



WCMA NEWS

Your source for the latest
in dairy processing

December 23, 2024

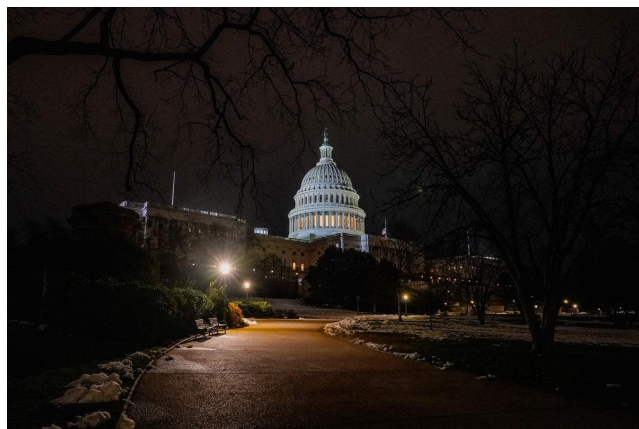
news@wischeesemakers.org



SUBSCRIBER NOTE: WCMA's offices will be closed for the holidays Tuesday, December 24 and Wednesday, December 25, Tuesday, December 31, and Wednesday, January 1. The next edition of this e-newsletter will be released on Thursday, January 2. We wish you a warm and happy holiday and look forward to serving you in 2025!

NEWS

Congress Approves Limited-Term Government Spending Package, Farm Bill Extension



Following a challenging week of negotiations, late on Friday night, Congress approved a [federal spending package](#) to continue government funding through March 14, averting a shutdown. The package is, essentially, a pared-back version of two other failed deals. It includes a clean, one-year extension of the 2018 Farm Bill, including authority to continue the Dairy Business Innovation Initiative, Dairy Forward Pricing Program, Dairy Margin Coverage, and Healthy Fluid Milk Incentives Projects. Related appropriations must still be determined in separate legislation.

Notably, the spending plan also offers \$20 billion for farmers affected by natural disasters and another \$10 billion in market relief. It does not include the suspension of the debt limit that President-elect Donald Trump had called for earlier in the week.

Many thanks go to all of you who engaged in direct advocacy via WCMA's email campaign, or through any other group or activity. Your voice matters – and it made a difference.

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

Biden Administration Finalizes H-1B & H-2 Immigration Rules

Last week, the Biden Administration finalized two new rules reshaping eligibility criteria for the [H-1B](#) and [H-2](#) visa programs, which may support dairy's pressing



workforce needs. Both rules take effect January 17.

WCMA continues to advocate for expanded legal immigration opportunities for dairy processing workers. Members may contact [WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney](#) with questions.

FDA Updates "Healthy" Claim, Leaves Out Many Dairy Foods

On December 19, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released its [final rule](#), updating the definition of "healthy" for use on product labels. FDA leaders opted to allow low-fat and fat-free white or flavored milks with no added sugar and low-fat and fat-free yogurts with no added sugar to be called "healthy," but left out many other highly-nutritious dairy products, including cheese, cottage cheese, and whole-fat dairy products. The compliance date for this rule is February 25, 2028. [READ MORE...](#)

Evers Names Hyun New Wisconsin DNR Secretary



Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers today announced he is appointing Karen [Hyun \(pictured\) as Secretary](#) of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, filling a position that has been vacant for more than a year. Hyun most recently served as Chief of Staff of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and her background includes senior policy roles with the U.S. House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee the U.S. Department of Commerce, and as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks at the U.S. Department of the Interior. [READ MORE...](#)

Hyun's appointment is effective January 27, and WCMA will work to quickly connect members with the Secretary-designee. Please contact [WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney](#) with any questions.

Wisconsin Ag Committee Chairs Named

With the next legislative session beginning in January, Republican leaders in the Wisconsin State Senate and Assembly have named their picks for committee leadership. Senator Patrick Testin (R-Stevens Point) has been named the [new chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Revenue](#), following the departure of Senator Joan Ballweg from the legislature. Sen. Testin has been an ally to WCMA, and our organization was actively supportive of his appointment to this position. Testin will also serve on the powerful Joint Finance Committee. Other Senate Republican committee assignments are [available here](#).

In the Wisconsin State Assembly, Representative Travis Tranel (R-Cuba City) will again serve as Chair of the Assembly Committee on Agriculture. Tranel has been recognized by WCMA as a Cheese

Champion, and works closely with our organization to advance dairy priorities. WCMA also cheers news that Rep. Tony Kurtz (R-Wonewoc) has been promoted to Vice Chair of the budget-writing Joint Finance Committee; Kurtz has authored numerous bills at WCMA's request, and has also been recognized as a Cheese Champion. A full list of Assembly Republican appointments is [available here](#).



H5N1 Response

Seven States Join USDA's H5N1 Milk Testing Effort



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced a second round of states engaging in its [National Milk Testing Strategy \(NMTS\)](#), designed to determine the prevalence of H5N1 infection in dairy herds with the goal of elimination. Indiana, Maryland, Montana, New York, Ohio, Vermont, and Washington will join six previously-announced states in the raw milk testing effort. [READ MORE...](#)

California Declares H5N1 State of Emergency



California Governor Gavin Newsom has [declared a state of emergency over H5N1](#), in an effort to streamline the state's response to the outbreak. The virus has been detected in dairy farms in Southern California, but there has been no person-to-person spread of the virus in the state so far. [READ MORE...](#)

Wisconsin Reports First Presumptive Positive H5N1 Human Case



After 11 months without an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI or H5N1) in Wisconsin, this week two poultry farms - one in [Barron County](#) and one in [Kenosha County](#) - reported positive cases of the virus. In addition, connected to the outbreak at the Barron County poultry farm, [one person is presumed positive for H5N1](#).

While there have been **no reported outbreaks of H5N1 infection at Wisconsin dairy farms or in dairy farm or processing workers**, dairy manufacturers and processors may wish to remind any workers handling unpasteurized (raw) milk to consider the [CDC's recommendation to wear personal](#)

[protective equipment \(PPE\)](#), including a NIOSH Approved® particulate respirator (for example an N95® or greater filtering facepiece respirator), eye protection, and gloves. Employees should also thoroughly wash their hands after raw milk contact.

A complete listing of confirmed H5N1 cases among dairy cattle in the U.S. can be found on the [U.S. Department of Agriculture's website](#). WCMA members can also visit [WisCheeseMakers.org/H5N1](https://www.wischeesemakers.org/H5N1) for information and resources to protect their employees.

USDEC Receives \$9.7M to Fund Trade Promotion Efforts



The U.S. Dairy Export Council (USDEC) [last week announced](#) that it has received \$9.7 million in a second round of funding through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Regional Agricultural Promotion Program (RAPP). USDEC's first allocation of RAPP funding, awarded in May 2023, is supporting a variety of programs, including cheese marketing initiatives in Southeast Asia. [READ MORE...](#)

Headlines

Wisconsin

- Monroe Times: [Main Street Monroe to host New Year's Eve Cheese Drop again](#) (Featuring WCMA member Chalet Cheese Cooperative)
- Sheboygan Press: [The Big Cheese Drop & more ways to celebrate the new year in Sheboygan](#) (Featuring WCMA member Sartori Company)

National & Global

- PBS: [Colorado dairy farms face calls to keep workers safe as bird flu spreads among cows](#)
- KTIV-TV: [Kemps Dairy Plant workers vote to join Teamster's union](#) (Featuring WCMA member Dairy Farmers of America)
- Cornell Chronicle: [Cornell's 'big cheese' of cheese retires](#)

EVENTS & CONNECTION

Enter U.S. Championship Cheese Contest Today



Less than six weeks remain to enter the [2025 U.S. Championship Cheese Contest](#). Submit entries of cheese, butter, yogurt, sour cream, and dry dairy ingredients by Friday, January 31 to receive expert technical feedback and compete for the coveted title of U.S. Champion Cheese!

Complete Contest details, including all deadlines, rules, and entry information, are available in the [official Entry Kit](#).

[SUBMIT ENTRIES](#)

Register Now for CheeseCon 2025 and Save



Act now to join thousands of dairy processing professionals at [CheeseCon 2025](#), set for April 15-17 in Madison, Wisconsin. Hosted by WCMA and the Center for Dairy Research, CheeseCon is the largest cheese, butter, and whey industry gathering of the year. Don't miss engaging educational seminars, exciting celebrations of industry excellence, top-notch networking, and more. [Register today](#) and save 20 percent!

REGISTER NOW

Upcoming WCMA Events

January 14	January 16	January 21	February 6	February 13
Front-Line Leadership Part A (Virtual)	Free Webinar: Marketing with AI	Front-Line Leadership Part A (Virtual)	Health & Safety Group Meeting	Front-Line Leadership Part B (Virtual)

VIEW ALL & REGISTER

EDUCATION

Limited Space Remaining in January WCMA Front-Line Leadership



Act now to join the [January 14](#) or [January 21](#) virtual offerings of [WCMA Front-Line Leadership](#): Part A! New and seasoned supervisors alike will learn to strengthen essential leadership skills in this one-day session. Part B, offered in February, offers ways to boost staff performance, and Part C, set for March, focuses on cultivating a positive team mentality. Those who complete all three parts will receive a free Full Registration for [CheeseCon 2025](#), valued at approximately \$600.

For more educational opportunities
from WCMA and our partners, visit: ..

[WisCheeseMakers.org/Events](https://www.wischeesemakers.org/Events)

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