



WCMA NEWS

AN EXCLUSIVE UPDATE FOR MEMBERS OF THE
WISCONSIN CHEESE MAKERS ASSOCIATION



SIGNATURE EVENTS



World Championship Cheese Contest Features Over 3,300 Entries

Dairy manufacturers and processors in 25 countries worldwide and 33 U.S. states have submitted an impressive 3,302 entries of cheese, butter, yogurt, and dry dairy ingredients for evaluation in the [35th biennial World Championship Cheese Contest](#).

On March 5-7 at Monona Terrace Community & Convention Center in Madison, Wisconsin, a team of highly qualified dairy processing experts from all over the world will carefully evaluate each product and calculate a precise score based on attributes such as flavor, body, texture, salt, color, finish, packaging, and others. Gold, silver, and bronze medals will be awarded to the three highest-scoring entries in each of this year's 142 distinct classes.

Preliminary rounds of judging will be open to entrants and the public from 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 5 and Wednesday, March 6. The announcement of the World Champion Cheese live online at WorldChampionCheese.org and on Facebook at 2:00 p.m. (CT) on Thursday, March 7.

[VIEW DETAILS](#)



Click "Play" to hear why attendees love CheeseExpo's unbeatable networking events!

Forge Quality Connections at CheeseExpo 2024

Expand your network and strengthen your existing business relationships with over 4,000 dairy processing professionals - including CEOs, plant managers, quality assurance and safety staff, marketers, and more - at CheeseExpo 2024!

Event hosts Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association (WCMA) and the Center for Dairy Research (CDR) promise energetic celebrations of industry excellence, stimulating educational offerings, 134,000 square feet of exhibits from nearly 300 trusted industry supplier companies, and valuable networking events.

Register at [CheeseExpo.org](https://cheeseexpo.org) by February 27 to lock in special early-bird rates for this exciting event, April 16-18 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Have questions? Please contact the WCMA Events team.

REGISTER NOW

ADVOCACY



Industry Wastewater Meeting with Wisconsin DNR Set for March 13

WCMA members are invited to join the WCMA Technology Committee for the [11th Annual Food & Dairy Industry Joint Meeting with Wisconsin DNR](#), Thursday, March 13, 2024 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin. This full-day hybrid meeting is a focus on nutrient and wastewater issues for dairy and food manufacturers. [Register now](#) for in-person (\$55) or online (\$35) attendance.

Topics to date include: Fertilizer designation for wastewater solids, 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. For more information, contact [WCMA Executive Director John Umhoefer](#).

[SIGN UP NOW](#)

WDATCP Awards Local Food Purchase Grants to Wisconsin Nonprofits

Nine Wisconsin nonprofit organizations are set to receive a total of \$1.5 million in grant funding to purchase and distribute fresh and minimally processed Wisconsin foods for distribution to underserved communities. The one-time funding comes from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (WDATCP). A complete list of grant winners is available on [WDATCP's website](#).



New Bill Aims to Boost Cybersecurity in Food, Agriculture Sectors

U.S. Senators Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Tom Cotton (R-AR) last week [unveiled the bipartisan, bicameral Farm and Food Cybersecurity Act](#). The legislation directs the Secretary of Agriculture to assess the cyber threats to and vulnerabilities in the sector every two years and to provide recommendations on improving security and resilience. WCMA supports efforts to help dairy processors safeguard their businesses against cyber attacks, and will continue to share relevant developments on this bill.

WCMA NOTES

WCMA NOTES



Offered by:

John Umhoefer
WCMA Executive Director



www.WisCheeseMakers.org

USDA Concludes FMMO Hearings as Need for Urgent Relief Continues

As WCMA Executive Director John Umhoefer writes in this month's [WCMA Notes column](#), the U.S. Department of Agriculture's hearing on Federal Milk Marketing Order (FMMO) reforms has finally ended – four months later than planned – but the need for

GRANTS



Apply Now for Free Export Consultation Hours

Act now to take advantage of free dairy export consultation hours, available now through WCMA. Each participating business will receive up to 30 hours of no-cost assistance with WCMA's consultant Ryan Wucherer of MCT Dairies. Services will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis, so [apply today!](#)

For new-to-export companies and cooperatives, consultations will include:

- Evaluations of their product line, helping to identify potential global customers;
- Direction to in-depth educational resources, such as ExporTech™;
- Support in creating and executing their export plan by completing necessary export paperwork and connecting the business with potential carriers and distributors.

For companies and cooperatives currently engaged in export activities, consultations will include:

- Evaluations and recommendations on refinements in their export business model;
- Suggested areas for export growth;
- Support in executing their export plans; and,
- Recommendations on improvements in products, packaging, marketing, labeling, sales or distribution.

To participate, complete our simple [one-page application](#) and return it to [WCMA Grants & Business Programs Director Danica Nilsestuen](#).



WCMA Webinar

Achieve Growth Goals with RFSI Grants

Join Free WCMA Webinar for Details on RFSI Grant Program

Register now for [WCMA's next free, members-only webinar](#) on Tuesday, February 13 at 1:00 p.m. (CT). Learn how to apply for a total of \$27 million available in grant funding through the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) Program, administered by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (WDATCP).



The all-new RFSI program aims 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. Individual awards range from \$10,000-\$3 million and can be used for building design, renovation and construction, equipment, staff time, plan development, market development, and system modernization. Featured WDATCP speakers are:

- Grace Puc, Agriculture Program Specialist
- Chad Kauffman, Grant Specialist
- Kara Kasten-Olson, Agriculture Program Supervisor
- Andrew Bernhardt, Agriculture Program Specialist



Grace Puc
WDATCP Agriculture
Program Specialist



Chad Kauffman
WDATCP Grant
Specialist



Kara Kasten-Olson
WDATCP Agriculture
Program Supervisor



Andrew Bernhardt
WDATCP Agriculture
Program Specialist

Presenters will reserve time to field audience questions during the webinar. If you'd like to share a question in advance, please email [WCMA Communications Director Grace Atherton](#) by Monday, February 12 at 12:00 p.m. (CT). Members with detailed questions may also contact [WDATCP staff](#) for assistance.

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 to gatherton@wischeesemakers.org.

REGISTER NOW



Apply Now for New Round of \$100K Dairy Business Builder Grants

Applications are available now for a **new round of \$100,000 Dairy Business Builder grants** administered by the Dairy Business Innovation Alliance (DBIA), a partnership between WCMA and the Center for Dairy Research.

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. 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.

APPLY ONLINE

DBIA Staff to Host Free Application Webinar

Looking for tips to submit your best DBIA grant application and maximize your chances of success? **Join DBIA staff for a free informational webinar** at 1:00 p.m. (CT) on Wednesday, February 7. DBIA staff will cover key details including eligibility, how to use DBIA's new application system, and helpful hints to keep in mind while writing your application.



JOIN
WEBINAR

WCMA Members Promote Products in Thailand

WCMA members last week joined the



Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (WDATCP) and Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin in Thailand on a trade mission promoting Wisconsin cheese. The venture was funded by the [Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports](#), an effort championed by WCMA, in December 2021 that aims to increase sales of Wisconsin dairy, crop, and meat products overseas.

Interested in joining future trade missions? [View more opportunities online.](#)

INDUSTRY UPDATES

USDA Seeking Cheddar, Yogurt, Butter



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is soliciting bids for [cheddar cheese](#) for use in federal food distribution programs. Bids are due by February 12 at 1:00 p.m. (CT), and questions may be directed to [USDA staff](#).

The agency is also seeking bids for [yogurt, and butter](#), due February 16 at 1:00 p.m. (CT). Questions may be directed to [USDA staff](#).

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

- *Wisconsin State Journal*: [Schoep's Ice Cream faces \\$145K in fines after workers exposed to anhydrous ammonia, OSHA says](#)
- *Supermarket Perimeter*: [Sweet heat: three new cheeses take on the trend \(Featuring WCMA member Emmi Roth USA\)](#)

National/International

- *Brownfield Ag News*: [December cheese, butter production up on year](#)
- *Dairy Processing*: [After merger, Chr. Hansen is now Novonesis](#)
- *Food & Wine*: [The essential tools for cheese lovers](#)
- *Interesting Engineering*: [Scientists devise new method to turn blue cheese](#)

WORKFORCE



WCMA Health & Safety Group Meeting to Cover Warehouse Protocols, Ergonomics

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](#)



Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association

Basic Safety Training for Dairy Processors

Protect Valued Team Members with WCMA Basic

Safety Trainings 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 five times throughout 2024:

- 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!

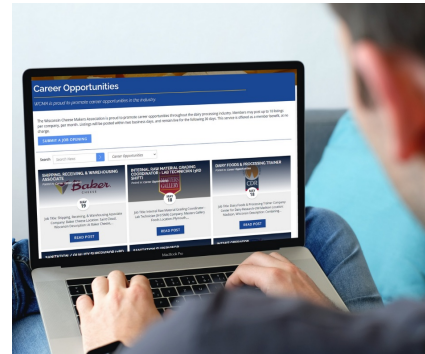
Have questions? Please contact [WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney](#).

Post Career Openings on WCMA Jobs Board

Visit [WisCheeseMakers.org](https://www.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



Limited Space Remaining in Spring WCMA Front-Line Leadership 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

MEMBERSHIP



WCMA SCHOLARSHIPS

Final Week to Apply for WCMA Scholarships



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.

WELCOME



NEW WCMA MEMBERS!

Dairy Manufacturers, Processors, and Marketers



New WCMA dairy processor member [Two Guernsey Girls](#) is a family-operated creamery run by mother-daughter pair Tammy and Breanna Fritsch, producing small-batch fresh cheese curds and bottled A2A2 milk.

Dairy Industry Suppliers



New WCMA supplier member [Amalgamated Research LLC](#) conducts process research and development, specializing in separation, mixing, and fluid distribution/collection technologies.



New WCMA supplier member [Keep Supply](#) is a distributor of heavy commercial and industrial refrigeration parts, equipment and other MRO supplies.



New WCMA supplier member [Material Transfer and Storage, Inc.](#) is a provider of bulk material handling systems including bulk bag fillers, dischargers, conditioners, and fully automated integrated systems

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

WisCheeseMakers.org
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