



WCMA NEWS

AN EXCLUSIVE UPDATE FOR MEMBERS OF THE
WISCONSIN CHEESE MAKERS ASSOCIATION



SIGNATURE EVENTS



Final Day for Best CheeseExpo Rates!

CHEESEEXPO
Global Technology for Dairy Processors
April 16-18, 2024 | Baird Center | Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Act now to **take advantage of CheeseExpo's best available registration rates**, expiring today, Tuesday, January 30!

Register today to save 20 percent on full, single-day, and exhibits and networking registrations for most attendees. Don't delay - unlock your access to engaging seminars, valuable networking opportunities, a sold-out exhibit floor, and exciting celebrations of industry excellence.

REGISTER NOW



Join, Sponsor WCMA Policy Committee Meeting & 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 to hear from federal and state lawmakers about the session ahead - and to advocate for industry priorities. Our meeting will begin with an overview of WCMA's advocacy efforts, followed by guest speakers on key federal and state topics:

- Federal funding, the Farm Bill, and the Food & Drug Administration
 - Speaker: Congressman Derrick Van Orden (WI-03)
- Strengthening Wisconsin Dairy Infrastructure
 - Speakers: Leaders from the Wisconsin Departments of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection; Transportation; and Natural Resources

After a networking lunch, attendees will enjoy an insightful panel discussion with legislative leaders:

- Sen. Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green), Co-Chair of Joint Finance Committee
- Sen. Joan Ballweg (R-Markesan), Chair of Senate Committee on Agriculture & Tourism, Member of Joint Finance Committee
- Sen. Brad Pfaff (D-Onalaska), Member of Senate Committee on Agriculture & Tourism
- Rep. Tony Kurtz (R-Wonewoc), Member of Joint Finance Committee
- Rep. Dave Considine (D-Baraboo), Member of Assembly Committee on Agriculture



Sen. Howard Marklein
(R-Spring Green)



Sen. Joan Ballweg
(R-Markesan)



Sen. Brad Pfaff
(D-Onalaska)



Rep. Tony Kurtz
(R-Wonewoc)



Rep. Dave Considine
(D-Baraboo)

WCMA staff will then brief members on current policy priorities before accompanying the group to the Wisconsin State Capitol for legislative meetings.

Additional speakers will be announced as they are confirmed. Have questions? Contact [**WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney**](#).

RSVP NOW

THANK YOU SPONSORS!

C.D. SMITH CONSTRUCTION  **COMPEER FINANCIAL**

SARGENTO

Limited Sponsorships Available for WCMA Policy Committee Meeting & Advocacy Day

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
- 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

Thanks go to our sponsors C.D. Smith Construction, Compeer Financial, and Sargento Foods!



Gov. Evers Declares 2024 'Year of the Worker'

Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers last week [declared 2024 the "Year of the Worker"](#) in his annual [State of the State address](#). In the speech, Evers announced new efforts to address the challenges employers face in attracting and retaining staff, including greater access to affordable child care, funding for workforce training, and state-supported parental leave. A full copy of the address is [available online](#).

GRANTS



Prepare Now to Apply for \$100,000

Dairy Business Builder Grants

Grow your business with a [new round of \\$100,000 Dairy Business Builder grants](#) administered by the Dairy Business Innovation Alliance (DBIA), set to open on February 5. Small- to medium-sized dairy farmers, manufacturers, and processors in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin may apply for the funding, which is administered by the Center for Dairy Research and WCMA. The grants aim to support recipients in diversifying on-farm activity, creating value-added products, enhancing dairy byproducts, and creating or enhancing dairy export programs.

Learn helpful hints to submit your best application in a free [informational webinar](#) hosted by DBIA staff at 1:00 p.m. (CT) on Tuesday, February 7. Have questions? Please contact [WCMA Grants & Business Programs Director Danica Nilsestuen](#).



WDATCP Accepting Applications for 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

WORKFORCE



Join WCMA Health & Safety Group Hybrid Meeting February 15

You're invited to [register now for the next meeting of WCMA's Health & Safety Group](#) on Thursday, February 15 from 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. (CT). Network with peers and colleagues, and dive into informative presentations from leading safety experts!

This meeting will focus on ergonomics best practices for dairy processing personnel and warehouse safety protocols - an especially important topic, given the launch of the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) National Emphasis Program. We'll also offer the latest updates from OSHA on its Regional Emphasis Program for Food Processors.

This meeting is open to all WCMA member employees and will be offered in hybrid format. [RSVP today](#) to join us in-person at WCMA's offices in Madison, Wisconsin or online via Zoom. Registration for all attendees costs just \$35.

RSVP NOW



Respond to 2024 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](#).



Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association

Basic Safety Training for Dairy Processors

Register Now for New WCMA Basic Safety Training for Dairy Processors

Registration is now open for WCMA's all-new [Basic Safety Training for Dairy Processors](#) - designed with input from the Health & Safety Group - to help support members' efforts to keep their valued employees safe on the job.

This course will teach attendees about their rights; employer responsibilities; and how to identify, abate, and avoid job-related hazards they may encounter. 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.

WCMA will offer this class six times in 2024:

- February 20 ([Virtual](#))
- April 9 ([In-Person](#))
- May 14 ([Virtual](#))
- June 4 ([In-Person](#))
- September 24 ([Virtual](#))
- October 15 ([In-Person](#))

In-person classes cost \$179, including lunch and snacks. Virtual sessions are offered at just \$149. Each class is capped at 24 attendees, so don't wait!

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



Industry Safety Leaders Learn Strategies to

Improve Training Effectiveness

Today, January 30, industry safety trainers from Associated Milk Producers Inc., BelGioioso Cheese, Complete Filtration Resources, Great Lakes Cheese, Integrity Cheese Packaging of Wisconsin, Sabrosura Foods, Teinnovations, Valley Queen Cheese, V&V Supremo Foods, and Wapsie Valley Creamery gathered for WCMA's virtual Train the Safety Trainer course to learn new ways to help their valued team members stay safe on the job.

Participants of this course come away with a packet of training materials and a certificate of completion from Chippewa Valley Technical College and WCMA, which they and their employer can retain as a record of instruction. WCMA plans to offer this class again at the end of 2024.

IN THE NEWS

Wisconsin

- *Wisconsin Agriculturist*: [Economists reflect on tough year for dairy farmers](#)
- *Cutting the Curd Podcast*: [A visit to Uplands Cheese](#) (Featuring WCMA member Uplands Cheese)

National/International

- *Dairy Herd Management*: [China expected to be growth engine for global cheese trade](#)
- *Dairy Processing*: [Avoiding high butter costs](#)
- *Dairy Foods*: [Hilmar Cheese now offers 24/7 cheese platform](#) (Featuring WCMA member Hilmar Cheese Company)

EDUCATION



WCMA Members Pursue Professional Growth

Kudos to member employees who participated last week in the January 24 WCMA Front-Line Leadership Training. The companies investing in personnel growth included: Complete Control Solutions, Organic Valley, Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery, Emmi Roth, Great Lakes Cheese Company, Pine River Cheese Spread, Teinnovations, Valley Queen Cheese, and Winona Foods.

Sign Up for Spring Front-Line Leadership Classes

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](#).



The course is offered in a la carte in three parts that can be taken in any order. Part A covers essential leadership skills, while Part B offers strategies to boost staff performance. Part C helps participants learn to cultivate high-performing, positive teams. Space is available now for classes in February and April.

Have 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
- February 22-23: [Short Course - Pasteurization](#) - UW-River Falls
- March 4-8: [Short Course - Cheesemaking](#) - UW-River Falls
- March 19-21: [Cheese Grading & Evaluation](#) - Center for Dairy Research
- March 22: [Cheese Judging](#) - Center for Dairy Research
- April 3-4: [Cheesemaking Fundamentals](#) - Center for Dairy Research
- May 7-9: [Advanced Cheesemaking: American Varieties](#) - 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

MEMBERSHIP



Limited Time Remaining for WCMA Student 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.

APPLY NOW

WCMA Young Professionals February Event Filling Quickly

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 nine spaces remain, so sign up today!



RSVP TODAY

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



Dairy Industry Suppliers



New WCMA supplier member [Contec Group International LTD.](#) is the provider of MADCAP, a modular, scalable supply chain management platform for the dairy and agricultural industries.



New WCMA supplier member [Douglas Machines Corp.](#) specializes in the design and manufacture of automated washing and sanitizing equipment for food processing.



New WCMA supplier member [VAA, LLC](#) is a nationwide multidisciplinary engineering, planning and design firm.

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

WisCheeseMakers.org
(608) 286-1001

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