



WCMA NEWS

AN EXCLUSIVE UPDATE FOR MEMBERS OF THE
WISCONSIN CHEESE MAKERS ASSOCIATION



SIGNATURE EVENTS



U.S. Championship Cheese Contest Begins

The 21st biennial [United States Championship Cheese Contest®](#) is underway! Join WCMA and dairy manufacturers nationwide this Thursday, February 23 at 2:00 p.m. (CT) for the virtual announcement of the 2023 U.S. Champion. Top 20 winners will be invited to join the event via Zoom, and all are welcome to watch the announcement live at [USChampionCheese.org](#) or on [Facebook](#).

Contest entrants and members of the public are also invited to watch Preliminary Round judging today, Tuesday, February 21 and tomorrow, Wednesday, February 22 from 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. at Resch Expo in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Samples will be available!

If you can't join us in person, follow along with us on social media. WCMA will share Contest updates on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [TikTok](#).

BOOKMARK LIVESTREAM



Participate in Make Allowance Survey by April 14

As approved by the WCMA Board of Directors, and in collaboration with International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA), WCMA intends to petition the U.S. Department of Agriculture in March for a hearing on federal order reform, focused on adjusting make allowances. We will recommend that a hearing cite up-to-date economic analysis, rather than absolute values based on older cost data.

In anticipation of a hearing, WCMA and IDFA have commissioned Dr. Mark Stephenson of the University of Wisconsin-Madison to update his most recent cost of processing study to capture manufacturing data from 2021-2022. Because the study released last year only includes cost data from October 2017 through December 2020, having updated survey data from 2021-2022 would provide a better understanding of the current cost challenges that the industry is facing, stemming in part from recent supply chain challenges and inflationary pressures.

Dr. Stephenson is ready to collect updated cost information from **any company or cooperative that manufactures cheddar cheese; dry whey; nonfat dry milk; and butter as all or part of their production**. He has recently updated his data collection software to make it easier for industry members to participate. In addition, Dr. Stephenson will treat all submitted data confidentially and protect it from disclosure in the same way that he has previously protected past survey responses, and only blinded and aggregated data will be shared with USDA.

To ensure that the cost data are as robust as possible, both from a plant size and a geographic perspective, we urge all WCMA members that manufacture these products to submit their data to Dr. Stephenson using [this link](#). Instructions for completing the survey are [available online](#). Please check with your team to ensure that the appropriate person on your staff is tasked with filling out the survey. **All responses must be received by April 14, 2023.**

TAKE THE SURVEY

Questions may directed to Dr. Stephenson at mark.stephenson@wisc.edu or to [WCMA Executive Director John Umhoefer](#).



WCMA Members Applaud Evers' Investments in Dairy Processing Industry, Rural Communities

WCMA members last week applauded Wisconsin Governor Tony **Evers' budget plan**, which included all of the Association's **state fiscal priorities**. Here's a look at the relevant proposals:

- **Dairy Processor Grants:** Increase base funding for this program from \$200,000 per year to \$800,000 per year, to a total of \$1.6 million over the biennium
- **Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports:** Provide \$2 million over the biennium, designating 50 percent of all funding for dairy endeavors
- **Food Security Initiative:** Provide \$15 million per year in state funding, or \$30 million over the biennium, to continue this effort
- **Dairy Innovation Hub:** Provide \$15.6 million over the biennium, to continue this effort
- **Workforce Support:**
 - Provide \$22 million over the biennium for a new "Partner Up!" program to support partnerships between businesses who purchase child care slots for their employees and child care providers and supporting retention, recruitment, and career development for potential providers
 - Establish an Affordable Workforce Housing Grant program and provide \$150 million over the biennium to local municipalities to encourage the development and maintenance of additional affordable workforce housing
 - Invest \$100 million over the biennium in the Workforce Innovation Grant Program, and \$12 million for job training initiatives through the Worker Advancement Initiative
- **Broadband Expansion:** Provide a minimum of \$75 million per year, and a total of \$750 million over the next ten years, to expand broadband access

In addition, the Governor also proposed the creation of a Healthy Meals, Healthy Kids program by providing \$120.2 million in fiscal year 2024-25 to fully fund school breakfast and lunches for all children, and proposed incentives for schools to support Wisconsin's farmers and food producers by providing \$2.75 million GPR in fiscal year 2024-25 for an enhanced 10 cents per meal reimbursement for meals that include locally sourced foods.

The Governor's budget address last week marked the official start of the budget season at the State Capitol, and WCMA expects Republican leaders to introduce an alternative vision for state spending in the weeks ahead. Between now and then, WCMA staff will be meeting with many legislators to discuss how our priorities can serve to strengthen the state. To engage in WCMA's advocacy efforts, please contact **WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney**.



Register Now for Joint Industry Meeting with Wisconsin DNR



Register now to join WCMA, Midwest Food Products Association, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources on March 16 for the opportunity to connect with dairy industry environmental staff and regulators.

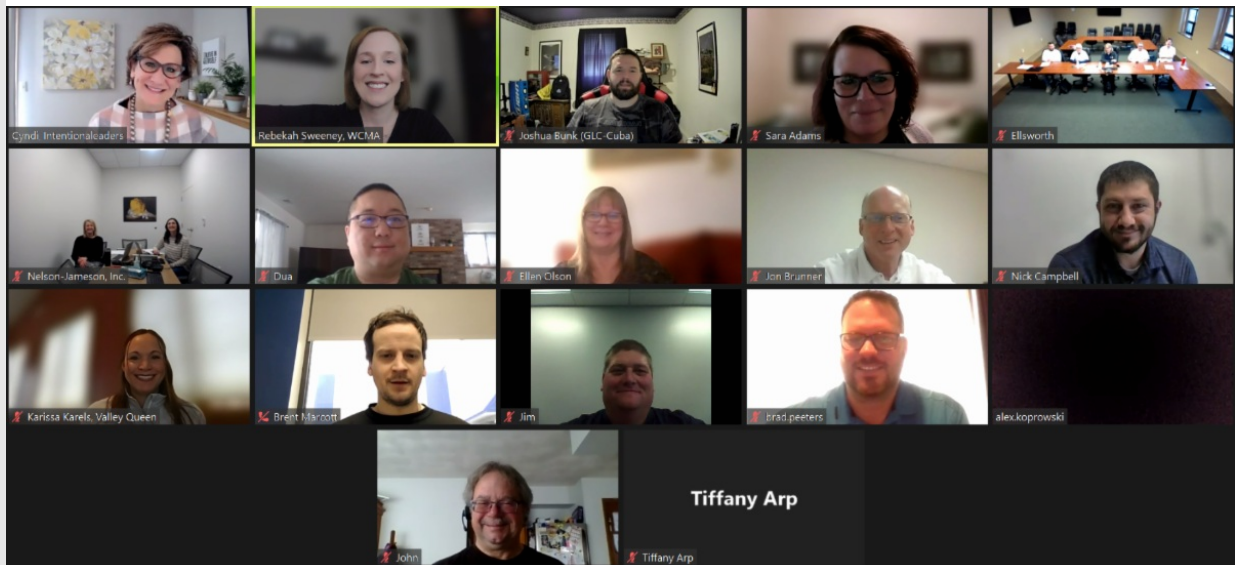
All WCMA members are welcome to attend, but space is limited, so sign up today!

Join in-person in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin or live online for discussions covering hot topics in environmental regulation and WPDES permitting, with joint presentations by agency staff and industry experts. On-site registration and networking begins at 9:30 a.m. (CT), with the meeting beginning at 10:00 a.m. for all participants and concluding at 2:30 p.m. This meeting provides continuing education credits for certified wastewater operators.

Registration is \$45 for in-person attendance and \$25 for online participation. For more information, contact **WCMA Executive Director John Umhoefer**.

RSVP TODAY

EDUCATION



Dive into Diversity and Inclusion with WCMA

Next Step Leadership Training

A fresh new line-up of [WCMA's popular leadership trainings](#) is available now for spring and fall 2023! Spaces fill quickly, so register now.

WCMA's [Next Step Leadership Training](#) offers established industry leaders an opportunity to reconnect with their peers and to refresh and remind themselves of the essentials, while providing a deeper dive on a key topic. On May 30, this one-day session will focus on diversity and inclusion strategies to build and strengthen teams. Session objectives include:

- Exploring the complexity of diversity and inclusion changes
- Understanding how our mind affects our actions
- Defining best practices for leveraging diversity and fostering an inclusive workplace.
- Learning about psychological safety and its importance to diversity and inclusion, and innovation

Next Step Leadership costs just \$135 per person and will be offered virtually in 2023, allowing participants to join live online from anywhere in the world.

SIGN UP TODAY

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



Industry Training Spotlight: CDR Cheesemaking Fundamentals in Spanish

Help your Spanish-speaking employees build a strong cheesemaking foundation and learn the basics of cheese science from Center for Dairy Research (CDR) experts. CDR's Cheesemaking Fundamentals course, [now offered in Spanish](#), covers basic cheese manufacturing science, principles of moisture and pH, basic mathematical calculations commonly used by cheesemakers, and common government regulations. Registration closes February 28, so sign up today.

REGISTER NOW

Additional Industry Training Opportunities

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

- February 23-24: [Short Course - Pasteurization](#) - University of Wisconsin - River Falls
- February 28: [Dairy Plant Food Safety Workshop Hosted by Hilmar Cheese and Leprino Foods](#) - Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy
- March 6-10: [Short Course - Cheesemaking](#) - University of Wisconsin - River Falls
- March 7-8: [Cheesemaking Fundamentals \(In-Person\)](#) - Center for Dairy Research
- March 8: [BRCGS for Food Safety Issue 9: Conversion for Sites Short Course](#) - Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin
- March 21-23: [Cheese Grading, Evaluation & Judging \(In-Person\)](#) - Center for Dairy Research
- March 27: [Prerequisite Programs Course](#) - Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin
- March 28-29: [HACCP Training for Processors](#) - Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin
- March 30: [Advanced HACCP: Verification and Validation](#) - Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin
- April 25-27: [FSPCA Preventive Controls for Human Food \(PCQI\) Training](#) - Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin
- Rolling Admission:
 - [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

IN THE NEWS

Wisconsin

- *Green Bay Press-Gazette*: [U.S. Championship Cheese Contest brings the best back to Green Bay](#)
- *WISC-TV*: [Dairy is Paoli business's bread and butter](#)
- *Wisconsin Foodie (PBS)*: [Visit Hoard's Dairyman](#) (Featuring WCMA member Hoard's Dairyman)

National/International

- *Associated Press*: [Former New Mexico lawmaker tapped for USDA leadership role](#)
- *Agri-Pulse*: [SNAP cost estimate jumps more than 8 percent, adding new wrinkle to farm bill debate](#)
- *Hoard's Dairyman*: [Myth busting dairy's link to mortality](#)
- *Salon.com*: [Eight questions about cheese and cheesemaking, answered by a famous cheese taster and judge](#) (Featuring WCMA member Cabot Cheese)
- *New York Post*: [Fried cheese and pickle wrap latest bizarre food craze](#)

WORKFORCE



Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association

Health & Safety Group

RSVP for WCMA Health & Safety Group Meeting

Register now to join the next meeting of WCMA's Health & Safety Group on Wednesday, March 1 from 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. (CT)! Join us in person in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, or online from anywhere in the world. In-person attendees will enjoy a networking lunch. All WCMA members - both dairy processor and supplier members - are welcome.

This meeting will focus on lockout/tagout best practices; a new machine guarding risk assessment tool; the development of a workplace safety culture, including a peer panel on practical applications; updates on OSHA's food processor LEP and increased enforcement measures; and discussion of new training opportunities for safety officers. Featured speakers include:

- Dan Trocke, WisCon Consultant
- John Brengosz, R&R Insurance Loss Control Specialist
- Mark Bonovetz, BelGioioso Cheese
- Zach Thayer, Emmi Roth
- George Jerome, Schreiber Foods

REGISTER TODAY

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



WCMA

WAGE & WORKFORCE

SURVEY

Respond to WCMA Wage & Workforce Survey

WCMA invites members to participate now through Wednesday, March 1 in the [2023 WCMA Wage & Workforce Survey](#).

This free, annual online survey helps WCMA provide critical data employers need to successfully attract and retain top talent. Members are encouraged to review the survey questions in [PDF format](#) first, as responses may not be saved in the online form.

All responses will remain confidential and anonymous. Survey respondents will receive a summary report from WCMA in March containing blinded and aggregated data. Some broad, topline data (such as overall industry wage growth year-to-year) may also be shared for the purposes of industry advocacy.

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

[TAKE SURVEY](#)



WCMA Workforce & Education Committee Reviews Spanish Language Training Resources

Many thanks to the members of WCMA's active [Workforce and Education Committee](#), who met last week to discuss training needs and learn about Spanish language resources available to dairy processing employees through the [Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy, Cornell University](#), the [Center for Dairy Research](#), and WCMA. We're grateful for your engagement!

To share ideas or suggestions, or to join the Workforce and Education Committee, please contact [WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney](#).

Free Spanish, Hmong Onboarding Videos Available

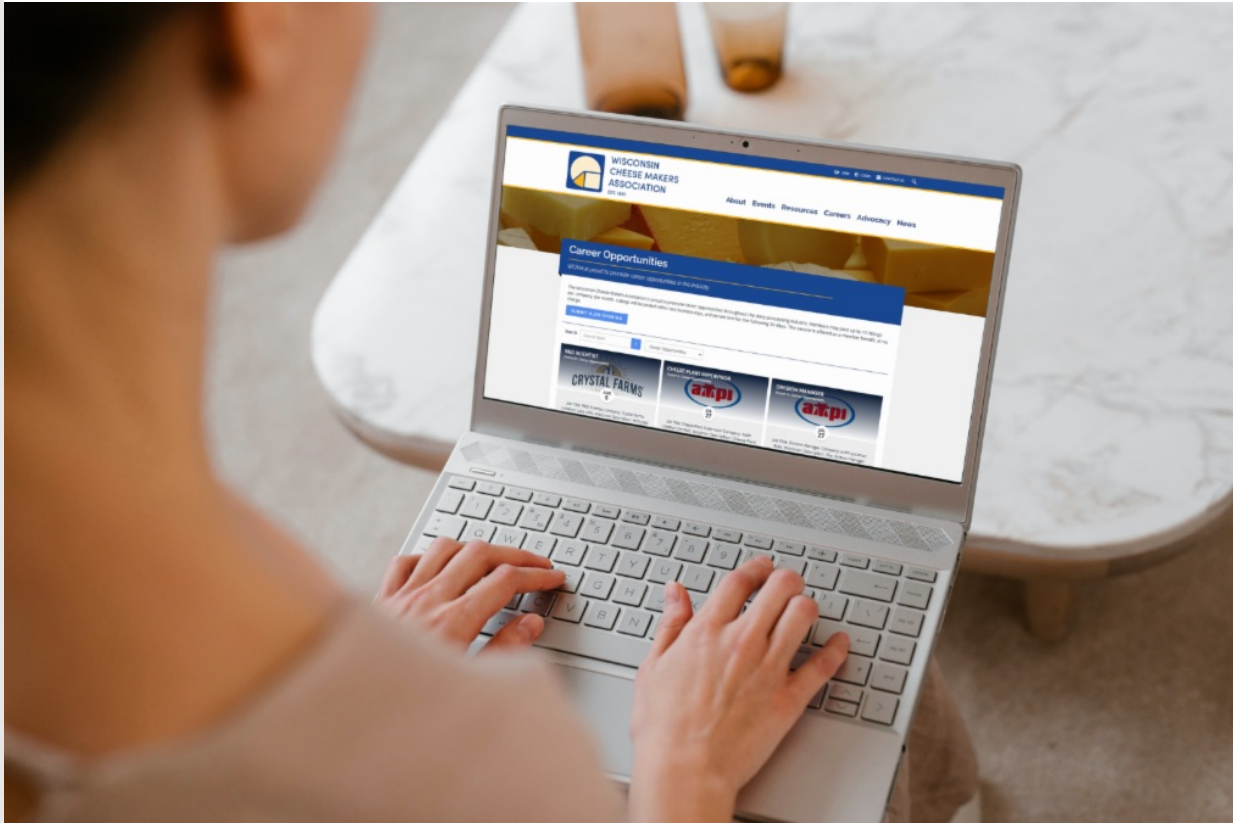
Visit [WisCheeseMakers.org.org](https://www.wischeesemakers.org) today to view and share WCMA's free onboarding videos, now available in Spanish and Hmong! This series of five videos, free to dairy manufacturers and processors, provides new employees with key information on food and personal safety, growth opportunities in the industry, and more.

This free series is brought to you by WCMA with generous support from our partners the Dairy Business Innovation Alliance and Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin; sponsors Ellsworth

Thank you!



Cooperative Creamery, Emmi Roth, Great Lakes Cheese, and Wapsie Valley Creamery; and contributors Specialty Cheese Company and Westby Cooperative Creamery. Thank you!



View, Share Career Opportunities on Free WCMA Jobs Board

Looking for motivated individuals to fill your open positions? Visit WCMA's [online jobs board](#) to post up to 10 career opportunities per company or cooperative, per month - free! This week features postings from the Center for Dairy Research and members Foremost Farms USA, Lactalis American Group, Masters Gallery Foods, and Tetra Pak.

Please contact [WCMA Communications Director Grace Atherton](#) with questions.

[SHARE OPENINGS](#)

GRANTS



DBIA

Dairy Business Innovation Alliance

Apply Now for DBIA Grants

A new round of [Dairy Business Builder grants](#) administered by the Dairy Business Innovation Alliance (DBIA) is now open for small- to medium-sized dairy farmers, manufacturers, and processors in 11 Midwestern states. Businesses in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin may apply for the funding, which is administered by the Center for Dairy Research (CDR) and WCMA.

The reimbursement grants of up to \$100,000 each aim to support recipients in diversifying on-farm activity, creating value-added products, enhancing dairy byproducts, and creating or enhancing dairy export programs. Applications are due by 5:00 p.m. (CT) on April 13. Successful applicants will be notified by May 19.

The DBIA is supported by funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and was created in the 2018 federal Farm Bill. Since then, the DBIA has administered over \$7 million to 88 dairy farms and businesses within its 11-state service area. The program also offers technical assistance to dairy farmers and processors in participating states.

[APPLY NOW](#)

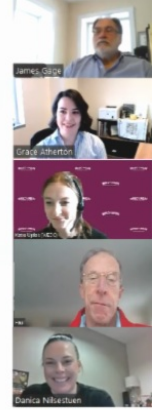


WISCONSIN
CHEESE MAKERS
ASSOCIATION



Writing Your Best Grant Proposal

February 14, 2023



Watch Free WCMA Grants Webinar Online Now

Watch WCMA's latest free, members-only webinar, available online now at [WisCheeseMakers.org](https://www.wischeesemakers.org). This session offers insights from experts as well as tips on finding grants for your dairy business and preparing a strong proposal. Contacts and resources referenced during the webinar include:

- [WCMA Grants & Financial Resources webpage](#)
- [Dairy Business Innovation Alliance grants](#)
- Webinar Presenters:
 - [Jim Gage](#); James D. Gage Consulting, Inc.; (920) 723-0083
 - [Katie Ujdak](#), Global Trade & Investment Grants Specialist, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, (608) 210-6773
 - [Paul Scharfman](#); President; Specialty Cheese Company, Inc.; (608) 575-0285
 - [Danica Nilsestuen](#), Grants & Business Programs Director, Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association, (608) 673-5547

Information on all of WCMA's monthly webinars is available to logged-in members anytime at [WisCheeseMakers.org/Webinars](https://www.wischeesemakers.org/Webinars). Be sure to mark your calendar for our next session on Tuesday, March 14 at 1:00 p.m. (CT), when we'll share resources to help bolster your recruitment efforts!

MEMBERSHIP



WCMA Board of Directors Seeks Nominees for Supplier Member Seat

WCMA Supplier Members are invited to nominate themselves, or another Supplier Member, for the ballot to select a Supplier Member Representative to the WCMA Board of Directors. This seat on the Board of Directors is an opportunity to join the Board for a two-year term beginning on July 1, 2023. This call for nominees will remain open through February 27, 2023. Nominees must be the designated key contact from a [WCMA supplier member company](#).

This is an open Board seat – no incumbent – because Chr. Hansen’s Mike Neu has graciously completed six years on the Board (three, two-year terms) and has reached our term limit. The nominees we receive from our Supplier community will be contacted for their interest in serving. Those interested will be placed on a ballot handed to the WCMA Board of Directors on April 4, 2023. The Board will vote on a single, new Supplier Representative. That appointed Supplier Representative will serve from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2025 and can seek to run for further terms. Note that the Board of Directors meets four times each year, in April, June, September and December.

Select your nominee from the [WCMA Supplier Member company list](#) and email your choice to [WCMA Executive Director John Umhoefer](#) by end of day on Monday, February 27. Thank you!

Share WCMA News with Colleagues

Thanks for subscribing to WCMA's weekly e-newsletter! This benefit is available to all WCMA member employees. [Let us know](#) if we should add your colleagues to our list, or if you'd like to share feedback on our communications.

WisCheeseMakers.org
(608) 286-1001



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