



# WCMA NEWS

AN EXCLUSIVE UPDATE FOR MEMBERS OF THE  
WISCONSIN CHEESE MAKERS ASSOCIATION



## ADVOCACY



### Engage with Local Leaders on Applications for Ag Road Improvement Funding

WCMA joined Wisconsin agricultural leaders yesterday in applauding the launch of the state's new \$150 million [Agricultural Roads Improvement Program \(ARIP\)](#). Local government leaders may apply now through April 5 for the first round of ARIP grant funds, totaling \$50 million, to strengthen rural roads essential to dairy processors' operations. A second round, offering \$100 million in grants, will begin later this year. For more, see related news coverage from [WKOW-TV](#) and [Mid-West Farm Report](#).

WCMA members can take action now by filling out [WCMA's simple, two-page form](#) and sharing it with their local leaders. Villages, towns, and other municipalities will be the primary applicants for ARIP grants, but they will need information from local businesses to be successful. The questions on this form mirror the questions your municipality will answer on the ARIP application, and your answers are essential for a strong submission.

## SUPPORT YOUR MUNICIPALITY'S APPLICATION

To complete this form, members should:

- Consult the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT) [interactive map of potentially eligible roads](#). An ARIP-eligible project must improve a highway functionally classified by WisDOT as a local road, minor collector, or a bridge or culvert on a highway functionally classified as a local road or minor collector, which

provides access to agricultural lands or facilities – like dairy processing plants – used for the production of agricultural goods. The road, bridge, or culvert must have been subject to a posted weight limit for at least one month during the previous year, and following the project, it must no longer be subject to a posted weight limit, other than in emergency circumstances.

- Note that ARIP application reviewers will consider: how many agricultural businesses are impacted, and their economic impact; the volume of agricultural products transported over the roadway; whether or not alternative routes for transportation are available; whether the project would result in a reduction of trips, costs, and mileage driven; and the fiscal and administrative needs of the local municipality.

Complete ARIP details are available on [WisDOT's website](#). Have questions? Please contact [WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney](#).



## WCMA Members Connect with Federal, State Policymakers at Annual Advocacy Day

Many thanks to all who joined the WCMA Policy Committee Meeting & Wisconsin Advocacy Day Tuesday, February 6 in Madison. Thanks also go to event sponsors C.D. Smith Construction, Compeer Financial, and Sargento Foods.



Congressman Derrick Van Orden (WI-03) joined the meeting live from Washington, D.C. ahead of floor votes. Members thanked him for his championship of the Dairy PRIDE Act, critical nutrition programs, and of the Dairy Business Innovation Alliance, and for his insights on opportunities to grow and support dairy processors' workforce.

“It was an honor to speak at the Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association Advocacy Day,” said Congressman Van Orden. “Wisconsin is America’s Dairyland and the number one cheese-producing state in the country, which is why I am an unwavering advocate for our hardworking dairy farmers and cheese producers in Congress and support legislation that best serves them. I am grateful to the Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association for all they do to support our dairy industry, and I look forward to our continued work together to share Wisconsin’s top-of-the-line cheese with the rest of the nation.”



The group then heard from Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection Deputy Secretary Aileen Switzer, Department of Natural Resources Deputy Secretary Steven Little, and Department of Transportation Division Administrator Justin Shell, who detailed efforts to partner with industry on nutrient management, export and modernization endeavors, and projects to improve agricultural roads.



A powerhouse panel of state legislators joined members for a productive discussion, including Sen. Joan Ballweg, Sen. Howard Marklein, Sen. Brad Pfaff, Rep. Dave Considine, Rep. Tony Kurtz, and Rep. Travis Tranel. These strong dairy industry allies have worked to pass a \$150 million ag road improvement package, \$5 million for ag exports, \$1 million in dairy processor grants, \$8 million for the Dairy Innovation Hub - and more.

At the State Capitol, members visited with lawmakers to talk about ways to strengthen dairy processors and our economy. Thanks to Sen. Romaine Quinn, Sen. Mark Spreitzer, Sen. Duey Stroebel, Rep. Ty Bodden, Rep. Todd Novak, Rep. Jerry O'Connor, and Rep. Peter Schmidt for their time and communication.



Interested in getting involved in WCMA's advocacy efforts? Contact [Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney](#).



# Get Environmental Updates from WI Leaders at WCMA Joint Industry Meeting with WDNR



Join the WCMA Technology Committee March 13 for important environmental updates and discussion at the [11th Annual Joint Industry Meeting](#) with Midwest Food Products Association and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR).

**SIGN UP NOW**

This full-day hybrid meeting focuses on nutrient and wastewater issues for dairy and food manufacturers. Topics to date include fertilizer designation for wastewater solids, the launch of the Water Quality Clearinghouse for phosphorus credits, alternate concentration limits for nitrogen in soil-based treatment systems, PFAS regulation and legislation, and a deep dive into the Whole Effluent Toxicity (WET) test and best practices to avoid WET test failures.

[Register now](#) for in-person (\$55) or online (\$35) attendance. This meeting provides continuing education credits for certified wastewater operators. For more information, contact [WCMA Executive Director John Umhoefer](#).

## GRANTS



## Apply Now for Nationwide Dairy Business Innovation Grants

Dairy farmers and processors across the U.S. can apply now for grants available through four regional Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives:

- [Dairy Business Innovation Alliance](#), administered by WCMA and the Center for Dairy Research
  - Eligible states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin
- [Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center](#), administered by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

- Eligible states: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont
- **[Pacific Coast Coalition - Dairy Business Innovation Initiative](#)**, administered by Fresno State University
  - Eligible states: Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington
- **[Southeast Dairy Business Innovation Alliance](#)**, administered by the University of Tennessee
  - Eligible states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Puerto Rico

Individual award amounts, eligibility, and application requirements vary by region. Funding for the grants is provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives were first championed by U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisconsin) and WCMA as part of the 2018 Farm Bill.

## DBIA Staff Share Application Tips in Free Webinar

Looking for strategies to submit your strongest application for a Dairy Business Builder grant through the Dairy Business Innovation Alliance (DBIA)? [View our free webinar](#) now for useful information from DBIA staff including eligibility, how to use DBIA's new application system, and helpful hints to keep in mind when applying.

**STREAM WEBINAR**



## Food Infrastructure Grant Funding Now Available in 35 States

Agriculture agencies in 35 U.S. states including [Wisconsin](#) are now accepting applications for the [Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure grant program](#) administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). USDA has allocated a total of up to \$420 million nationwide for the grants, with \$27 million provided to Wisconsin alone.

The grants aim to build resilience throughout the food supply chain and strengthen local and regional food systems. A full list of states with open application windows is available

## FIND YOUR STATE



### New Wisconsin RFSI Resources

WCMA members interested in applying for Wisconsin's RFSI grants can [join a free webinar today](#), February 13, at 1:00 p.m. (CT) for an overview of the program and a live Q&A with presenters from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (WDATCP).

Can't attend? Watch this e-newsletter next week for a link to the webinar recording. Applicants with questions can also take advantage of WDATCP's new [RFSI Budget Calculator](#) and [virtual office hours](#).

## INDUSTRY UPDATES

### USDA Seeks Cheese Bids

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has [issued a solicitation](#) for the purchase of cheese products for use in domestic food distribution programs. Bids are due February 22 at 1:00 p.m. (CT). Please contact [USDA staff](#) with questions.

### Join Free USDA Webinar on Becoming a Qualified Vendor

Sign up today for a free, two-part interactive webinar series hosted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) on how to become an approved USDA food vendor and compete for federal [commodity purchase contracts](#).

[Part 1, set for February 15](#) at 1:00 p.m. (CT), will cover how to become a qualified vendor. [Part 2, scheduled for February 22](#) at 1:00 p.m. (CT), will detail what approved vendors need to know to submit their first bid and be successful in future bids. Presenters will also reserve time to answer pre-submitted audience questions during the webinar. Please contact [USDA staff](#) with questions.

## IN THE NEWS

### Wisconsin

- *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*: ["Top Chef" Wisconsin premieres in March](#)
- *PBS Wisconsin*: [Wisconsin Foodie: Alpinage Cheese](#) (Featuring WCMA member Alpinage Artisan Cheese)
- *FoodSided*: [These romantic cheese pairings will make your heart melt](#) (Featuring WCMA members Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese, Henning Cheese, Sartori Company, Schuman Cheese - Lake Country Dairy)

### National/International

- *Dairy Processing*: [CheeseExpo Preview: Bringing the industry together](#)

(Featuring WCMA)

- *Shepherd Express*: [Artisan cheeses from around the globe shine at World Championship Cheese Contest \(Featuring WCMA\)](#)
- *WTAQ Radio*: [World Championship Cheese Contest boasts 3,302 entries](#)

## MEMBERSHIP



# WCMA SCHOLARSHIPS

## DEADLINE EXTENDED: Apply by February 16 for WCMA Scholarships Worth \$19,000



**APPLY NOW**

Undergraduate, graduate, and technical students - including WCMA member employees and their children - have until this Friday, 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.



## WCMA Young Professionals Learn, Network at Meister Cheese



Thanks go to the members of WCMA's Young Professionals group who gathered for a day of networking and education at Meister Cheese last week, featuring tours of the company's cheese and whey plants and wastewater treatment facility.

WCMA also thanks their employers for supporting their efforts to connect with and learn from their peers!

WCMA's Young Professionals meet quarterly, with most events involving a plant tour and industry presentations. For more information on upcoming events and to get involved, contact [WCMA Contest Director Kirsten Strohmenger](#).

# WELCOME



*NEW WCMA MEMBERS!*

## Dairy Industry Suppliers

New WCMA supplier member [Great Lakes Pallet Company](#) specializes in the manufacture of dust-free, mold-free, 48x40 wood pallets for the food industry and other applications.





New WCMA supplier member [Mayekawa USA Inc.](#) is a manufacturer of industrial refrigeration compressors and specialty equipment.

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

## WORKFORCE



## Join WCMA Health & Safety Group Hybrid Meeting February 15



Limited time remains to register for the [next meeting of WCMA's Health & Safety Group](#) this 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.

**RSVP NOW**

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. Attendees will also hear the latest updates from OSHA on its Regional Emphasis Program for Food Processors.

This hybrid meeting is open to all WCMA member employees. [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.

## Stay Competitive with Industry Insights from WCMA Wage & Workforce Survey

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.

**COMPLETE SURVEY**

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.

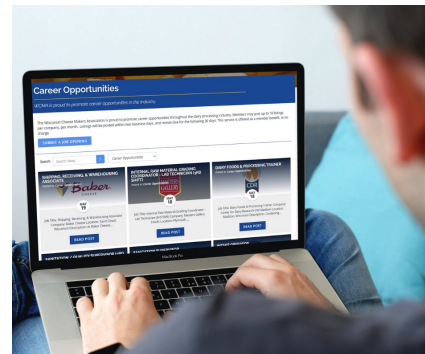
Have questions? Please contact [WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney](#).

## Reach New Potential Team Members with Free Online WCMA Jobs Board

Visit [WisCheeseMakers.org](http://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, Cedar Grove Cheese, Dairyfood USA, Foremost Farms USA, Masters Gallery Foods, Nelson-Jameson, Sabrosura Foods, and Wapsie Valley Creamery.

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



**SUBMIT OPENINGS**

## EDUCATION



## Gain, Refresh Safety & Leadership Skills with WCMA Spring Educational Offerings

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. Limited space remains available in our all-virtual classes in February and April:

- [February 26: Part B - Boosting Staff Performance](#)
- [February 29: Part B - Boosting Staff Performance](#)
- [April 2: Part C - Cultivating a Team](#) - *Just two seats remaining!*
- [April 3: Part C - Cultivating a Team](#)

These classes will be offered again in fall 2024. 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

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