



# WCMA NEWS

AN EXCLUSIVE UPDATE FOR MEMBERS OF THE  
WISCONSIN CHEESE MAKERS ASSOCIATION



## SIGNATURE EVENTS



## World Championship Cheese Contest Early Entry Savings Extended

By popular demand, dairy product manufacturers worldwide now have an additional week to enter the [2024 World Championship Cheese Contest](#) at a special rate of just \$75 per entry, available until Friday, December 8! The final entry deadline is Friday, January 26.

Click the "play" button above to hear from judges and entrants about the international recognition offered by participating in this prestigious competition - and visit [WorldChampionCheese.org](#) to submit your products.

A team of internationally renowned expert judges will evaluate products March 5-7 at the Monona Terrace Convention Center in Madison, Wisconsin, with preliminary judging open to the public from 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. on March 5 and 6.

Complete entry rules and Contest details are available in the [2024 Official Entry Kit](#). All questions may be directed to [WCMA Contest Director Kirsten Strohmenger](#).

**ENTER TODAY**

# Register Today for Best CheeseExpo Rates



**CHEESEEXPO**  
Global Technology for Dairy Processors  
April 16-18, 2024 | Baird Center  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
Special Events: April 16, 2024  
Exhibits & Seminars: April 17-18, 2024

Visit [CheeseExpo.org](https://CheeseExpo.org) for the best available rates on the world's largest cheese and whey processing expo! Now until January 30, proud hosts WCMA and the Center for Dairy Research are offering a savings of 20 percent on all registrations.

Join over 4,000 colleagues, customers, and friends for unparalleled networking, education, and celebration - all focused on the dairy processing industry.

**REGISTER NOW**

Have questions? Please contact [events@wischeesemakers.org](mailto:events@wischeesemakers.org).

## ADVOCACY



**USMCA**  
UNITED STATES-MEXICO-CANADA AGREEMENT

## Panel Rules Canada Did Not Violate USMCA

An independent trade dispute settlement panel formed in February to investigate Canada's dairy tariff-rate quotas (TRQs) under the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) [ruled this week that the country's revised dairy TRQ allocation measures did not undermine market access](#) for American dairy producers.

U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai said officials "continue to have serious concerns about how Canada is implementing [its] dairy market access commitments [and] will not hesitate to use all available tools to enforce our trade agreements". American dairy industry leaders echoed Tai's disappointment, urging President Biden's administration to seek other strategies to address Canada's noncompliance.

This is the latest action taken on the second formal dispute filed by the U.S. over Canada's execution of the USMCA. The dispute was initiated in May 2022, after an initial settlement panel review in December 2021 found Canada to be noncompliant with its dairy TRQ commitments. WCMA will keep members informed of future developments.

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## Contact Wisconsin Lawmakers by December 8 to Urge Opposition to Raw Milk Bill

Take action by next Friday, December 8, to join Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association (WCMA) in [voicing opposition to a new proposal in Wisconsin](#) that would allow broad sales of raw milk, including at retail establishments.

**CONTACT  
YOUR  
LEGISLATORS**

WCMA continues to advocate against efforts to lift the state's current restriction on raw milk sales, as the product can contain dangerous disease-causing bacteria that pasteurization is designed to kill. While our advocacy was successful in delaying a proposal to legalize the sale of raw milk, a draft bill was recently circulated by Rep. Elijah Behnke (R-Oconto) and Sen. Duey Stroebel (R-Saukville) for co-sponsorship in the Wisconsin State Legislature.

Legalizing the advertisement and broad sale of raw milk creates a significant food safety risk for consumers - with no scientifically proven benefit to their health - and threatens economic losses for dairy producers and processors in America's Dairyland. Earlier this fall, WCMA members and staff met with Assembly Speaker Robin Vos (R-Rochester), Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu (R-Oostburg), and Governor Tony Evers, all of whom expressed a strong understanding of our Association's opposition, and provided some assurance that the bill, if introduced, would not become law.

Thanks to WCMA's [simple advocacy tool](#), sharing your input with your state lawmakers takes just a few minutes of your time. It automatically sends a strong message, with any thoughts you'd like to add, to your state representatives and senators.

For more information or assistance, please contact [WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney](#).

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# WCMA Voices Concern Regarding WDNR Fertilizer Action in Ongoing Discussions



In a [letter to Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources \(WDNR\) officials](#) distributed last week, WCMA is expressing concern over the agency's actions to threaten dairy processors' use of production wastewater residuals as valuable commercial fertilizer.

Earlier this year, 11 Wisconsin dairy processors received letters from WDNR, suggesting that their residuals must, instead, be managed as industrial waste pursuant to Chapter NR 214 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code, a shift in understanding and practice that could result in great cost to dairy processors. Last month, in a meeting with WCMA staff, WDNR leadership apologized for this action, characterized as a misstep in communication, and indicated the agency would engage in additional outreach to processors, consider enforcement discretion, and hold open meetings to discuss paths forward.

While this conversation was viewed as a positive step, subsequent processor outreach has been backward-facing, with agency staff trying to determine volume of residuals handled as fertilizer, triggering the most recent letter from WCMA and other agricultural advocates. WCMA has reiterated a need for meetings between the agency and industry to navigate the discrepancy in policy interpretation, and to determine a way to continue to allow processors to land-apply residuals as fertilizer.

WCMA will keep members informed of developments, and welcomes their engagement in future conversations. To learn more, please contact [WCMA Executive Director John Umhoefer](#) or [Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney](#).

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## USDA Resumes FMMO Hearings

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) [national hearing on Federal Milk Marketing Orders](#) resumed yesterday, Monday, November 27. USDA officials expect several weeks of testimony and cross examination will be required to complete the hearing. WCMA will keep members apprised of developments and decisions via this e-newsletter. Questions may be directed to [WCMA Executive Director John Umhoefer](#).

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## GRANTS



## Apply Now for Free Export Consultation Hours

**Applications are open now** for free consultation hours available through WCMA for dairy manufacturers and processors interested in starting or growing their export endeavors. Each participating business will receive up to 30 hours of no-cost assistance with WCMA's consultant, Ryan Wucherer of MCT Dairies (pictured here). Services will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis.

For new-to-export companies and cooperatives, consultations will include:

- Evaluations of their product line, helping to identify potential global customers;
- Direction to in-depth educational resources, such as ExporTech™;
- Support in creating and executing their export plan by completing necessary export paperwork and connecting the business with potential carriers and distributors.

For companies and cooperatives currently engaged in export activities, consultations will include:

- Evaluations and recommendations on refinements in their export business model;
- Suggested areas for export growth;
- Support in executing their export plans; and,
- Recommendations on improvements in products, packaging, marketing, labeling, sales or distribution.

To participate, complete our [one-page application](#) and return it to [WCMA Director of Grants & Business Programs Danica Nilsestuen](#).

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## WCMA Member Awarded Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Grant



WCMA member Lov-It Foods has been awarded a Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin (BLBW) grant, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection **announced today**. The company will use the grant funds to launch a retail website selling its newly-branded Lov-It cheese products, converted from 40-pound blocks, artisanal wheels, and trim cheese from Wisconsin manufacturers.

WCMA has been a strong advocate for continued funding of BLBW, which has helped recipients generate more than \$14.4 million in new local food sales since its inception in 2008. The program aims to help businesses process, distribute, and market their products locally while also increasing consumers' access to Wisconsin-grown foods.

## INDUSTRY UPDATES

### Share Input on Wisconsin Global Trade Ventures



The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) is seeking feedback on its 2024-2025 Global Trade Venture schedule. Companies in the state interested in exporting can fill out [WEDC's short survey](#) by Tuesday, December 12 to share their input. More information on WEDC's Global Trade Ventures is [available online](#).

### USDA Issues Cheddar Solicitation

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has [issued a solicitation](#) for the purchase of cheddar cheese to be used in domestic food distribution programs. Bids are due December 11 by 1:00 p.m. (CT). Please contact [USDA staff](#) with questions.

## EDUCATION



### *WCMA Webinar*

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### *Continued Education for Dairy Processors*

### Join Free December 12 Webinar for 2024 Industry Education Preview

Join WCMA on Tuesday, December 12 at 1:00 p.m. (CT) for our next [free, members-only webinar](#), previewing the industry educational offerings available in the coming year!

Plan your 2024 professional development with presentations from the Center for Dairy Research, Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin, the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, and WCMA. Our featured guest speakers include:

- Andrea Miller, Outreach Program Manager, Center for Dairy Research
- Adam Brock; Vice President of Food Safety, Quality and Regulatory Compliance; Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin
- Rueben Nilsson, Dairy Pilot Plant Manager, University of Wisconsin-River Falls
- Rebekah Sweeney, Senior Director of Programs & Policy, WCMA
- Sara Schmidt, Membership Director, WCMA



**Andrea Miller**  
Center for  
Dairy Research



**Adam Brock**  
Dairy Farmers  
of Wisconsin



**Rueben Nilsson**  
UW-River Falls



**Rebekah Sweeney**  
WCMA



**Sara Schmidt**  
WCMA

**RSVP TODAY**

Presenters will reserve time to field audience questions during the webinar. Advance questions may be emailed to [WCMA Communications Director Grace Atherton](#) by Monday, December 11 at 12:00 p.m. (CT).

This offering is the latest in WCMA's [monthly webinar series](#). Webinar topics are driven by WCMA member feedback and cover a range of themes such as business development, communication strategies, and industry resources. Suggestions and ideas for future topics are welcome anytime!

## Equip Team Members with Key Safety Skills in New WCMA Trainings

Reserve space now in WCMA's all-new safety trainings, designed to support dairy processors' efforts to keep their team members safe on the job. Two courses are available, offered virtually and in-person in a convenient one-day format.

WCMA's interactive **Train the Safety Trainer Course** will equip the dairy processing industry's safety trainers with the knowledge, skills, and strategies to effectively communicate safety expectations and protocols for maximum compliance. Just a few spaces are left in the [in-person offering](#) of this course. Act now to join us at WCMA's training center in Madison, Wisconsin on December 12, or [online on January 30](#).

For safety education geared toward all dairy processing employees, register your team members for **Basic Safety Training for Dairy Processors**. Offered six times in the coming year with [in-person and virtual options](#), this new course will teach participants about their rights, employer responsibilities, and - most importantly - how to identify, abate, and avoid job-related hazards they may encounter.

The curriculum concentrates on safety strategies related to machine guarding, lockout/tag out, prevention of slips, trips, and falls, chemical controls, and control of hazardous energy - the key focus areas of the Occupational Safety & Health Administration's ongoing Local Emphasis Program for food processors.

Please contact [WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney](#) with your questions and ideas.



**REGISTER NOW**





## WCMA Front-Line Leaders Build Stronger Teams

Kudos and thanks go to the participants of today's WCMA Front-Line Leadership training, who gathered in-person in Madison, Wisconsin to discuss strategies to cultivate a team mentality in their workplaces. Attendees hailed from WCMA members Custom Fabricating & Repair, Grande Cheese Company, Meister Cheese Company, Sabrosura Foods, and Schuman Cheese - Lake Country Dairy.

### Join Next Round of Top-Rated WCMA Trainings



Join the ranks of hundreds of WCMA member employees who have sharpened their leadership skills and expanded their networks. Register for the next round of WCMA's popular [Front-Line Leadership Trainings](#)!

Each class is a one-day offering, running from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. (CT). All Front-Line Leadership classes are offered a la carte and may be taken in any order.

Here's a look at our fully virtual Winter 2023/Spring 2024 offerings:

- Part A, offered on [January 23](#) and [January 24](#), will focus on developing essential leadership skills.
- Part B, set for [February 26](#) and [February 29](#), will provide strategies to help supervisors boost staff performance.
- Part C, scheduled for [April 2](#) and [April 3](#), will help trainees learn to foster a collaborative team mindset in their workplace.

Questions? Please contact [WCMA Membership Director Sara Schmidt](#).

## Additional Industry Educational Opportunities

WCMA is pleased to share opportunities for industry training and enrichment. Here's a look at upcoming offerings hosted by WCMA members and partners:

- December 6: [Cheesemaking Fundamentals](#) - Center for Dairy Research
- On-Demand:
  - [Introduction to Food Safety Principles \(English and Spanish\)](#) - Cornell University
  - [Online Dairy Science and Sanitation \(English and Spanish\)](#) - Cornell



- University
  - [Artisan Dairy Food Safety Coaching](#) - Cornell University
  - [Online HACCP Training](#) - North Carolina State University
  - [Good Manufacturing Practices in Food Safety](#) - North Carolina State University
  - [Environmental Monitoring in the Dairy Industry](#) - North Carolina State University
  - [Preventive Controls for Dairy Processors](#) - North Carolina State University
  - [Food Safety Basics For Artisan Cheesemakers](#) - North Carolina State University
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## IN THE NEWS

### Wisconsin

- *Milwaukee Business Journal*: [Saputo Franklin facility hiring now to eventually fill more than 500 jobs](#) (Featuring WCMA member Saputo Cheese USA)
- *Dairy Processing*: [Nelson-Jameson contributes to Idaho research dairy](#) (Featuring WCMA member Nelson-Jameson)
- *Dairy Foods*: [Sargento celebrates 70th anniversary](#) (Featuring WCMA member Sargento Foods)

### National/International

- *WCVB-TV*: [A look into local cheese making, from farm to table](#) (Featuring WCMA member Narragansett Creamery)
  - *San Luis Obispo Tribune*: [Husband and wife start SLO County cheese company](#)
  - *Iowa State University*: [Cheesemaking class to culminate in tasting event](#)
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## MEMBERSHIP



# Apply Now for \$19,000 in WCMA Scholarships

Submit your application today for WCMA's [annual student scholarships](#) - and mark your calendar for April 17, when a total of \$19,000 in scholarship awards will be presented at [CheeseExpo](#) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Seven awards are available across WCMA's three scholarships: the WCMA Myron P. "Mike" Dean Cheese Industry Student Scholarship, the WCMA Cheese Industry Supplier Student Scholarship, and the Brian Eggebrecht Student Scholarship Supporting Skilled Trades in the Dairy Industry. Complete details on all awards are [available online](#).

Applicants for all WCMA scholarships must supply school transcripts, a letter of recommendation, and a completed application form. All applicants will be notified of their application status in March.

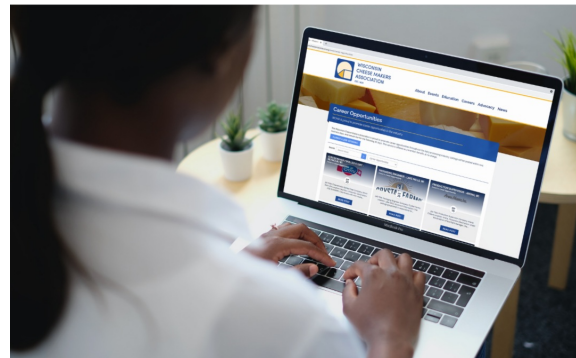
[APPLY TODAY](#)

## WORKFORCE

### View, Share Career Opportunities on Free, Online WCMA Jobs Board

Visit [WisCheeseMakers.org](#) today to share your career openings on WCMA's online jobs board - for free! Members can post up to 10 job openings per month. Each posting is published within two business days and remains live on our website for 30 days after submission. This week, the [Jobs Board](#) features opportunities from members Bassett Mechanical, Crystal Farms, Grande Cheese, and Masters Gallery Foods.

Have questions about the Jobs Board? Please contact [WCMA staff](#).



[POST OPENINGS](#)

[WisCheeseMakers.org](#)  
(608) 286-1001



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