



WCMA NEWS

AN EXCLUSIVE UPDATE FOR MEMBERS OF THE
WISCONSIN CHEESE MAKERS ASSOCIATION



SIGNATURE EVENTS



CheeseExpo Unveils Keynote Speaker, Diverse Educational Offerings



Learn from the industry's best at [CheeseExpo 2024](#), April 16-18 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin! [Register by January 30](#) to save big on full, single-day, and exhibits and networking registrations for most attendees.

REGISTER TODAY

Start your CheeseExpo experience with fascinating lessons in dairy sustainability at the Opening Keynote sponsored by RELCO.

In **Sustainability: The FrieslandCampina Story**, Sumeet Mathur, Managing Director of FrieslandCampina Consumer Dairy Americas, shares the Dutch cooperative's learnings at the cutting edge of dairy sustainability. Mathur currently leads the FrieslandCampina business for North America and Latin America following years of dairy industry experience including strategic roles with Nestlé in India, Switzerland, and Indonesia.



Follow this engaging keynote with a [diverse array of seminars](#) on Wednesday, April 17 and Thursday, April 18, diving into the topics that matter most to the industry. From sustainability to innovation, and from product safety and quality to timely policy issues, CheeseExpo covers it all.

[VIEW FULL SCHEDULE](#)



Click the "Play" button for a taste of the technical expertise available to dairy processors who enter their products in the World Championship Cheese Contest!

Enter World Championship Cheese Contest by January 26 for Expert Technical Feedback



Enter your products in the [2024 World Championship Cheese Contest](#) to access useful technical input from internationally renowned dairy experts! Don't delay: entries must be submitted no later than Friday, January 26.

[ENTER NOW](#)

This year, thousands of entries are expected across 142 distinct categories of cheese, butter, yogurt, and dry dairy ingredients. All products will be evaluated by a team of skilled, experienced judges March 5-7 at the Monona Terrace Community & Convention Center in Madison, Wisconsin. Complete entry details can be found in the [2024 Contest Entry Kit](#).

Have questions? Please contact [WCMA Contest Director Kirsten Strohmenger](#).

[GRANTS](#)



Apply Now for a Total of \$27M in Food Infrastructure Grants

Wisconsin dairy manufacturers and processors have until Wednesday, March 6 at 5:00 p.m. (CT) to apply for the state's **Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI)** grant program, offering a total of \$27 million in awards.

APPLY FOR FUNDING

The RFSI program is all new, created to expand capacity and infrastructure for the production, processing, and distribution of locally- and regionally-produced foods, including dairy products. Funding for the grants is provided through the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Businesses may apply for one of two grant tracks:

- **Infrastructure Grants** range from \$100,000 to \$3 million each. The funding can be used for building design, renovation & construction, equipment, staff time, plan development, market development, and system modernization. A match is required, and may be as low as 25 percent for applicants who qualify as underserved.
- **Equipment-Only Grants** range from \$10,000 to \$99,999 each. This funding may only be used for new, used, or refurbished equipment. No match is required for Equipment-Only Grants.

Questions can be emailed to RFSI@wisconsin.gov. Members may also contact [WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney](#) for assistance.

Learn More in Free WCMA Webinar February 13

Get an inside look at the RFSI Program and learn how to submit your best application in [a free webinar for WCMA members](#) on Tuesday, February 13 at 1:00 p.m. (CT)!

Register today and make plans to join WCMA and WDATCP staff for an informative, concise session. Bring your questions, or submit them in advance to [WCMA Communications Director Grace Atherton](#).

RSVP NOW



DBIA Awards Research Grants

The Dairy Business Innovation Alliance (DBIA), a partnership between WCMA and the Center for Dairy Research (CDR), is awarding a total of \$1.2 million in grants to six research groups at the University of Wisconsin through a new [DBIA Research Program](#).

The selected projects will receive funding for up to three years to combine research and development activities focused on opportunities for converting dairy co-product streams into commercially feasible, value-added products. The projects span multiple departments, including bacteriology, bioenergy, biological systems engineering, chemical and biological engineering, civil and environmental engineering, and food science. More details will be available soon on [CDR's website](#).

DBIA develops and administers grants and technical assistance to dairy farmers and processors in Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin. The next round of [Dairy Business Builder Grants](#) offered by the Alliance will open for applications in February.

ADVOCACY



Join, Sponsor WCMA Advocacy Day



You're invited to join WCMA's open Policy Committee for an in-person meeting at the Concourse Hotel and State Capitol in Madison, Wisconsin on Tuesday, February 6 from 10:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m. (CT)!

Register now at [WisCheeseMakers.org](https://www.wischeesemakers.org) to hear from federal and state lawmakers about the session ahead - and to advocate for industry priorities.

RSVP NOW

Looking to expand your advocacy impact? Act now to secure a **low-cost, high-visibility sponsorship** of WCMA's Policy Committee Meeting & Advocacy Day event. Sponsorship benefits include:

- Two complimentary registrations for your staff to attend
- Company logo on event sponsor signage and agenda
- Company logo on registration page on [WisCheeseMakers.org](https://www.wischeesemakers.org)
- Company logo in WCMA e-newsletter the week prior and the week following event, acknowledging sponsorship
- Company tag in social media posts on Facebook and Twitter the day of the event, acknowledging sponsorship

Only a few of these unique opportunities are available, so don't delay! Please contact **WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney** with questions.

BECOME A SPONSOR

Take Action on Wisconsin Food Labeling Bills

Act now to **advocate for newly introduced proposals** in the Wisconsin legislature designed to protect dairy names and provide consumer clarity in the marketplace.



Senator Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green), Representative Peter Schmidt (R-Bonduel), and Representative Joy Goeben (R-Hobart) recently proposed the bills, which ban the labeling of foods as "dairy products" or "dairy ingredients" if the food is not made from the milk of a cow, sheep, goat, or other camelid mammal.

With [WCMA's easy-to-use advocacy tool](#), you can message your elected officials with just a few clicks, letting them know you want to see them support these bills and move them forward.

Please contact [WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney](#) with any questions.

[CONTACT LAWMAKERS](#)

INDUSTRY UPDATES



Connect with Export Partners Overseas

Reach new potential customers with upcoming international trade missions hosted by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (WDATCP) and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC).

Current opportunities include ventures to Costa Rica from March 4-5, [China from March 9-16](#), and London at the [International Food and Drink Event](#) from March 25-27. Complete details on these and other international trade opportunities can be found on [WDATCP's website](#).

Register Now for Vermont Cheese Council Educational Opportunities

Expand your knowledge with two new offerings from the Vermont Cheese Council (VCC) - available at a discount exclusively for WCMA members.



Artisan Cheesemakers Winter Conference: Feb 15-16
REGISTRATION OPEN

VCC's [Artisan Cheesemakers Winter Conference](#), set for February 15-16, will feature topics such as risk management, solutions for cheese production issues, how cheesemakers can get the most out of working with a distributor, a virtual tour with a cheese producer in Brazil, team management, and more. Registration costs \$110 per person.



BUSINESS MINIVERISTY REGISTRATION OPEN
for farm and food business owners and managers of all flavors
January 29 - March 6

VCC's six-week [Business Miniversity](#) is suitable for new (or up-and-coming) business owners/managers and those who have run/managed businesses for a while – but never had training in these areas. The course is designed to equip participants with helpful, actionable information in 12 virtual sessions. Registration costs \$100 for the full series.

Use code **WI20PCG** to receive 20 percent off your registration for either of these upcoming offerings. For more information, please contact [VCC staff](#).

USDA Soliciting Mozzarella Bids

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has [issued a solicitation](#) for the purchase of mozzarella cheese for use in domestic food distribution programs. Bids are due January 23 at 1:00 p.m. (CT). Please contact USDA staff with questions.

IN THE NEWS

Wisconsin

- *PBS Wisconsin*: [What robotics means for the future of Wisconsin dairy farms](#)
- *WITI-TV*: [Charcuterie House features 200+ Wisconsin cheeses](#)

National/International

- *Dairy Reporter*: [Plant-based drinks face multiple barriers as suitable dairy alternatives, researchers say](#)
- *POLITICO*: [Congressional continuing resolution plan puts Farm Bill at risk](#)
- *Dairy Processing*: [International cheese competition's early rounds open to public](#) (Featuring WCMA)
- *KDKA-TV*: [Butter sculpture at PA Farm Show to be turned into renewable energy](#)

WORKFORCE



WCMA WAGE & WORKFORCE SURVEY

Complete WCMA Wage & Workforce Survey by March 1

Participate now through Friday, March 1 in the [2024 WCMA Wage & Workforce Survey](#) to gain insight on the latest industry trends in wages, benefits, and training. This free, annual online survey helps WCMA compile critical data employers need to successfully attract and retain top talent in an increasingly competitive labor market. Thanks to member feedback, this year's survey features additional careers including EHS positions, comptroller, and supply chain analyst.

Members are encouraged to [review the questions](#) before beginning the survey, as responses may not be saved if the online form is closed while in progress.

All responses will remain confidential and anonymous. Survey respondents will receive a summary report from WCMA later in March containing blinded and aggregated data. Some broad, topline data (such as overall industry wage growth year-to-year) may also be used in industry advocacy efforts.

[TAKE SURVEY](#)

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



View, Share Career Opportunities on WCMA Jobs Board

Visit [WisCheeseMakers.org](https://www.wischeesemakers.org) today to share your career openings on WCMA's online jobs board, available to members only - for free!

Members can post up to 10 job openings per month. Each posting is published within two business days and remains live on our website for 30 days after submission.

This week, the [Jobs Board](#) features opportunities from members Agropur, Bassett Mechanical, Foremost Farms, and Masters Gallery Foods, as well as the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

Have questions or need assistance? Please contact [WCMA Business Coordinator Carah Maier](#).

POST OPENINGS

MEMBERSHIP

WCMA 2024 Member Directory Now Available

Watch your company's mailbox or [log into WisCheeseMakers.org](#) now to view the 2024 WCMA Member Directory - available in print and digital formats!

This edition is jam-packed with contact details for WCMA members operating coast-to-coast. You'll also find a concise



2024 WCMA MEMBER DIRECTORY



overview of our services, highlights of upcoming WCMA events, and a list of the free member committees and groups you can join to engage with your colleagues and the WCMA team.

A full-color print version will be mailed in the coming weeks to each member company or cooperative at no charge. To order additional copies at just \$25 each, please contact [WCMA Membership Director Sara Schmidt](#).

Need help logging in or creating an account on WCMA's website? [Watch our brief video tutorial](#) to learn how to access the [searchable online member directory](#), update your email subscription preferences, and more.



WCMA SCHOLARSHIPS

Apply By February 9 for WCMA Scholarships

Undergraduate, graduate, and technical students - including WCMA member employees and their children - have until February 9 to apply for WCMA's [annual student scholarships](#). On April 17, WCMA will present a total of \$19,000 in scholarship awards at [CheeseExpo](#) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Seven awards are available across three scholarships:

- The [WCMA Myron P. "Mike" Dean Cheese Industry Student Scholarship](#), open to WCMA dairy processor and manufacturer member employees and their children;
- The [WCMA Cheese Industry Supplier Student Scholarship](#), open to WCMA supplier member employees and their children; and
- The [Brian Eggebrecht Student Scholarship Supporting Skilled Trades in the Dairy Industry](#), open to all students attending or registered to attend a technical school in Wisconsin.

Applicants for all WCMA scholarships must supply school transcripts, a letter of recommendation, and a completed application form. All applicants will be notified of their application status in March. Full details on all WCMA scholarships are [available online](#). Please contact [WCMA Business Coordinator Carah Maier](#) with questions.

[DOWNLOAD APPLICATIONS](#)

WELCOME



NEW WCMA MEMBERS!

Dairy Industry Suppliers



HEINE CONSTRUCTION
CORPORATION

New WCMA supplier member **Heine Construction Corporation** is an industrial/commercial construction general contractor focusing on food processing plants, warehousing, manufacturing, site utility, and office buildouts.



New WCMA supplier member **Lubrizol Corporation** is a chemical company making polymers and next-generation filtration products for the dairy industry.



Red Oak Label, LLC

New WCMA supplier member **Red Oak Label** is a manufacturer of prime labels for many industries including the food and beverage industry.

Visit WCMA's [online member directory](#) for more information.

EDUCATION



**Learn with Friends and Peers at WCMA
Young Professionals Event**

WCMA members under 40 can [register now](#) to join a day of networking and education at Meister Cheese in Muscoda, Wisconsin on Thursday, February 8, hosted by WCMA's Young Professionals group.

The event kicks off at 10:00 a.m. (CT) and will include lunch, in addition to tours of the company's cheese and whey plants and wastewater treatment facility.

Registration costs just \$25 per person. Only 30 spaces are available, so sign up now!



RSVP TODAY

Please contact [WCMA Contest Director Kirsten Strohmenger](#) with questions.



Register Now for Virtual WCMA Train the Safety Trainer Course

Limited space remains available in the [January 30 virtual edition](#) of WCMA's all-new Train the Safety Trainer Course. This interactive class is designed to equip the industry's safety trainers with the knowledge, skills, and strategies to effectively communicate safety expectations and protocols for maximum compliance.

Taught by instructors from Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC) with significant experience in dairy processing plants, the course covers best practices for design and delivery methods used by successful workforce safety trainers.

For just \$219 per person, each participant will come away with a wealth of new skills and strategies, a packet of training materials, and a certificate of completion from CVTC and WCMA that they and their employer can retain as a record of instruction.

REGISTER NOW



Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association

Basic Safety Training for Dairy Processors

Equip Valued Employees with Key Safety Knowledge in New WCMA Offering

For safety education geared toward all dairy processing employees, register your team members for Basic Safety Training for Dairy Processors.

Offered six times this year, both **in-person and virtually**, Basic Safety Training for Dairy Processors will teach attendees about their rights; employer responsibilities; and how to identify, abate, and avoid job-related hazards.

The curriculum concentrates on the key focus areas of the Occupational Safety & Health Administration's ongoing Local Emphasis Program for food processors: machine guarding, lockout/tag out, prevention of slips, trips, and falls, chemical controls, and control of hazardous energy.

In-person classes cost \$179, including lunch and snacks. Virtual sessions are offered at just \$149. Each class is capped at 24 attendees.

REGISTER NOW

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



Limited Space Remaining in Top-Rated WCMA Leadership Trainings

Join the ranks of over 1,000 WCMA member employees who have sharpened their leadership skills and expanded their networks through WCMA's popular [Front-Line Leadership Trainings](#)!

Each class is a one-day offering, running from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. (CT). All Front-Line Leadership classes are offered a la carte and may be taken in any order. Here's a look at our fully virtual offerings this spring:

- Part A will focus on developing essential leadership skills.
 - ~~January 23~~ - **SOLD OUT**
 - ~~January 24~~ - **Just three seats left!**
- Part B will provide strategies to help supervisors boost staff performance.
 - **February 26**
 - **February 29**
- Part C will help trainees learn to foster a collaborative team mindset in their workplace.
 - **April 2** - **Just two seats left!**
 - **April 3**

Questions? Please contact [WCMA Membership Director Sara Schmidt](#).

Additional Industry Educational Opportunities

WCMA is pleased to share opportunities for industry training and enrichment. Here's a look at upcoming offerings from WCMA partners:

- February 12-April 22: [Certificate in Dairy Processing](#) - Center for Dairy Research
- March 19-21: [Cheese Grading & Evaluation](#) - Center for Dairy Research
- March 22: [Cheese Judging](#) - Center for Dairy Research
- On-Demand:
 - [Introduction to Food Safety Principles \(English and Spanish\)](#) - Cornell University
 - [Online Dairy Science and Sanitation \(English and Spanish\)](#) - Cornell University
 - [Artisan Dairy Food Safety Coaching](#) - Cornell University
 - [Online HACCP Training](#) - North Carolina State University
 - [Environmental Monitoring in the Dairy Industry](#) - North Carolina State University
 - [Preventive Controls for Dairy Processors](#) - North Carolina State University
 - [Food Safety Basics For Artisan Cheesemakers](#) - North Carolina State University

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