mention in a social media post, and access to the webinar attendee list. **Act now** to reach new audiences and show your support for dairy processors.

Upcoming WCMA Events

December 1	December 2	December 10	January 20	January 27
Train the Safety Trainer Course (Virtual)	**Dairy Export Group Meeting** (Virtual)	**WCMA Webinar: 2027 Dairy Market Forecast** (Virtual)	**Front-Line Leadership Part A** (Virtual)	**Front-Line Leadership Part A** (Virtual)



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