



# WCMA NEWS

AN EXCLUSIVE UPDATE FOR MEMBERS OF THE  
WISCONSIN CHEESE MAKERS ASSOCIATION



## COVID-19 UPDATES

### Omicron Variant Triggers New Concern

A new coronavirus variant first identified by South African scientists last week has prompted world leaders to institute new [travel restrictions](#). The strain, named Omicron, was designated Friday as a variant of concern by the World Health Organization, with cases identified in 14 countries, including Canada. Studies are underway, and U.S. health officials say they should know within two weeks how severe cases caused by the new variant may be.

For more information on this pandemic development, see the news articles linked below:

- *Associated Press*: [New info shows omicron spread wider earlier than thought](#)
- *USA Today*: [Global risk of Omicron variant is 'very high'](#)
- *CNN*: [One thing Biden will not do to fight the Omicron variant](#)
- *Wall Street Journal*: [Omicron unlikely to cause severe illness in vaccinated people, BioNTech founder says](#)
- *FOX News*: [COVID-19 effectiveness will likely drop against Omicron variant, Moderna CEO says](#)
- *Reuters*: [EU could approve shot against new coronavirus variant in 3-4 months](#)

### CDC Recommends Boosters for All Adults

Citing the emergence of the Omicron variant, officials from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Monday [issued a recommendation](#) that all adults receive a COVID-19 booster shot. Regulators last week [expanded eligibility for booster shots](#) to all adults who received the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccines at least six months ago, and had previously authorized boosters for those adults who had received the Johnson & Johnson one-dose vaccine at least two months ago.

To secure a booster vaccination appointment, visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) or contact your local public health department, health care provider or pharmacy.

### Survey Shows 57% of U.S. Employers to Mandate COVID-19 Vaccination

A new [survey from Willis Towers Watson](#), a global advisory firm, has found that a majority of U.S. employers - 57 percent - now require or are planning to require their employees to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

The survey, conducted November 12 to 18 and including results from 543 U.S. employers representing a total workforce of 5.2 million, further revealed that 18 percent of all

responding employers currently require vaccinations, 32 percent plan to require vaccinations only if the [Occupational Safety and Health Administration Emergency Temporary Standard \(ETS\)](#) takes effect, and 7 percent that plan to mandate vaccinations regardless of the ETS status.

In addition to vaccine mandates, 84 percent of all employers will offer testing, with just 25 percent requiring unvaccinated employees to pay for testing. Nearly half of respondents reported they had not yet determined how to administer testing.

Other key survey findings include:

- Half of all respondents have business travel restrictions in place.
- A third of all respondents believe their workforce is at least 75 percent vaccinated. One in five employers reported their belief that less than half their workforce is vaccinated.

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## Coronavirus Headline News

### Wisconsin

- *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*: [In Wisconsin, COVID-19 hospitalizations increased to a record high for 2021](#)
- *WGBA-TV*: [Wisconsin administers nearly 1M booster shots as Omicron variant looms](#)

### National/International

- *Associated Press*: [U.S. tracking of virus variants has improved after slow start](#)
  - *MarketWatch*: [FDA advisers to vote Tuesday on Merck's COVID-19 pill](#)
  - *Associated Press*: [Stocks slip on Wall Street over renewed concerns over virus](#)
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## ADVOCACY



# POLICY COMMITTEE

## Save The Date: Join WCMA's Impactful Policy Committee for Meeting January 12

Your voice has value - and we invite you to join WCMA's impactful Policy Committee as we continue efforts to advocate for federal and state policies that support the dairy processing industry's growth.

[Register today](#) to participate in the next WCMA Policy Committee meeting, set for Wednesday, January 12 from 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. (CT) in Madison, Wisconsin. We will gather at The Madison Club for a lunch, guest speakers and committee discussion before meeting with state lawmakers in the Capitol. Additional details will follow as the meeting nears.

Have questions or ideas? Please contact [WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney](#).

INDUSTRY UPDATES

## DBIA to Offer \$1M in Business Builder Grants



Small- to medium-sized dairy processors in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin can prepare now to apply for a new, \$1 million round of grants administered by the Dairy Business Innovation Alliance (DBIA). This advance notice allows applicants to develop business plans, secure vendor quotes, and take advantage of webinars and other resources [now available online](#).

The DBIA, a partnership between the Center for Dairy Research and WCMA, will open its Dairy Business Builder grant competition on February 1, 2022, with completed applications due March 31, 2022. Eligible projects will include dairy farm diversification and on-farm processing, the creation of value-added dairy products, and efforts to market dairy products for export. Reimbursement grants of up to \$50,000 each will be awarded through a competitive review process.

The DBIA is supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Since its inception as part of the 2018 Farm Bill, the DBIA has administered nearly \$1.5 million in 38 grants to dairy farms and businesses in all five participating Midwestern states. The program also offers technical assistance and education to dairy farmers and processors in the region.

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## Apply Now for Wisconsin Processor Grants

Apply now for [Dairy Processor Grants](#) of up to \$50,000, available via the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (WDATCP). **Through our lobbying efforts, WCMA secured a doubling of state funding for this program and we're pleased to announce that WDATCP will award a total of \$400,000 in dairy processor grants in 2022.** Applications are due January 7, with successful applicants to be announced in February.

Eligible applicants must operate a licensed dairy processing plant in Wisconsin that is engaged in pasteurizing, processing, or manufacturing milk or dairy products. Awards can be used to address a wide range of dairy business needs, such as food safety, staff training, plant expansion or modernization, and professional consulting services. Projects must increase capacity or production, and processors are required to provide a match of 20 percent of the grant amount.

Applications must be received by [WDATCP staff](#) by 5 p.m. (CT) on Friday, January 7, 2022. For assistance with your application, please contact [WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney](#).

**APPLY NOW**

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## USDA Seeks Cheddar & Swiss Bids

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is seeking bids to supply [Cheddar and Swiss cheese](#) under the Build Back Better Initiative. Bids are due **December 2** at 1:00 p.m. (CT). Please contact [USDA staff](#) with questions.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Register to Join WCMA Young Professionals in Marshfield, Wisconsin January 21

WCMA invites all member company employees, aged 40 and younger, to join its Young Professionals group on Friday, January 21 for a tour of Nasonville Dairy in Marshfield, Wisconsin, followed by a fun networking opportunity at nearby Rose Bowl Lanes Bowling Alley. Registration includes both lunch and activities, and costs \$30 per person. This event is limited to the first 35 registrants.



Have questions or ideas? Please contact [WCMA Events Manager Kirsten Strohmenger](#).

**REGISTER NOW**



## WCMA Webinar

*Growing Your Dairy Business with Support from Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin*

### Register to Join in WCMA Member Webinar Focused on DFW Resources December 14

Make plans today to join WCMA in December for a [free, members-only webinar](#) focused on practical strategies to help grow dairy processing businesses.

On Tuesday, December 14 from 1:00-2:00 p.m. (CT), Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin (DFW) leaders will share expert insights on how dairy businesses can successfully boost their operations using DFW as a resource. Presentations include:

- **Chad Vincent, Chief Executive Officer**, providing an overview of the history, strategy, and structure that informs DFW's work;
- **Jen Walsh, Chief Operating Officer**, discussing ways DFW utilizes research insights to ensure effective programming;
- **Suzanne Fanning, Chief Marketing Officer**, offering insight into DFW's multi-faceted marketing efforts, from consumer-facing campaigns to the Cheeselandia community and more; and
- **Kirk Scott, Senior Vice President, Dairy Company Communications**, sharing DFW's approach to reaching dairy professionals across a variety of different channels and industry sectors.





**Chad Vincent**  
Chief Executive Officer



**Jen Walsh**  
Chief Operating Officer



**Suzanne Fanning**  
Chief Marketing Officer



**Kirk Scott**  
Senior Vice President

Register today: [WisCheeseMakers.org/Events](https://WisCheeseMakers.org/Events)

Following the program, WCMA staff will facilitate a question-and-answer session with presenters. Members who prefer to submit questions anonymously may send them to [WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney](#) by close of business on Monday, December 13.

**REGISTER NOW**

## WORKFORCE



### Connect With Prospective Employees at WCMA Job Fair at CheeseExpo 2022

Recruit the best and brightest at the [WCMA Job Fair](#), set for Tuesday, April 12 from 3:00-5:00 p.m., just ahead of CheeseExpo 2022 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin!

**RESERVE SPACE**

The WCMA Job Fair has room for 20 exhibiting member companies and cooperatives, and both dairy processors and industry suppliers are invited to participate. A booth cost of just \$200 includes your table, skirting, chairs, passes for up to four representatives from your organization to staff the Job Fair, as well as a beautiful buffet of snacks and beverages. Space is first-come, first-served, so don't delay reserving your booth.

This special event offers an exclusive opportunity for WCMA members to connect with students participating in the Collegiate Dairy Products Evaluation Contest, which will also be held at CheeseExpo. Students hail from 15 colleges and universities, including the University of Tennessee, Aims Community College in Colorado, California Polytechnic State University, Clemson University, Cornell University, Iowa State University, Michigan State University, Pennsylvania State University, South Dakota State University, the University of Minnesota, the University of Missouri, the University of Tennessee, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of Wisconsin-River Falls, Washington State University and the University of Idaho.

WCMA is also coordinating with representatives from the University of Wisconsin System, the Wisconsin Technical College System and various high school agricultural program coordinators to bring in more prospective interns and employees for your businesses!

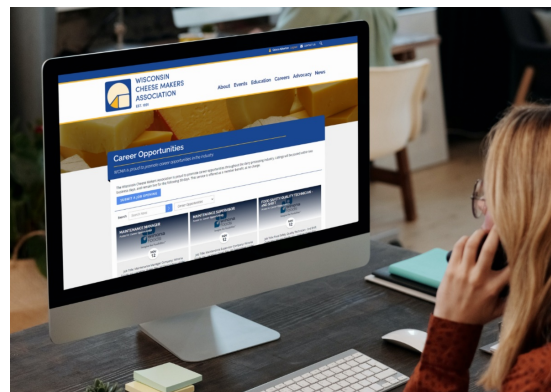
Have questions or ideas? Please contact [WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney](#).

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## Post Job Openings on WCMA Jobs Board

WCMA's [online jobs board](#) currently features industry career opportunities from members Baker Cheese Factory, Caloris Engineering, Loos Machine & Automation, Summit Refrigeration Group, and Winona Foods. WCMA members can [post openings](#) anytime - it's free and easy!

**ADD JOB OPENINGS**



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## EDUCATION



# WCMA SCHOLARSHIPS

## Apply Now for 2022 WCMA Scholarships

WCMA is [now accepting applications](#) for seven student scholarships worth a total of \$19,000. Applicants must provide school transcripts, a letter of recommendation, and a completed application form to WCMA by **February 16, 2022**.

In 2022, two students will be awarded the [WCMA Myron P. "Mike" Dean Cheese Industry Student Scholarship](#), worth \$3,000 each. Any employee or child of an employee of a WCMA dairy manufacturing, processing, or marketing member company may apply.

Employees or children of employees at WCMA supplier member companies may apply for the [WCMA Cheese Industry Supplier Student Scholarship](#). Three students will receive scholarship awards of \$3,000 each.

WCMA will also select two students to receive the [Brian Eggebrecht Student Scholarship](#), worth \$2,000 each. This award, named in honor of Championship Cheese Contest Chairman and generous donor Brian Eggebrecht, aims to support skilled trades in the dairy industry. It is open to students attending any technical school in Wisconsin and high school seniors registered to attend a Wisconsin technical school.

Application forms are available at [WisCheeseMakers.org](http://WisCheeseMakers.org) or by request from [WCMA Business & Membership Manager Sara Schmidt](#). Successful applicants will be announced in March 2022, with awards presented on April 13 at CheeseExpo in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



## Space Available in CDR Certificate in Dairy Processing Course

Register now to reserve your space in the [Certificate for Dairy Processing - Online](#) course, hosted by the Center for Dairy Research. Led by leading industry experts, the program will use a practical approach to the basic aspects of dairy processing.

Over ten weeks beginning January 20, 2022, participants will learn key aspects of dairy processing through online sessions and other learning opportunities. Students will also be expected to complete a short project of their choosing with the assistance of a mentor.

[REGISTER NOW](#)

## Other Industry Training Opportunities

WCMA is pleased to share opportunities for industry-specific training and enrichment. Here's a look at some upcoming trainings hosted by our partners:

- December 7-9: [Preventive Controls Qualified Individual \(PCQI\) Training Workshop](#) | M3 Insurance
- January 20, 2022: [Certificate in Dairy Processing - Online](#) | Center for Dairy Research

[WCMA Members Sponsor ZoomDairy Tours](#)



Kudos go to WCMA members Great Lakes Cheese Company and Dairy Farmers of America for their sponsorship of ZoomDairy virtual dairy farm tours, available now for students free of charge, nationwide. This agricultural education program has already hosted nearly 200 virtual farm tours, showcasing North Harbor Dairy in Sackets Harbor, New York. For more information, contact [ZoomDairy organizers](#).

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## IN THE NEWS

### Wisconsin

- *Milwaukee Business Journal*: [Saputo seeks spring start for Franklin cheese facility valued at \\$85 million](#) (Featuring WCMA member Saputo Cheese USA)
- *WISC-TV*: [Five Madison-area businesses up for Good Food awards](#) (Featuring WCMA member Uplands Cheese)

### National/International

- *Chicago Tribune*: [Lactalis completes \\$3.3 billion acquisition of Kraft Heinz natural cheese business, launches new Chicago office](#) (Featuring WCMA member Lactalis USA)
  - *Portland Press Herald*: [Dairy's unlikely new champion is a centuries-old Indian cheese](#)
  - *Smithsonian Magazine*: [How much longer will Roquefort reign as the king of cheese?](#)
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## MEMBERSHIP

### WCMA Social Media Campaign Highlights Dairy Processing Industry Leaders

WCMA invites you to get to know the 21 enthusiastic industry leaders who serve on our Board of Directors and guide our work each day. We'll profile the Board on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and in this newsletter on a weekly basis. This week, we're pleased to introduce Linda Lee of Prairie Farms Dairy, Inc.!



**Linda Lee**  
**Prairie Farms Dairy, Inc.**

**Favorite Cheese**

Swiss

**Proudest Achievement**

Being appointed by the Southwestern Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association as their representative on the WCMA Board of Directors.

**Why I Support WCMA**

"WCMA is a reliable source for education, training, advocacy, and employment resources for the dairy industry. Association staff are always available to help members in any way that they can. It gives me great pleasure knowing that I am contributing to the dairy industry on a broader level."



Have an idea for a WCMA social media campaign or other communication? Please contact [WCMA Communications Director Grace Atherton](#).

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## Sign Up Colleagues for WCMA Newsletter

Thanks for subscribing to WCMA's weekly electronic newsletter! Please note, WCMA extends this benefit to all member employees. Let us know if we should [add your colleagues](#) to our mailing list, or if you'd like to share feedback on our communications.

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WisCheeseMakers.org

