



# WISCONSIN CHEESE MAKERS ASSOCIATION

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## CORONAVIRUS INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Bulletin Distributed: April 15, 2021

*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.*

### USDA to End Food Box Program in May

Speaking at a Congressional hearing on Wednesday, U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom [Vilsack announced](#) his agency will bring the Farmers to Families Food Box program to an end in May. The \$4 billion Food Box program has delivered more than 156 million boxes of dairy, meat and produce since the start of the pandemic.

USDA [staff emphasized](#) to reporters that the program had "significant challenges" noting that box distribution was not based on need; rural counties were underserved; prices fluctuated from \$28 to \$105 per box; food varied in quality and quantity; perishable items often went unrefrigerated; and small businesses struggled to compete for contracts.

Vilsack noted that USDA plans to direct tax dollars to expand food stamp benefits and increase food purchases through existing government food distribution programs.

### USDA Details New Dairy Donation Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) [announced yesterday](#) that it will soon begin the \$400 million Dairy Donation Program (DDP), as established in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021.

The DDP is designed to address food insecurity, offset processors' and producers' costs, and minimize food waste through direct reimbursements for processors' donation of dairy products to nonprofit organizations.

In a public notice, USDA detailed the following key program requirements:

- A donation and distribution plan must be submitted and approved by USDA. Appropriate forms for submitting this information will be provided once the regulations are published.
- The reimbursement will be at least equivalent to the minimum classified value of milk used to make the donated product on the date of manufacturing.
- Records related to the donation and receipt of products must be maintained for review and/or audit.
- Eligibility is open to dairy farmer cooperatives and processors who "account to" a federal milk marketing order (FMMO) and donate dairy products to any private or public nonprofit food distribution entity.

USDA officials also emphasized that guiding statute does allow for retroactive reimbursements of donations made before donation and distribution plans are approved. USDA provided advance notice of the minimum program provisions to encourage the dairy industry to process and donate surplus milk supplies as it moves through the spring production season.

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## Evers Strikes Deal with USDA to Preserve \$70M in FoodShare Funding

Late Tuesday, Wisconsin Governor Tony **Evers announced** he had reached an agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to preserve more than \$70 million per month in supplemental food assistance benefits for more than 400,000 Wisconsinites. Negotiations were necessary following the Wisconsin Supreme Court's decision to strike down Evers' emergency order, a requirement for additional federal aid. USDA agreed to accept an **emergency declaration** issued by Wisconsin Department of Health Secretary-designee Karen Timberlake on April 8 as a sufficient substitute.

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## Wisconsin Court Strikes Down Capacity Limits

The Wisconsin Supreme **Court ruled** Wednesday that Governor Tony Evers does not have the authority to impose capacity limits on bars and restaurants without legislative approval.

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## DOL Issues Guidance on COBRA Subsidy

The U.S. Department of Labor has issued **guidance** and **model notices** on an American Rescue Plan provision fully subsidizing COBRA premiums for workers who are involuntarily laid off or have reduced hours, April 1 through September 30, 2021. Qualifying individuals will not have to pay premiums or administrative fees for COBRA continuation coverage.

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## WCMA Surveying Dairy Processor Members on Workforce Vaccination Rates

To provide information to our members and to policymakers, WCMA is compiling data on the administration of COVID-19 vaccinations to dairy processing member employees. We invite you to participate in this [one-minute survey](#), asking for your best estimate of the percentage of your workforce that is or will soon be vaccinated.

Information collected in this survey will be blinded and aggregated for release. Data from each participating member will be held in strictest confidence.

Please know that WCMA is [available to help](#) with questions you may have regarding vaccine access, and to connect you with vaccinators as desired.

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## State-by-State Vaccination Access Information

WCMA is pleased to provide links to vaccination scheduling resources in these key dairy processing states:

- [California](#)
  - [Idaho](#)
  - [Illinois](#)
  - [Iowa](#)
  - [Michigan](#)
  - [Minnesota](#)
  - [New Mexico](#)
  - [New York](#)
  - [Ohio](#)
  - [Pennsylvania](#)
  - [South Dakota](#)
  - [Tennessee](#)
  - [Texas](#)
  - [Vermont](#)
  - [Wisconsin](#)
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## Coronavirus Headline News

### Dairy Industry

- *Brownfield Ag News:* [Dairy specialist teaching dairy workers about COVID vaccinations](#)

### Wisconsin

- *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel:* [Michigan is overwhelmed by another COVID-19 surge, this one driven by young people. Is Wisconsin next?](#)
- *WKOW-TV:* [Five new deaths from COVID-19 in Wisconsin; 25.2 percent fully vaccinated](#)
- *Osceola Sun:* [Community-based vaccination clinic in Barron County to open April 20](#)
- *WLUK-TV:* [Some rural Wisconsin counties still doing well despite pause on J&J vaccine](#)

### National/International

- *Yahoo! News:* [America is about to hit a 'vaccine wall' as demand](#)

[drops](#)

- *CBS News*: [Study shows vaccines carry much lower risk of blood clots than COVID-19](#)
  - *New York Times*: [New coronavirus tests should still be able to detect variants, but health officials are vigilant](#)
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## Visit [WisCheeseMakers.org](https://www.wischeesemakers.org) for More Resources

WCMA's coronavirus resources page on [WisCheeseMakers.org](https://www.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.

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## 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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