



# WCMA NEWS

AN EXCLUSIVE UPDATE FOR MEMBERS OF THE  
WISCONSIN CHEESE MAKERS ASSOCIATION



## WCMA SIGNATURE EVENTS



## Internationally Renowned Judging Team to Evaluate Over 2,900 Entries at 2022 World Championship Cheese Contest

Less than a month remains until highly qualified judges from around the world gather in Madison, Wisconsin for the [2022 World Championship Cheese Contest](#). From March 1-3, the group of 53 international experts will evaluate 2,919 dairy product entries, selecting the best in each class - and the 2022 World Champion.

This year's [judging team](#) includes cheese graders, cheese buyers, dairy science professors, and researchers with more than 700 combined years of experience in the dairy processing industry. They hail from 16 countries and 13 U.S. states. A full list of judges is available [online](#).

Under the leadership of Chief Judge Jim Mueller, Chief Judges Emeritus Bill Schlinsog and Bob Aschebrock, and Assistant Chief Judges Tim Czmowski, Stan Dietsche, Josef Hubatschek, Mariana Marques de Almeida, and Sandy Toney, the judges will calculate a precise score for each cheese, butter product, yogurt, and dry dairy ingredient entry.

Gold, silver, and bronze medals will be awarded to the three highest scoring entries in

each of this year's 141 distinct classes. The World Champion Cheese will be announced [live online](#) at 2:00 p.m. (CT) Thursday, March 3.

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## Celebrate Dairy Industry Excellence at CheeseExpo 2022

Join colleagues and friends in recognizing the best of the best in the dairy processing industry at CheeseExpo 2022! [Register by March 1](#) for a special discount on your all-access pass to CheeseExpo's [exciting celebrations](#).

On Wednesday, April 13, after a full day of insightful seminars, productive networking, and time well spent on the expansive exhibit floor, get those bidding paddles ready and head to the **Chr. Hansen Reception & Championship Cheese Auction**. A popular highlight of CheeseExpo, this energizing event features the auction of gold-medal cheeses, butters, and more from the 2022 World Championship Cheese Contest, with proceeds going toward WCMA trainings, scholarships, and programming to support the continued growth of the dairy industry.

The final day of CheeseExpo starts Thursday, April 14 with the **WCMA Recognition Breakfast, exclusively sponsored by DSM Food Specialties**. This worthwhile event brings all attendees together to celebrate the achievements of industry greats who have been selected by their peers on WCMA's Recognition Committee.

Gather with dairy professionals from around the world to honor the outstanding achievements of the 2022 World Championship Cheese Contest winners at the **World Champions Reception exclusively sponsored by IFF**, followed by the **World Champion Awards Banquet**.

Finally, CheeseExpo 2022 closes on a high note with the lively **Custom Fabricating & Repair Afterglow Reception**. Relax and enjoy music and refreshments on the final evening of the industry's biggest event!

These and all of CheeseExpo's [well-attended events](#) are included in every registration, but a 10 percent discount is only available to those who register by March 1!

[REGISTER TODAY](#)

## Fresh Reasons to Fix Federal Orders



A recent report from the International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA) identifies a key element of the federal order debate: the role of exports in the U.S. dairy industry. As [WCMA Executive Director John Umhoefer writes](#), "Federal orders incent America to produce commodity dairy products, then make long-term export sales contracts riskier to sign."

As IDFA and other dairy groups offer fresh takes on the long-running federal order debate, WCMA has engaged a diverse group of members with unique expertise in cheese, whey, and butter production to explore the subject.

## ADVOCACY

### FDA Prioritizes Guidance on Plant-Based Product Labeling

Draft guidance for industry on the labeling of plant-based milk alternative products is a priority and may come as soon as January 2023, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [said last week](#). This marks the agency's first major action on the topic since it solicited comments more than three years ago and received thousands of responses.

Under the bipartisan [DAIRY PRIDE Act](#), authored by U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisconsin), FDA would be required to issue draft guidance for nationwide enforcement of mislabeled imitation dairy products within 90 days after enactment, and to issue final guidance within 180 days after enactment. WCMA strongly supports truth in dairy labeling, and has [advocated](#) in favor of the DAIRY PRIDE Act since its introduction in April 2021.

### Wisconsin to Award Another \$100M in Broadband Grants in Key Communities

Wisconsin's Public Service Commission (PSCW) is set to award another \$100 million in broadband expansion grants, with funding WCMA advocated for in the 2021-23 state budget. [Applications](#) may come from organizations, municipalities and counties, or utilities in partnership with a broadband service provider, and are due March 17. Awards will be made in summer 2022.

Nearly \$100 million in grant dollars was [awarded in October 2021](#) to provide fiber internet access to more than 28,000 residential and 1,490 business locations, including dairy processors. Last week, Gov. Evers and PSCW representatives delivered awards in key dairy processing regions of the state, including \$5.6 million for the [Vernon Communications Co-op](#) and \$9.3 million for the [Reedsburg Utility Commission](#).



# WCMA Members Advocate for Top Policy Priorities in Letter to Wisconsin Lawmakers

In a [letter](#) to Wisconsin legislators, WCMA members this week urged swift action on key policy priorities for the dairy processing industry, including maximum funding for the Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports and truth and transparency in food labeling.

The letter, signed by 44 WCMA members representing companies and cooperatives in 83 locations across the state, is the latest in a series of impactful member advocacy efforts led by the WCMA Policy Committee. To join the committee, which is open to all WCMA members, please contact [Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney](#).

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## WCMA Pushes for Funding to Support Additional Extension Agricultural Agents

Along with 16 other Wisconsin agricultural groups, WCMA this week [advocated for funding](#) to support eight additional statewide county outreach specialists in the University of Wisconsin - Madison Division of Extension, and three additional extension faculty specialist positions in the UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. These skilled individuals are vital to the economic health of farming in Wisconsin, providing a link between research and applying updated practices in the field.

The legislature's powerful Joint Finance Committee will take up the proposal at its meeting Wednesday, February 9.

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## COVID-19 UPDATES

### Coronavirus Headline News

#### Wisconsin

- *WBAY-TV*: [Wisconsin COVID-19 case numbers falling but more slowly](#)
- *The Badger Herald*: [UW researchers developing new rapid, more accurate COVID-19 test](#)
- *WISC-TV*: [Two years ago, the first COVID-19 case in Wisconsin was confirmed](#)

#### National/International

- *Reuters*: [U.S. coronavirus deaths surpass 900,000, driven in part by Omicron surge](#)
- *CNN*: [COVID-19 cases are one-third of the peak three weeks ago. Here's where the U.S. stands on other metrics](#)
- *The Daily Yonder*: [Rural vaccination rate climbs 1.25 points, inching toward 50 percent](#)
- *Washington Post*: [California joins growing numbers of states saying mask mandates will end in coming weeks](#)

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## WORKFORCE

### Participate in WCMA Wage and Workforce Survey by Friday

Share your input now in the [2022 WCMA Wage and Workforce Survey](#)! This free, annual survey helps WCMA provide critical data that employers need to successfully attract and

retain top talent.



New this year are questions regarding sign-on and referral bonuses, team-based incentives, and greater detail on weekend premiums. By member request, automation managers and electro-mechanical technicians have also been added to the wage data collection portion.

The full survey is available in [PDF format](#) for members who prefer to review the questions before submitting their answers.

**TAKE THE SURVEY**

Survey responses are due **this Friday, February 11**. Individual responses are held in confidence, and participants will not be identified. Participating companies and cooperatives will receive a summary report from WCMA detailing current industry wage ranges and benefits packages, as well as comparative data on non-industry wages in their region.

Questions may be directed to [WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney](#).

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## Sponsor, Contribute to New Industry Video Onboarding Series

Dairy processors and industry suppliers have until **this Friday, February 11** to [sponsor or contribute to a new series](#) of five onboarding videos produced by WCMA. The series will be made available to WCMA members at no cost, and to other members of industry for a fee.

At the direction of WCMA's Workforce and Education Committee, the videos will be available in English, Spanish, and Hmong and will cover key messages for all new dairy processing employees.



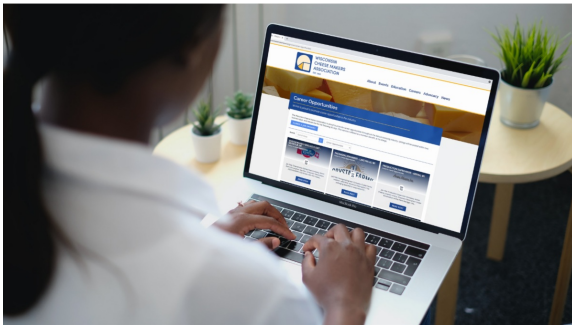
This new series will overview the dairy processing industry and its essential mission, highlight opportunities for ongoing education and career growth, explain dairy processing from intake to product distribution, deliver key food safety and sanitation messages and highlight the culture of dairy processing and its commitment to excellence, inclusivity and growth. More details are available [here](#).

WCMA thanks **Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery**, **Great Lakes Cheese**, and **Wapsie Valley Creamery** for their participation! One sponsorship space is left. Be recognized in this series for your support – and for your commitment to the success of the U.S. dairy processing industry.

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

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## Share Job Opportunities on WCMA Jobs Board



Visit WCMA's [online jobs board](#) to view job openings from members Agropur, Arla Foods, Door Artisan Cheese, Emmi Roth USA, and Lactalis American Group.

Have an opportunity at your company or cooperative? WCMA members can [post openings](#) on the Jobs Board anytime - it's free and easy!

**POST OPENINGS**

## EDUCATION



# WCMA SCHOLARSHIPS

## WCMA Scholarship Applications Due Next Week



Students pursuing a degree and/or career in the dairy industry have until next Wednesday, February 16 to apply for a [WCMA student scholarship](#). Seven scholarships worth a total of \$19,000 will be granted in March, with awards presented on April 13 during CheeseExpo in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Two students will be selected for 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 or cooperative may apply.

Three students will receive the [WCMA Cheese Industry Supplier Student Scholarship](#), also worth \$3,000 each. Any employee or child of an employee of a WCMA supplier member company may apply.

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 students pursuing technical certificates, technical diplomas, or associate degrees that may lead to a career in the dairy industry. Unlike other WCMA scholarships, applicants are not required



to be connected to a WCMA member company or cooperative.

For more information or to download an application, visit [WisCheeseMakers.org](https://www.wischeesemakers.org) or contact [WCMA Business & Membership Manager Sara Schmidt](#).

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## Register Now to Learn Talent Retention Strategies in WCMA Next Step Leadership

Dairy processors know from firsthand experience the value - and challenge - of retaining skilled team players. WCMA is here to help with a new [Next Step Leadership](#) session Thursday, March 31. This one-day course is geared toward established leaders who have completed any of our Front-Line or Advanced Leadership trainings. The program will feature a review basic leadership concepts and a deep dive into talent retention strategies.

By member request, Next Step Leadership will be offered in a hybrid format, allowing participants to join in-person in Madison, Wisconsin, or online via Zoom.

Have questions about WCMA's educational opportunities? Please contact [Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney](#).

[REGISTER TODAY](#)

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## Sign Up Today for Additional WCMA Spring Front-Line Leadership Trainings

**Register now** for the upcoming of WCMA's popular Front-Line Leadership trainings, newly added in virtual format this spring by member request! These sessions are designed for new and seasoned supervisors of focused teams, and will help build their skillset in the areas of conflict resolution, communication, stress and time management, and the cultivation of a team mentality. Classes are offered à la carte, and may be taken in any order. The spring offerings are as follows:

- **Part A: Essential Leadership Skills** - Tuesday, April 19
- **Part B: Boosting Staff Performance** - Wednesday, May 18
- **Part C: Cultivating a Team** - Tuesday, June 14

All spring 2022 Front-Line classes will be held virtually. Tuition for each course is \$135 per person. Please contact **WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney** with questions.

**SIGN UP 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:

- February 16: **Cheesemaking Fundamentals - On Demand** - Center for Dairy Research
- February 21: **Prerequisite Programs** - Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin
- February 22-23: **HACCP for Processors** - Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin
- February 22-24: **Process Cheese Course - In Person** - Center for Dairy Research
- February 24: **Advanced HACCP: Verification and Validation** - Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin
- February 25: **Dairy Ingredients Fundamentals - Online** - Center for Dairy Research
- March 15: **Buttermaking Fundamentals - Online** - Center for Dairy Research
- March 15: **Cheesemaking Fundamentals - On Demand** - Center for Dairy Research



- March 22-24: [Cheese Grading - In Person](#) - Center for Dairy Research
- Rolling Admission: [Online HACCP Training](#) - North Carolina State University
- Rolling Admission: [Environmental Monitoring in the Dairy Industry](#) - North Carolina State University
- Rolling Admission: [Preventive Controls for Dairy Processors](#) - North Carolina State University
- Rolling Admission: [Food Safety Basics For Artisan Cheesemakers](#) - North Carolina State University

## IN THE NEWS

### Wisconsin

- WFRV-TV: [Step your your bouquet game with Renard's Cheese](#) (Featuring WCMA member Renard's Cheese)
- WTMJ-TV: [Packers fan delivers Wisconsin-based cheese, meat to food pantries en route to Super Bowl host city](#) (Featuring WCMA member Nasonville Dairy)

### National/International

- RealAgriculture: [Canada provides revised dairy TRQ implementation plan to the U.S.](#)
- Reuters: [U.S. calls for 'concrete action' from China on trade deal](#)
- Deli Market News: [Schuman Cheese's Allison Schuman discusses cheese category trends driving demand](#) (Featuring WCMA member Schuman Cheese)
- Forbes: [Tillamook making National Cheddar Day a stadium staple](#)
- KCBD-TV: [Leprino Foods to bring the cheese to West Texas, boosting area dairy farmers](#)

## UPCOMING EVENTS



# WCMA Webinar

*New Resources to Support  
Wisconsin Dairy Exports*

**Join WCMA Member Webinar to Access New  
Dairy Export Resources**

Sign up now for WCMA's next [free, members-only webinar](#) focused on new resources to support Wisconsin dairy processors' exporting endeavors.



**Mark Rhoda-Reis**  
*Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade  
and Consumer Protection*



**Aaron Zitzelsberger, J.D.**  
*Wisconsin Economic Development  
Corporation*

Next Tuesday, February 15 from 1:00-2:00 p.m. (CT), Mark Rhoda-Reis, Director of the International Agribusiness Center at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (WDATCP) will share information on WDATCP's new Wisconsin Initiative on Agricultural Exports (WIAE).

Aaron Zitzelsberger, Director of Global Trade & Investment at the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, will also present information on the International Market Access Grant program, and detail how our members can receive direct-to-business grants of between \$10,000-\$25,000 to support their export initiatives. Additional monies are being added to this program, with the approval of the Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports.

This \$5 million, five-year program, championed by WCMA, is designed to boost Wisconsin businesses via increased sales abroad. Half of the program funds are devoted to dairy exporting endeavors, including trade missions, reverse buyers' missions, social media marketing campaigns, and direct grants to processors.

Following the program, WCMA staff will facilitate a Q&A 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, February 14.

**REGISTER NOW**

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## DAIRY FOOD SAFETY ALLIANCE

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**Register to Join Dairy Food Safety Alliance**

Sign up today to [join the Dairy Food Safety Alliance](#) next Thursday, February 17 at

11:00 a.m. (CT) for a meeting at the Farm Wisconsin Discovery Center in Manitowoc, Wisconsin and a facility tour of Pine River Pre-Pack, Inc. Here's a detailed look at the day's agenda:

- 9:45 a.m. Sign-in & network at Farm Wisconsin Discovery Center
- 10:00 a.m. Welcome from Alliance partners
- 10:15 a.m. Introduction by Pine River Pre-Pack staff
- 10:45 a.m. Tour of state-of-the-art Pine River Pre-Pack facility in nearby Newton
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch at Farm Wisconsin Discovery Center
- 12:30 p.m. Updates on food safety projects from Tim Stubbs, Senior Vice President of Product Research & Food Safety, Dairy Management Inc.
- 1:00 p.m. News & updates from Tim Anderson, Dairy Services Section Manager, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection
- 1:45 p.m. Common food safety challenges for dairy manufacturers and processors with increased automation and solutions from Joel Cook, Sr. Technical Manager, & Spencer Lightfield, Technical Manager, Hydrite Chemical Co.
- 2:30 p.m. Discussion and open forum
- 3:00 p.m. Adjourn

Registration costs just \$35 per attendee and includes a catered lunch. Those who wish to attend the meeting virtually can register for \$25.

Together with the Center for Dairy Research (CDR) and Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin (DFW), WCMA leads the Dairy Food Safety Alliance, a group designed to deliver the latest in food safety news to the dairy processing industry. Participation in Alliance meetings is open to all dairy manufacturers, processors, and related suppliers.

Questions about the Dairy Food Safety Alliance may be directed to [WCMA Events Manager Kirsten Strohmenger](#).

**RESERVE YOUR SPOT**



## Register for Joint Industry Meeting with WCMA Technology Committee, WDNR, and MWFPA

**Register now** to participate in the WCMA Technology Committee's annual Information Meeting with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and the Midwest Food Products Association (MWFPA) on Wednesday, March 16 in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin. The meeting will begin with registration and networking at 10:00 a.m. and will adjourn by 2:30 p.m. WCMA members may join the meeting in-person or live online.

The program will cover environmental- and wastewater-related issues with WDNR, and speakers from industry and the state agency will present together on multiple topics. A \$35 meeting fee is planned for in-person attendees, with a reduced rate of \$25 for virtual attendees.

**REGISTER TODAY**



### Apply by March 31 for DBIA Grants



**APPLY NOW**

Submit an application today for a **new, \$1 million round** of Dairy Business Builder Grants administered by the Dairy Business Innovation Alliance! All applications are due by March 31 at 5:00 p.m. (CT)

Small- to medium-sized dairy farmers, processors, and other in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin are eligible to apply. Grants of up to \$50,000 will be awarded through a competitive process. Eligible projects will include dairy farm diversification, on-farm processing, the creation of value-added dairy products, and efforts to market dairy products for export.

The application form is available on the [DBIA website](#), as well as a webinar offering information on the program, an overview of the application process, and tips for a competitive application.

The DBIA is a partnership between WCMA and the Center for Dairy Research, 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.

Questions about DBIA or the Dairy Business Builder grant can be directed to [DBIA staff](#).

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### Join Virtual Discussion on Local Food Purchasing Cooperative Agreements

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (WDATCP) invites food security and local food system organizations to [register for](#) a virtual strategic planning discussion regarding the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Local Food Purchasing Cooperative Agreement Program next Tuesday, February 15, from 1:00-2:30 p.m. (CT). The webinar will include program information, a question and answer session with USDA staff, and an open discussion on the following questions:

- What current barriers do you see in developing local supply chains to serve food security efforts?
- What current projects do you have that are attempting to address these issues?
- How can we shape our local supply chain system?

Those who are unable to attend may submit comments to [WDATCP staff](#).

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### Save the Date for USDA Commodity Procurement Industry Meetings

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agriculture Marketing Service (USDA AMS) [Commodity Procurement Program](#) will hold its Annual Industry Meetings for existing

qualified vendors, interested new vendors, and other stakeholders. The meeting for dairy, grain, oilseed, and international vendors will be held Thursday, March 3. Additional details will be released in the near future.

## MEMBERSHIP

### Together We Grow: WCMA Celebrates Member Employee Growth and Advancement

WCMA members know that growth involves more than product sales. A focus on the potential, satisfaction, and development of team members helps build a foundation for long-term success. That's why WCMA is pleased to celebrate the many opportunities for collaborative employee advancement in dairy processing through our newest social media campaign: Together We Grow.



This week, **Laura Laehn, Raw Materials Grading Manager for WCMA member Masters Gallery Foods** notes that "With the help of WCMA, my relationships throughout the dairy industry have expanded immensely, which helps me grow my knowledge of a variety of cheeses. I can apply those experiences to my everyday life in the cheese business to improve the cheese quality of our suppliers."

Follow along on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [LinkedIn](#) each week for more inspiring stories of growth from WCMA members!

### Sign Up Colleagues for WCMA E-Newsletters

Thanks for subscribing to WCMA's weekly e-newsletter! 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](http://WisCheeseMakers.org)

