



WCMA NEWS

Your source for the latest
in dairy processing

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NEWS

Trade Developments Hold Opportunity and Threats to U.S. Dairy Processing



Trade developments remain dynamic this week, with both positive and potentially negative implications for U.S. dairy.

Mexico

In Mexico, President Claudia Sheinbaum said Monday that [she plans to increase imports](#) from the United States and reduce imports from other countries as part of the ongoing review of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). The move follows U.S. requests to address trade imbalances and could create opportunities for additional U.S. agricultural and dairy exports.

Canada

At the same time, trade tensions with Canada continue to escalate. President Trump last week [threatened tariffs as high as 100% on Canadian goods](#) in response to Canadian trade actions, while the U.S. has already announced additional 50% tariffs on certain Canadian products and restrictions affecting some Canadian dairy imports. These developments come as Canada explores deeper economic ties with the European Union.

European Union

Canada's efforts to strengthen its economic relationship with the European Union are creating another layer of uncertainty. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has proposed making Canada the EU's first "associate member," while Canada is pursuing closer economic ties with Europe. President Trump has warned that the United States could impose [significant tariffs on European goods](#) if the relationship moves forward in a way he considers unfavorable.

WCMA will continue monitoring these developments and advocating for trade policies that support reliable market access and the competitiveness of U.S. dairy processors.

U.S. Senate Ag Committee Approves Farm Bill

Last week, the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry voted 12-11 to advance the [2026 Farm Bill](#), clearing an important hurdle after the legislation failed to advance from the committee in August. The action moves the legislation to the full Senate for consideration; the current Farm Bill extension expires September 30.

The Senate committee's proposal includes several priorities championed by WCMA and the broader dairy industry, including:

- \$36 million in annual authorization for the Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives (DBII), strengthening a program that has helped small and mid-sized dairy businesses innovate, expand production, and reach new markets.
- Permanent authorization for Mandatory Dairy Cost Surveys and the Dairy Forward Pricing Program, providing important tools and data for the dairy industry.
- Expanded dairy nutrition incentives to include cheese, yogurt, and cultured dairy products, helping increase access to and consumption of nutritious dairy foods.
- Codification of the term "natural cheese" to provide greater clarity in the marketplace.
- Increased investments in export promotion, including the Market Access Program and Foreign Market Development Program.
- Protections for common food names in trade agreements, supporting the ability of U.S. dairy businesses to market their products around the world.



WCMA is asking members to [contact their U.S. Senators](#) and urge them to support the dairy priorities included in the Senate Farm Bill. It takes just a minute to make your voice heard. Through WCMA's e-advocacy campaign, you just enter your name, address, and the system will send a prepared message on your behalf. Have questions? Please contact [WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney](#).

USDA Directs End to Dairy Checkoff Funding for ESG Initiatives



[U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins](#) announced last week that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is directing an [end to dairy checkoff funding for Environmental, Social, and Governance](#) (ESG)-related initiatives.

USDA said the action is intended to align research and promotion activities with the statutory purpose of the checkoff programs and ensure producer-funded dollars are focused on strengthening markets for U.S. dairy. USDA is also directing the Agricultural Marketing Service to ensure research and promotion funds across other commodity checkoffs are not used to advance ESG mandates.

PACK Act Advances in House Committee



The bipartisan Packaging and Claims Knowledge (PACK) Act ([H.R. 6832](#)) took an important step forward last week when the House Energy and Commerce Committee voted 25-18 to advance the legislation to the full House.

Introduced by Rep. Randy Weber (R-Texas), [the PACK Act](#) would establish a nationally consistent framework for voluntary

recyclable, compostable, and reusable packaging claims.

The legislation is designed to replace an increasingly complex patchwork of state requirements with one federal standard, providing greater consistency for manufacturers and clearer information for consumers. Under the bill, companies that choose to make covered packaging claims would follow federal requirements, with claims subject to independent third-party certification and oversight by the Federal Trade Commission. Supporters say a national framework could reduce compliance costs and uncertainty for businesses operating across multiple states while helping consumers better understand packaging claims. The legislation now heads to the full House for consideration. WCMA will keep members informed on its progress and implications.

Final Reminder: September 30 DBIA Grant Deadline



Why apply for a DBIA grant? [Click the "Play" button](#) to hear from awardee Cinnamon Ridge Farms about how DBIA funding helped boost their business.

The deadline for Midwest dairy businesses to [apply for the next round of grants](#) through the Dairy Business Innovation Alliance (DBIA), a partnership between WCMA and the Center for Dairy Research (CDR), is next Wednesday, September 30.

Two grant programs are available to small- to mid-sized dairy farmers and processors in DBIA's 11-state service region. The [Dairy Business Builder](#) program supports those seeking to diversify on-farm activities, develop value-added products, enhance dairy by-products, or expand export programs.

The [Dairy Industry Impact](#) program funds projects with a potential impact on the broader industry. Applicants may apply to both grant programs. All applications are due by 5:00 p.m. (CT) on September 30. Questions may be directed to [DBIA staff](#).

Headlines

Wisconsin

- InBusiness Madison: [Wisconsin farmers coping with nightmare diesel costs](#)
- WBAY: [One in 8 Wisconsin residents considered food insecure, report finds](#)
- The Monroe Times: [Weather doesn't dampen the spirit of Cheese Days](#)
- Food Manufacturing: [Wisconsin cheese packaging company to expand Mississippi facility](#)
- Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: [Wisconsin farm bankruptcies rise again after post-pandemic lull](#)
- WPR: [Threat of avian flu returns to Wisconsin with new species at risk](#)

National & Global

- NPR: [How a national farm leader is dealing with record diesel prices](#)
- WROK: [True or false: the most stolen Illinois grocery item is... Cheese?](#)
- NewsNation: [Vermont cheesemaker says US-Canada trade war wiped out his business overnight](#)
- Primetimer: [Who owns Tillamook? Halal-certified cheese controversy explained as mass boycott movement erupts online](#)
- eDairy News: [World Dairy Expo: a global stage in the heart of Madison](#)

Cheese Fair Off the Square Coming Up



on September 26

[Cheese Fair Off the Square](#) returns to Madison, Wisconsin on September 26. This annual celebration of Wisconsin dairy, hosted by Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin, will feature products from 18 companies, including WCMA members, Alpinage Cheese Co., Carr Valley Cheese Company, Chalet Cheese, Kingston Cheese Cooperative,

Klondike Cheese Company, Marieke Gouda, Nasonville Dairy, Pine River Pre-Pack, Inc., Renard's Cheese, Ron's Wisconsin Cheese, LLC, and Widmer's Cheese Cellars. The Fair will be held from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. in a two-block area of Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., just off of the Capitol Square in downtown Madison.

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.

WCMA Welcomes New Members



Join WCMA in welcoming new dairy manufacturer member [Wiowa Foods](#), and new supplier members [Ace Packaging Solutions](#), [Azo Inc.](#), [Bearing Distributors, Inc.](#), [Columbus Vegetable Oils](#), [DairyChem](#), [Gericke USA](#), [Iceberg Mechanical & Refrigeration](#), [Imaflex Inc.](#), [LANXESS](#), and [The Robinette Company](#). 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](#).

Update Your Member Directory Details by October 9



Not sure how to update your business profile?
[Click the "Play" button](#) to watch our short video for step-by-step directions.

Unlock the power of your WCMA membership — and ensure that dairy processors in our worldwide network know how to reach you - by [updating your member listing](#) today.

Take action by October 9 to ensure your details are ready for our next printed member directory, coming in January 2027.

Editing your business profile and contact information is quick and easy at [WisCheeseMakers.org](#). Questions can be directed to [WCMA Membership Director Sara Schmidt](#).

Show Your WCMA Pride with “Proud Member” Logos

Proud Member



WISCONSIN
CHEESE MAKERS
ASSOCIATION

Show your support for the dairy processing industry and display your status as an active, engaged part of WCMA with an exclusive member benefit: a [“Proud Member” logo](#). Available in three variations to suit your desired use, this new logo is free to all current members in accordance with WCMA's Logo Terms of Use. All assets are available for download now at [WisCheeseMakers.org](https://www.wischeesemakers.org).

EVENTS & CONNECTION

Receive OSHA Updates at WCMA Health & Safety Group Meeting on October 20



[Sign up now for WCMA's Health & Safety Group meeting](#) on Tuesday, October 20, for the latest regulatory updates, peer networking, and lessons on how to prepare for the unexpected. Held online and in-person at Masters Gallery Foods' facility in Oostburg, Wisconsin, attendees will hear from Masters Gallery - WCMA's 2025 Employer of the Year Award winner - about how it has created and sustained its exceptional safety culture.

What's more, the first 30 registrants for in-person attendance will enjoy an exclusive tour of Masters Gallery Foods' Oostburg facility, focused on safety protocols and practices (**only 17 tour spots remain**). Attendees will also have the opportunity to connect directly with representatives from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), who will cover OSHA's Top Ten Most Frequent Citations, as well as regulatory updates from the agency.

This [meeting](#) will also feature an emergency preparedness panel, with WCMA dairy processor members discussing emergencies they've experienced firsthand, how their teams responded, and the changes they made to emergency plans and procedures afterwards.



Thanks go to meeting sponsor [Nelson-Jameson, Inc.](#) Act now to [sponsor this meeting](#)! Connect with safety personnel and show your company's support for dairy processors' efforts to improve their health and safety policies.

Strengthen Sustainability Data with WCMA Workshop October 21-22



Join WCMA on October 21-22 in Madison, Wisconsin, for our third annual in-person [sustainability workshop](#).

Knowing that dairy processors need repeatable, reliable, and defensible processes to collect, analyze, and report their sustainability data, WCMA designed ["Good Data, Better Decisions: Building a Stronger Sustainability Data Strategy"](#).

Attendees of this two-day workshop will get an in-depth look at the sustainability reporting landscape, learn how to build sustainability data SOPs, and how to prepare for external scrutiny. This program will be led by industry experts Kaitlyn Harbort, Sushil Rajagopalan (Harbor Environmental, a Terracon company), and dairy processors with extensive experience in this area.

Participants will learn how to build confidence in their sustainability data so it can withstand customer and third-party scrutiny while finding new ways to create value for their business. Topics include which data they should collect and why, the importance of data integrity, why sustainability data matters, and how to turn data requests into strategic conversations. After the first day of the workshop wraps up on Wednesday, October 21, attendees are invited to a WCMA-hosted dinner.

This two-day workshop costs \$750 to attend. If an organization sends more than one person, all other registrants after the primary will be \$250. **The registration deadline is coming up on October 16.** Don't miss this chance to stay up-to-date on recommended sustainability practices and connect with peers and colleagues. [Register today!](#)

Register Now for October Front-Line Leadership Session



Extremely limited space remains in the next session of [WCMA's three-part Front-Line Leadership training series](#)! Part B, "Boosting Staff Performance", is designed for supervisors who want to cultivate a team mentality, communicate better, resolve conflicts, and manage their time and stress. The [virtual Part B training](#) will take place on October 7, while the [in-person training](#) will take place on October 14 at WCMA's offices in Madison, Wisconsin.

Missed Part A? Not to worry — all three parts are offered à la carte and can be taken in any order. Additionally, **successful completion of all three parts of WCMA Front-Line Leadership results in a free, full registration to CheeseCon 2027 — a savings of approximately \$600.** [Sign up while you still can!](#)



Thanks go to [Nelson-Jameson, Inc.](#) for their generous sponsorship of the in-person training on October 14. Sponsorship of the virtual meeting on October 7 is still available. [Become a sponsor](#) to show your support for the dairy processing industry's next generation of leaders.

Upcoming WCMA Events

September 23	October 7	October 14	October 20	October 21-22
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[Annual Member Meeting and Awards Ceremony](#) (In-Person)

[Front-Line Leadership Part B](#) (Virtual)

[Front-Line Leadership Part B](#) (In-Person)

[Health & Safety Group Meeting](#) (Hybrid)

["Good Data, Better Decisions" Sustainability Workshop](#) (In-Person)



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