



WCMA NEWS

AN EXCLUSIVE UPDATE FOR MEMBERS OF THE
WISCONSIN CHEESE MAKERS ASSOCIATION



SIGNATURE EVENTS



Final Day to Save on CheeseExpo Registration!

Today, February 27, is the **final day for early bird savings** on CheeseExpo registrations! Visit CheeseExpo.org now to receive 10 percent off full, single-day, and exhibits and networking registrations for most attendees.

This year, CheeseExpo offers a wealth of opportunities to take your sustainability efforts to the next level. Visit our **expansive trade show floor** to connect with trusted dairy industry suppliers, and hear from innovative leaders at the forefront of dairy sustainability.

SAVE NOW

Wednesday, April 17

In the thought-provoking Opening Keynote sponsored by RELCO, Sumeet Mathur, Managing Director of FrieslandCampina Consumer Dairy Americas, kicks off CheeseExpo with **Sustainability: The FrieslandCampina Story**. Hear lessons learned from the Dutch cooperative at the cutting edge of dairy sustainability, shared by an industry leader with years of global experience in strategic roles with Nestlé.



Then, head to **Dairy Sustainability through the Supply Chain**, where the University of Wisconsin's Dr. Michel Wattiaux leads an all-star panel including FrieslandCampina's Sumeet Mathur as well as newly announced guests:

- Kyle Jensen, Vice President, Global Sales and Marketing, Hilmar Cheese
- Josh Luth, Global Sustainability Lead, Schreiber Foods
- Erica McDougall, Business Enablement & Sustainability Manager, Land O' Lakes Inc.
- Shane Reynolds, Senior Vice President - Commercial Operations, Milk Specialties Global

Listen in as these industry leaders share efforts along the supply chain to reach a lower carbon footprint and meet customers' expectations.

Thursday, April 18

Building Your Workforce on an ESG Foundation features nationally renowned thought leader Jim Link, Chief Human Resources Officer for the Society for Human Resources Management. Jim will explore new research on how sustainability drives the career decisions of Millennial and Gen Z workers – who will comprise more than 70 percent of the world's labor pool in the next five years.



Then, join a practical discussion of how industry leaders are already using ESG endeavors to secure crucial human capital. Panelists include:

- Mathew Bartkowiak, Vice President of Corporate Responsibility and Development for Nelson-Jameson
- Allison Bolet Cafaro, Manager of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Great Lakes Cheese Company
- Iassen Donovan, GPHR, Associate Director of Talent Acquisition for Leprino Foods

Learn from the best, build your network, and join exciting celebrations of industry excellence with friends and peers. You'll find it all at CheeseExpo. [Register now](#) to save!

Have questions? Please contact events@wischeesemakers.org.



Mark Your Calendar: One Week to World Championship Cheese Contest

Make your plans now to join the excitement of the 35th biennial [World Championship Cheese Contest](#), proudly hosted by WCMA! Join the world's premier technical dairy product evaluation in person at the Monona Terrace Community & Convention Center in Madison, Wisconsin from 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. (CT) on Tuesday, March 5 and Wednesday, March 6.

Can't make it to Madison? Follow the competition on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#), and [TikTok](#) and use #CheeseContest and #WorldChampionCheese to join the conversation. Witness the exciting announcement of the next World Champion Cheese live online at [WorldChampionCheese.org](#) at 2:00 p.m. (CT) on Thursday, March 7!

ADVOCACY



Join WCMA, WisDOT for Free ARIP Webinar February 28

Mark your calendar now to attend a [free informational webinar](#) tomorrow, February 28, at 2:00 p.m. (CT) on Wisconsin's new [Agricultural Roads Improvement Program \(ARIP\)](#). Presenters from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, WCMA, and municipality organizations will share details about ARIP eligibility, application procedures, and more. Questions must be submitted in advance to DOTLocalPrograms@dot.wi.gov.

[JOIN WEBINAR](#)

Presenters from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, WCMA, and municipality organizations will share details about ARIP eligibility, application procedures, and more. Questions must be submitted in advance to DOTLocalPrograms@dot.wi.gov.

Championed by WCMA and other agricultural groups, ARIP is currently accepting grant applications from local governments through April 5. Up to \$50 million in funds will be awarded in this first round, followed by another round of up to \$100 million later this year.

WCMA members can take action now to support agricultural road improvements in their communities: simply complete [WCMA's two-page form](#) and share it with local government leaders. Villages, towns, and other municipalities are the primary applicants for ARIP grants, but they will need information from local businesses in order to be successful. Dairy processors' assistance is essential for a strong submission!

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

USDA Reauthorizes Dairy Forward Pricing

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) on Wednesday published a [final rule reauthorizing the Dairy Forward Pricing Program \(DFPP\)](#), which allows handlers to pay producers a negotiated price for milk, as opposed to the federal order minimum price blend for non-fluid classes of milk (Classes II, III, and IV).

In the newly published rule, USDA also made two administrative changes to DFPP to include the California federal milk marketing order to the list of eligible orders where the use of a forward contract is applicable. WCMA has advocated in favor of DFPP as a voluntary tool for the dairy industry.

GRANTS



Apply by March 6 for Wisconsin RFSI 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.

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.

Helpful resources including a budget calculator, FAQs, templates, and more are [available online](#). WCMA members can also [view our free webinar](#), recorded February 13, with RFSI information tailored to dairy processors. Questions can be emailed to RFSI@wisconsin.gov. Members may request a letter of support for their application by emailing [WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney](#).

RFSI Grants Available Nationwide

Agriculture agencies in 38 U.S. states are now accepting applications for [RFSI grants](#). USDA has allocated a total of up to \$420 million nationwide for the grants. A full list of states with open application windows is available on [USDA's website](#).

[FIND YOUR STATE](#)

IN THE NEWS

Wisconsin

- *Dairy Processing:* [DBIA grants to help dairy businesses grow, diversify](#) (Featuring WCMA)
- *Dairy Foods:* [Crystal Farms puts its Wisconsin community and employees first](#) (Featuring WCMA member Crystal Farms)

National/International

- *Deli Market News:* [Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association touts sustainability focus at CheeseExpo 2024](#) (Featuring WCMA)
- *Dairy Processing:* [3,000-plus products vying for honors at cheese competition](#) (Featuring WCMA)
- *CBS Saturday Morning:* [The cheesemaker handcrafting cheddar in the place of its birth](#)
- *WIFR-TV:* [2024 World Championship Cheese Contest: How to view the cheese and the competitors](#) (Featuring WCMA)
- *KIMT-TV:* [SE Minnesota cheesemakers are gearing up for the world championships](#) (Featuring WCMA members Dairy Farmers of America and Prairie Farms Dairy, Inc.)

EDUCATION



WCMA Webinar

Optimizing Sustainability with Materiality Assessments

Learn Materiality Assessment Basics in Free March 12 WCMA Webinar

Register now for WCMA's next free, members-only webinar on Tuesday, March 12 at 1:00 p.m. (CT) focused on the value of materiality assessments for dairy processors.

RSVP TODAY

As a first step in mapping out a sustainability strategy, a well-conducted materiality assessment will help companies identify key sustainability priorities, answer customer-driven questions related to Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) initiatives, and meet the growing expectations of external stakeholders and reporting institutions.

Hear from the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy and industry leaders on why the time is now for dairy processors to assess their current responsible business practices and set sustainability goals for the future. WCMA will also welcome its new sustainability program partner, Harbor Environmental, to present on the first steps in starting a materiality assessment and preview WCMA's Spring 2024 Materiality Assessment Workshop, which will be held in Madison May 7-8.

Presenters will reserve time to field audience questions during the webinar. To share a question in advance, please email **WCMA Communications Director Grace Atherton** by Monday, March 11 at 12:00 p.m. (CT).

This offering is the latest in WCMA's **monthly webinar series**. Webinar topics are driven by WCMA member feedback and cover a range of themes such as business development, communication strategies, and industry resources. Suggestions for future webinars are welcome anytime.



Front-Line Leaders Learn New Coaching Strategies in WCMA Training

WCMA applauds the member employees who this week engaged in Front-Line Leadership-Part B, a class focused on coaching strategies to improve staff performance. Participants demonstrated great care for their teams, and for the mission of their employers, including CROPP Cooperative/Organic Valley, Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery, Holmen Cheese, Pine River Pre-Pack, Sartori Company, Schuman Cheese, Wapsie Valley Creamery, and Winona Foods.

Register now for the next offering Front-Line Leadership-Part C on **April 3**, focused on how your plant leaders can foster a team mentality at work, solving conflict collaboratively and setting goals to motivate others. 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:

- March 19-21: **Cheese Grading & Evaluation** - Center for Dairy Research
- March 22: **Cheese Judging** - Center for Dairy Research
- March 25: **Prerequisite Programs Course** - Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin
- March 26-27: **HACCP for Dairy Processors** - Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin
- March 28: **Advanced HACCP: Verification and Validation Training** - Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin
- 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

WORKFORCE

Complete WCMA Wage & Workforce Survey



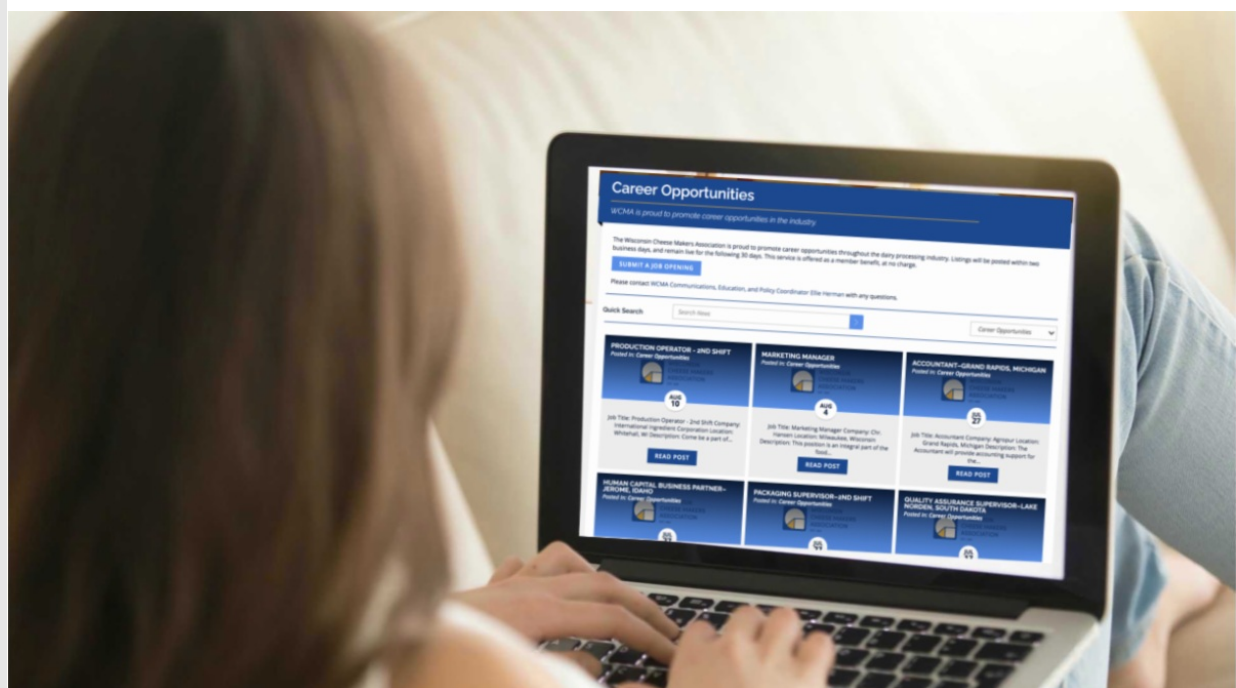
Participate now in the [2024 WCMA Wage & Workforce Survey](#) to gain insight on the latest industry trends in wages, benefits, and training. This free, annual online survey helps WCMA compile critical data employers need to successfully attract and retain top talent in an increasingly competitive labor 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](#).



Share Job Openings on Free WCMA Jobs Board

Visit 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, Foremost Farms USA, Masters Gallery Foods, Sabrosura Foods, and Wapsie Valley Creamery.

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

MEMBERSHIP



Support WCMA Industry Education and Engagement with New Sponsorships

Show your support for industry education and connection with low-cost, high-visibility sponsorship of [WCMA trainings](#) and [committee meetings](#). These new opportunities put your company or cooperative in the spotlight at WCMA's popular educational offerings and active member committees and workgroups.

Exclusive sponsorship opportunities are [available online now](#) for WCMA's Front-Line Leadership Trainings, Advanced Leadership Series, Basic Safety Training for Dairy Processors, Train the Safety Trainer Program, and more. Throughout the year, [check WisCheeseMakers.org](#) for ways to support WCMA's Health & Safety Group, Young Professionals, Workforce & Education Committee, Policy Committee, Technology Committee, Export Workgroup, or Dairy Food Safety Alliance.

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

WELCOME



NEW WCMA MEMBERS!

Dairy Industry Suppliers



New WCMA supplier member [EM3](#) helps food and beverage manufacturers reduce energy consumption and transition to a more sustainable future.



New WCMA supplier member [Moleaer, Inc.](#) develops industrial-scale nanobubble technology for chemical-free water treatment, sustainable food production, and the recovery of natural resources.

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



Update Your WCMA Subscriptions

Thanks for subscribing to WCMA's weekly e-newsletter! This benefit - as well as communications about WCMA's programs, services, and signature events - is available to all WCMA member employees at no extra cost.

You can customize your subscriptions anytime by [logging in at WisCheeseMakers.org](#) and selecting the communications you'd like to receive. If you haven't created a login yet, simply click "Join," then "Create an Account" in the top right corner of our homepage. Need help? Check out our [short video tutorial](#).

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