



WCMA NEWS

Your source for the latest
in dairy processing

February 3, 2026
news@wischeesemakers.org



NEWS

House to Vote Today to End Shutdown



The House of Representatives is [expected to vote today](#) to end a four-day-long partial federal government shutdown after the U.S. Senate passed a stopgap spending package over the weekend. If approved, the legislation would fund most federal agencies through September, buying lawmakers time to resolve disputes over the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), including Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Protection, which would receive only a two-week extension under the plan.

Notably for dairy processors, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) was funded for the full fiscal year as part of an earlier appropriations package, meaning USDA operations are not affected by the current shutdown negotiations. The shutdown has, however, disrupted services such as air traffic control and Occupational Safety and Health Administration operations. It has also delayed the release of key economic data, including the monthly labor report. [READ MORE...](#)

Share Feedback on California Food Date Labeling Law



In October 2024, California lawmakers approved [first-of-its-kind legislation](#) designed to standardize food date labels and reduce food waste. Now, beginning July 1, 2026, food sold in California must use uniform language for quality and safety date labels, absent a successful legal challenge. Under the law, consumer-facing date labels are limited to two standardized phrases: "Best If Used By" (or "Best If Used or Frozen By") to indicate peak quality, and "Use By" (or "Use By or Freeze By") for highly perishable foods where safety may be impacted. "Sell By" dates will be prohibited on consumer packaging, though retailers may continue to use non-readable coded dates for internal inventory purposes. Small packages may use abbreviated terms ("BB" or "UB").

By member request, WCMA has prepared an [Instant Data survey](#) seeking industry feedback on compliance with the California law. Please complete the survey by close of business on **Friday, February 6**. Results will be blinded and aggregated before being shared with respondents. Members with questions may contact [WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney](#).

Thompson Says Farm Bill Committee Markup Coming This Month



House Agriculture Committee Chair G.T. Thompson (R- PA 05) this week said he is targeting the week of February 23 for a tentative markup of the [next farm bill](#). While legislative text has not yet been released, the proposal – dubbed “Farm Bill 2.0” – is expected to closely mirror the version approved by the committee in 2024 but never enacted. Thompson signaled the bill will be roughly 80 percent policy and 20 percent spending, focused on risk management, market access, and modernizing agricultural programs. He has also suggested the bill could advance priorities like year-round sale of E-15 ethanol and additional farmer assistance.

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Ranking Member Angie Craig (D-MN 02) cautioned that February's markup date could slip, citing the current government shutdown and warning that controversial provisions, such as pesticide preemption, could jeopardize bipartisan support. Other Democrats have also expressed lingering frustration over prior Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program cuts.

WCMA continues to advocate for members' Farm Bill priorities; members with questions may contact [WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney](#).

U.S., Mexico Agree to Begin USMCA Talks; Timeline Unclear



U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Jamieson Greer and Mexican Secretary of Economy Marcelo Ebrard [will start formal discussions](#) on possible changes to the U.S.-Mexico-Canada (USMCA) trade agreement, the USTR's office said last Wednesday. USTR did not provide details on when the meeting will take place, or whether Canada will be involved in the talks. [READ MORE...](#)

WCMA-Led Coalition Urges WI Lawmakers to Fix FoodShare



In a [letter](#) led by WCMA and signed by a broad coalition of agricultural groups, WCMA last week urged Wisconsin legislators to maintain and strengthen FoodShare, the state's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The requested funding would help cover increased state administrative costs, protect program integrity, and reduce the risk of costly federal penalties. [WCMA continues to advocate](#) for this fiscally responsible investment to protect farmers, processors, taxpayers, and the long-term stability of Wisconsin's food system. [READ MORE...](#)

Join the Call: Contact Your Legislators

WCMA members operating in Wisconsin: your voice is needed now - [join WCMA's call for a strategic state investment in FoodShare](#). More than \$1 billion in federally funded FoodShare benefits are redeemed annually at Wisconsin retailers, supporting hundreds of millions of dollars in demand for Wisconsin-produced and processed foods. [Contact your lawmakers today](#) with just a few clicks to urge action before the legislative session adjourns this month.

WCMA Applauds WI Senate Action on Dairy Labeling



WCMA applauded an effort from Wisconsin Senate Democrats in late January to [ban the use of dairy terms](#) on imitation product labels. The proposal, which mirrored standalone legislation from past cycles and came as an amendment to a bill designed to provide [no-interest loans for dairy farmers](#), was rejected on the floor. WCMA continues to champion truth in product labeling at both the state and federal levels to provide clarity for consumers and fairness in the marketplace for the dairy industry.

USDA Awards Cheddar Contracts to WCMA Members



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has [awarded contracts](#) to purchase over 450,000 pounds of cheddar cheese products from WCMA members Associated Milk Producers Inc., Masters Gallery Foods, and Pacific Cheese Company. A list of [open USDA solicitations](#) and information on how to become an [approved vendor](#) is available [online](#).

Headlines

Wisconsin

- American Ag Network: [AMPI transitioning to cottage cheese at Wisconsin plant](#) (Featuring WCMA member Associated Milk Producers Inc.)
- Madison Magazine: [Tony Evers on cheese curds, first jobs, dairy farms and more](#)

National & Global

- Feedstuffs: [USTR signs trade deals with El Salvador and Guatemala](#)
- Brownfield Ag News: [Butter exports lead gains in November U.S. dairy shipments](#)
- WQRF-TV: [French cheesemaker Savencia invests in Lena, Illinois, creates jobs](#) (Featuring WCMA member Savencia Cheese USA)
- KPCW Radio: [Ballerina Farm pauses raw milk sales after samples fail health tests](#)

FEATURED: WCMA NOTES

Learn more about WCMA's programs & services in this special rotating section! This week, we spotlight WCMA's monthly column, WCMA Notes, sharing insights and ideas for the dairy processing industry.

Colostrum Rising



Bovine colostrum is rapidly emerging as a health-boosting tool for human consumption - and a high-value growth opportunity for the dairy processing industry. In this month's [WCMA Notes column](#), Executive Director John Umhoefer details how colostrum, once reserved almost exclusively for calf health, is now surging in the human nutrition and pet food markets. Industry sources estimate the global human colostrum market now exceeds \$1 billion and continues to accelerate. To meet demand, processors are leaning into new capabilities, creating a promising new revenue stream from a formerly niche product. [READ MORE...](#)

EVENTS & CONNECTION

Final Opportunity: RSVP for WCMA Advocacy Day



With just one week to go until [WCMA's Policy Committee Meeting & State Advocacy Day](#), now is the time to register for this impactful event in Madison, Wisconsin on Wednesday, February 11. As legislators wrap up the session and make final decisions on bills affecting the dairy industry, WCMA members have a critical opportunity to make their voices heard on key policy priorities. [Join us](#) for a dynamic legislative panel, remarks from Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Secretary Karen Hyun, direct advocacy meetings with legislators, and a meeting with Governor Tony Evers.

[**REGISTER NOW**](#)

February 11	February 18	March 3-5	March 12	March 17
<u>Policy Committee Meeting & State Advocacy Day (In-Person)</u>	<u>Dairy Sustainability Group Meeting (Hybrid)</u>	<u>2026 World Championship Cheese Contest</u>	<u>Food & Dairy Joint Annual Meeting with Wisconsin DNR (Hybrid)</u>	<u>Health & Safety Group Meeting (Hybrid)</u>

EDUCATION

Applications Due February 4 for CWCBA Scholarships



The Central Wisconsin Cheesemakers and Buttermakers Association (CWCBA) is [accepting scholarship applications now](#) through tomorrow, February 4 for two awards of \$3,000 each. Scholarships will be awarded to applicants enrolled full-time in a program of study toward any degree, with an emphasis given to students pursuing degrees in dairy science, food safety, or a related field. Questions may be directed to [CWCBA's Peggy Noeldner](#).



For more educational opportunities from WCMA and our partners, visit: [**WisCheeseMakers.org/Events**](http://WisCheeseMakers.org/Events)

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Wisconsin Cheese Makers Assn. | 5117 West Terrace Drive Suite 402 | Madison, WI 53718 US

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