



# WCMA NEWS

AN EXCLUSIVE UPDATE FOR MEMBERS OF THE  
WISCONSIN CHEESE MAKERS ASSOCIATION



## ADVOCACY



## WCMA Voices Support for Wisconsin Dairy Labeling Bills

WCMA is urging Wisconsin legislators to co-sponsor [LRB-5371/LRB-5418](#) and [LRB-5370](#). These proposals - recently introduced by Senator Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green), Representative Peter Schmidt (R-Bonduel), and Representative Joy Goeben (R-Hobart) - 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.

WCMA has strongly supported similar legislation in previous sessions. These proposals are essential to providing consumer clarity in the marketplace and protecting Wisconsin's long-standing reputation for nutritious, high-quality, delicious dairy products.

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

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Grants  
available now!



## Apply by March 6 for \$27 Million in Wisconsin Food Infrastructure Grants

Wisconsin dairy manufacturers and processors have until 5:00 p.m. (CT) Wednesday, March 6 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 aims to expand capacity and infrastructure for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of locally- and regionally-produced foods, including dairy products. Funding for the grants is provided through the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Applicants may apply for one of two grant tracks: the Infrastructure Grant and the Equipment-Only Grant.

**Infrastructure Grants** will range from \$100,000 to \$3 million. This grant can fund:

- Capital investments such as construction, equipment (e.g. delivery vehicles, frozen or refrigerated storage, value-added food processing equipment, or other equipment for middle-of-the-food supply chain activities);
- Building renovations;
- Facility design or engineering;
- Staff time;
- Modernizing systems (e.g. tracking, storage, information technology, etc.);
- Plan development (e.g. Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point plan); and
- Market development.

A match is required for Infrastructure Grants and starts at 50% of the total project cost. However, if the main applicant qualifies as underserved, the match requirement will be reduced to 25% of the total project cost.

**Equipment-Only Grants** will range from \$10,000 to \$99,999. This grant can only fund equipment, per the examples provided above. Equipment may be new, used, or refurbished. No match is required for Equipment-Only Grants.

[Register online now](#) to attend a free informational webinar about the RFSI program at 11:00 a.m. (CT) on Friday, January 9. Questions about the program can be emailed to [RFSI@wisconsin.gov](mailto:RFSI@wisconsin.gov).





## Save the Date for WCMA Advocacy Day on February 6

Mark your calendars now to join WCMA for its annual Advocacy Day on Tuesday, February 6 from 10:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m. (CT) at the Concourse Hotel and State Capitol in Madison, Wisconsin.

Elected officials will join us to share updates on the Farm Bill and long-term federal funding proposals impacting our industry, as well as state-level priorities for action before the legislature adjourns in March. You'll have an opportunity to make your voice heard and connect directly with lawmakers, too!

Watch for complete details and a registration link coming soon. Please contact [WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney](#) with any questions or ideas.

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### SIGNATURE EVENTS



## Limited Time Remaining to Enter World Championship Cheese Contest



Less than a month remains to enter the 35th biennial World Championship Cheese Contest, proudly hosted by WCMA. Visit [WorldChampionCheese.org](https://www.worldchampioncheese.org) by January 26 to join dairy product manufacturers worldwide in gaining expert technical feedback, reaching new potential customers, and competing for the venerated title of World Champion Cheese.

Thousands of entries in 142 classes of cheese, butter, yogurt, and dry dairy ingredients will be evaluated by an internationally renowned judging team March 5-7 in Madison, Wisconsin.

**ENTER TODAY**

Have questions? Please contact [WCMA Contest Director Kirsten Strohmenger](mailto:kirsten.strohmen@wcma.com).

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## Act Quickly for Best CheeseExpo Rates

The best available rates on the nation's largest gathering of dairy processors expire soon. Visit [CheeseExpo.org](https://CheeseExpo.org) by January 30 to save big on your all-access pass to the industry's must-attend event of 2024!

Join over 4,000 colleagues, customers, and friends for unparalleled networking, education, and celebration - all focused on the dairy processing industry. [Register now and save 20 percent](#) on full, single-day, and exhibits and networking events registrations for most attendees. Please contact the [WCMA Events team](#) with questions.

[REGISTER ONLINE](#)

## IN THE NEWS

### Wisconsin

- *Green Bay Packers*: [Packers WR Dontayvion Wicks and Sargento Foods present donation to Hunger Task Force and Paul's Pantry](#) (Featuring WCMA member Sargento Foods)
- *Saveur*: [A day in the life: Meet Wisconsin's newest superstar cheesemaker](#) (Featuring WCMA member Emmi Roth USA)
- *Madison Magazine*: [An award-winning cheesemaker weighs in on Wisconsin's best](#) (Featuring WCMA member Landmark Creamery)

### National/International

- *Deli Market News*: [Grace Atherton reveals WCMA's CheeseExpo 2024 benefits and showcase](#) (Featuring WCMA)
- *Dairy Processing*: [Flavor, formulation trends to watch out for in 2024](#)
- *AgUpdate*: [Food Fanatics help promote dairy](#)

## EDUCATION



# WCMA Webinar

## Research Recap: Identifying Dairy Export Barriers

### Gain Insights into Export Barriers in Free WCMA Webinar Tuesday, January 9

Sign up today to join [WCMA's next free, members-only webinar](#) next Tuesday, January 9 at 1:00 p.m. (CT). Gain insights on the latest research on barriers to dairy exporting, and learn how WCMA can help members maximize sales overseas.

This session will feature Dr. Chuck Nicholson, Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, detailing his recent research and findings on the obstacles dairy processors face in their export efforts.

Danica Nilsestuen, WCMA Grants & Business Programs Director, will also share information on the support and resources available to WCMA members as they seek to launch and grow their export endeavors. Both presenters will reserve time to field audience questions at the end of the webinar.



**Dr. Chuck Nicholson**  
UW-Madison



**Danica Nilsestuen**  
WCMA

**RESERVE YOUR SEAT**

This offering is the latest in [WCMA's monthly webinar series](#), open to all WCMA members. Webinar topics are driven by member feedback and cover a range of themes such as business development, communication strategies, and industry resources. Have an idea for a future webinar offering? [Let us know!](#)





## Enhance Compliance, Communication Skills in Virtual WCMA Train the Safety Trainer Class

Limited space is 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. Less than 10 spaces are left in this convenient virtual session, so sign up today!

**REGISTER NOW**

### Basic Safety Training for Dairy Processors



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. These classes are capped at 24 attendees, so act quickly.

**REGISTER NOW**

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



## Reserve Space Today in WCMA Front-Line Leadership Courses

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](#)!

**SIGN UP ONLINE**

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](#) - **Fewer than 10 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](#) - **Three 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:



- 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
  - [Good Manufacturing Practices in Food Safety](#) - 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

## MEMBERSHIP



## Join WCMA Young Professionals for Networking, Tour at Meister Cheese

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. 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 early sign-up is strongly encouraged!

**RSVP TODAY**

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

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## Share WCMA Student Scholarship Applications

Undergraduate, graduate, and technical students - including WCMA member employees and their children - have until February 7 to apply for WCMA's [annual student scholarships](#). On April 17, WCMA will present a total of \$19,000 in scholarship awards will be presented 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](#). Have questions? Please contact [WCMA Communications Director Grace Atherton](#).

**DOWNLOAD APPLICATIONS**

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# WELCOME



*NEW WCMA MEMBERS!*

## Dairy Industry Suppliers



New WCMA supplier member **Servi Doryl** designs and manufactures a wide range of cheese molds and aging solutions.

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

## WORKFORCE



WISCONSIN  
CHEESE MAKERS  
ASSOCIATION  
EST. 1891

## JOBS BOARD



## Reach New Audiences in the New Year with WCMA's Free Online Jobs Board

Visit [WisCheeseMakers.org](http://WisCheeseMakers.org) today to share your career opportunities on WCMA's free online jobs board! 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 openings from WCMA members Foremost Farms USA, Masters Gallery Foods, and Sabrosura Foods.

Have questions about the Jobs Board? Please contact [WCMA staff](#).

**SUBMIT POSTINGS**

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