



WISCONSIN CHEESE MAKERS ASSOCIATION

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CORONAVIRUS INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

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WCMA distributes member bulletins focused on coronavirus information on Thursdays and as breaking news warrants. WCMA delivers electronic newsletters with broader content on Tuesdays. Please contact [WCMA staff](#) with any questions.

Biden Signs \$1.9T Relief Package, Delivering \$3.6B for USDA Food Purchases and Processor Aid

President Joe Biden this afternoon [signed the American Rescue Plan](#) (ARP), his \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief package, following Congressional approval yesterday.

The plan offers direct relief payments of \$1,400-per-person to approximately 90 percent of American households, an increase in SNAP benefits, a child tax credit of up to \$3,600 per child, and an extension of federal unemployment boosts of \$300 per week over state offerings. It delivers \$350 billion in state and local aid, with Wisconsin to receive approximately \$5.7 billion, as well as \$130 billion for K-12 schools and \$60 billion to expedite COVID-19 testing, tracing and vaccination.

For businesses, the American Rescue Plan will also launch a \$25 billion program to support restaurants and \$7.25 billion for the Paycheck Protection Program. **It also provides \$3.6 billion for U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) food purchasing programs, authorizing the continuation of the food box program, and for USDA grants and loans to food processors and distributors that have taken action to protect employees from COVID-19.** More details are expected in the weeks ahead, and WCMA will keep members informed.

Register Now for USDA Listening Sessions on COVID-19 Programs

The U.S. Department of Agriculture - Agricultural Marketing Service (USDA-

AMS) announced this week it will hold listening sessions and accept public comments on two key topics: its pandemic food purchasing programs, including the Farmers to Families Food Box program, and coronavirus relief grants.

Food Purchasing Program

The USDA-AMS [listening session on food purchasing programs](#) is set for March 22 from 1-4 p.m. (CT), and will be held via Zoom. You must register by March 17 at 11 p.m. (CT) to be considered for a speaking role, and you must [register in advance](#) to join the session. The agency will also accept comments via its [online portal](#) through March 31.

Coronavirus Relief Grants

USDA-AMS is also seeking comments regarding the development and implementation of grant programs to support food processors, distributors and producers respond to coronavirus, including for measures to protect workers against COVID-19. A [listening session](#) will be held March 19 from 1-4 p.m. (CT), via Zoom. You must register by March 16 at 11 p.m. (CT) to be considered for a speaking role, and you must [register in advance](#) to join the session. The agency will also accept comments via its [online portal](#) through March 31.

Accelerating Vaccine Distribution, Wisconsin to Expand Eligibility Beginning March 29

With [20 percent of the Wisconsin population](#) now having received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, Department of Health Services (WDHS) officials today announced that Wisconsinites aged 16 and older with certain medical conditions will be [eligible for vaccination](#) beginning March 29.

The list of qualifying conditions is extensive, including anyone who is pregnant, overweight, immuno-compromised, or has cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma, diseases of the heart, liver or kidneys, or COPD. The complete list is [available online](#).

WDHS officials also noted that vaccination of the state's general public will begin in May.

Members of Wisconsin's Phase 1B population, including dairy manufacturing and processing employees, are eligible for vaccination now. To secure a vaccination appointment, individuals may contact their health provider or:

- Use the [Wisconsin COVID-19 Vaccine Registry](#). If no appointments are currently available, individuals are placed on a wait-list.
- Call Wisconsin's toll-free vaccination hotline at 844-684-1064. Call center representatives can schedule appointments and answer questions about COVID-19 vaccination.
- Contact one of Wisconsin's two Federal Retail Pharmacy Partners:
 - Call 1-800-Walgreens or visit www.walgreens.com/findcare/vaccination/covid-19.
 - Call Kroger's pharmacy hotline at (866) 211-5320 or visit <https://www.kroger.com/rx/covid-eligibility>.

Wisconsin vaccinators are asking for an individual's proof of eligibility, which

could be a pay stub, work identification, [letter from their employer](#) or self-attestation.

State-by-State Dairy Processing Workers' Vaccination Eligibility Status Report

In COVID-19 bulletins delivered each Thursday, WCMA provides vaccination eligibility status reports for states in which the bulk of members operate, as well as news clips noting progress in other states.

California

- Sacramento County this week joined eight other key dairy counties in [California](#) - Fresno, Kern, Kings, Los Angeles, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tulare - to offer broad vaccination of food and agriculture workers, including dairy plant personnel. [Access information](#) is available online.

Illinois

- Dairy processing personnel in [Illinois](#) are eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccination now. A list of vaccination sites is [available online](#), along with details regarding required identification.

Iowa

- Dairy processing personnel in [Iowa](#) are eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccination now. Vaccine provider information is [available online](#).

Minnesota

- [Minnesota](#) has this week expanded vaccine eligibility to food processing workers in the state's [Phase 1B-Tier 2](#) group. Appointments and information are available through the [Minnesota Vaccine Connector](#).

Ohio

- Today, Ohio [expanded vaccine eligibility](#) to its Phase 1D and Phase 2B populations, including those with Type 2 diabetes and end-stage renal disease as well as all Ohioans aged 50 and older.
- [Ohio](#) has not yet issued guidance on when essential workers, including dairy processing personnel, will become eligible for vaccination. Union representatives for food processing workers are this week [pushing for member access](#).
- Ohio's [centralized scheduling website](#) is now live. It will serve as a singular location for Ohioans to confirm that they are eligible to be vaccinated, identify nearby providers, and schedule their vaccine appointments.

South Dakota

- [South Dakota](#) is now vaccinating members of its Phase D group, including those aged 65 or older and those with high-risk medical conditions.
- Essential workers, including dairy processing employees, are in the state's Phase E group, though a date has not yet been set for this group's access. State officials [currently estimate](#) access for this group in April.

Wisconsin

- Dairy processing personnel in [Wisconsin](#) are eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccination now. Appointments can be made via the Wisconsin [COVID-19 Vaccine Registry](#), or through a health care provider or pharmacy.

Other States

Please see these news clips for relevant updates on vaccination eligibility in other key dairy states.

- *KIFI-TV*: [SIPH prepares for vaccine rollout to frontline workers and ages 55-64](#) (Idaho)
- *MyTwinTiers.com*: [Agriculture and food processing employees continue to be left out of the states vaccination plan](#) (New York)

Coronavirus Headline News

Wisconsin

- *WEAU-TV*: [State's average for COVID-19 deaths hits single digits for second time in one week](#)
- *Wisconsin Public Radio*: [Wisconsin Hospital Association to businesses: Encourage staff to get vaccinated](#)
- *Wisconsin Public Radio*: [GOP lawmakers push for oversight of Wisconsin's federal COVID-19 aid](#)
- *WFRV-TV*: [Wisconsin Hospital Association warns continued social distancing, masking still necessary](#)

National/International

- *Washington Post*: [Sorrow and stamina. Defiance and despair. It's been a year.](#)
- *Politico*: [Virus drove record U.S. death rate in 2020, CDC finds](#)
- *Philadelphia Inquirer*: [U.S. unemployment claims dropped to 712K last week, lowest since November](#)

Visit [WisCheeseMakers.org](#) for More Resources

WCMA's coronavirus resources page on [WisCheeseMakers.org](#) is updated daily, featuring information on employee safety, regulatory flexibility, operations guidance, federal and state support, and salutes to your critical, essential staff.

WCMA Key Contacts

Members with pandemic-related questions or concerns should feel encouraged to contact WCMA staff at any time. Here are ways to get in touch.

- WCMA Executive Director John Umhoefer:
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