



WCMA NEWS

AN EXCLUSIVE UPDATE FOR MEMBERS OF THE
WISCONSIN CHEESE MAKERS ASSOCIATION



SIGNATURE EVENTS



World Championship Cheese Contest Now Underway in Madison, Wisconsin

Make your plans now to join in the excitement of the 35th biennial [World Championship Cheese Contest](#), proudly hosted by WCMA! The world's premier technical dairy product evaluation is now underway at the Monona Terrace Community & Convention Center in Madison, Wisconsin.

The World Championship Cheese Contest is open to the public from 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. (CT) today, Tuesday, March 5 and on Wednesday, March 6. Samples and judging demonstrations are available!

Can't make it to Madison? Follow the competition on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), 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!

[LEARN MORE](#)

WCMA NOTES



Offered by:

Rebekah Sweeney
WCMA Senior Director,
Programs & Policy



www.WisCheeseMakers.org

Dairy Processors' Advocacy Yields Results

As WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney writes in the March edition of WCMA Notes, every legislative and regulatory success our industry enjoys is built on the engagement of dairy processors in state and federal advocacy. [Read on](#) to learn what lobbying "wins" WCMA saw in Wisconsin this cycle, and our priorities for lawmakers in Washington, D.C. in the year ahead.



Join WCMA for Tech Committee 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). A complete, detailed agenda is now [available online](#).

REGISTER 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](#).

Congress Approves Short-Term Funding for USDA, Other Agencies to Avoid Shutdown

Congress approved its latest [short-term stopgap spending plan](#) on Thursday, with President Joe Biden quickly signing it into law to avoid a partial government shutdown. The patch extends federal funding for half of government - including the U.S. Department of Agriculture - through this coming Friday, March 8, and the rest of government until March 22. WCMA will keep members posted on relevant developments.

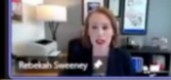
GRANTS

USDA Offers Local Food Promotion, Farmers Market Promotion Monies

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) last week [opened the application window](#) for \$26 million in Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP) grants, designed to help local and regional food entities develop, coordinate, and expand producer-to-consumer marketing, local and regional food markets, and local food enterprises.

LAMP includes two distinct grant opportunities that may be of support to dairy processors. [Local Food Promotion Program](#) grants can support feasibility studies, food safety training, market development plans, and more. [Farmers Market Promotion Program](#) grants are aimed at increasing access to locally-produced agricultural products, and can be used for market analysis, producer market education, or online sales operations. The deadline to apply for LAMP grants is May 14.

Questions? Please contact [WCMA Grants & Business Programs Director Danica Nilsestuen](#).

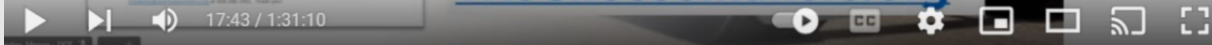


ARIP Resources for Dairy Processors

The screenshot shows a document titled "WISCONSIN CHEESE MAKERS ASSOCIATION" and "Wisconsin Agricultural Road Improvement Program Dairy Manufacturer Processor Application Support Form". It contains several sections with form fields and checkboxes, including "Name of Applicant (Business Name, Manufacturer or Processor)", "Phone", "Address", "County", "Municipality", "Name of Applicant (Business Name or Processor)", "Name of Applicant (Business Name or Processor)", "I have a list of three roads I would like to see listed on the ARIP application (Please list the road name and location):", "I have a list of three roads I would like to see listed on the ARIP application (Please list the road name and location):", "I have a list of three roads I would like to see listed on the ARIP application (Please list the road name and location):", and "I have a list of three roads I would like to see listed on the ARIP application (Please list the road name and location):".



Access Support Form at
WisCheeseMakers.org



View WisDOT Webinar & Prep Materials to Support Road Improvement Grant Application

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation has released a recording of an [informational webinar](#) held last week detailing Wisconsin's new [Agricultural Roads Improvement Program \(ARIP\)](#). Presenters from the agency, WCMA, and municipal organizations shared information about ARIP eligibility, application procedures, and more.

[VIEW WEBINAR](#)

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](#).



Apply by Tomorrow for Wisconsin RFSI Grants

Wisconsin dairy manufacturers and processors have until tomorrow - 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](#)

Apply by March 15 for Wisconsin Export Aid

Wisconsin dairy processors are encouraged to apply by March 15 for [International Market Access Grants](#). The Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports, a program WCMA has championed, supports this offering designed to help and agriculture product exporters of any size to enter or expand global sales. Agribusiness exporters can be reimbursed up to \$10,000, while graduates of [ExporTech™](#) can be reimbursed up to \$25,000 for eligible market entry and expansion activities.

WORKFORCE



Register Now for Virtual Workforce & Education Committee Meeting March 21

Make plans now to join WCMA's active [Workforce and Education Committee](#) for its next quarterly meeting, set for Thursday, March 21 from 1:00-2:30 p.m. (CT). This free meeting, open to all WCMA members, will be held virtually.



WCMA is pleased to bring members two special presentations during this meeting. We'll begin with a look at **financial literacy resources for your employees**, with a guest speaker from the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions.

Then, we'll explore opportunities to **enhance your training programs with grant dollars**; we'll have a deep dive into Wisconsin Fast Forward offerings, but information about available federal grant monies, too.

[REGISTER NOW](#)

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

Deadline Extended: Complete Wage & Workforce Survey by Friday

Looking for insights on the latest employment trends in the dairy processing industry? Join WCMA member businesses operating across the U.S. in completing our free [2024 Wage & Workforce Survey](#), with the deadline to respond now extended to March 8.

This free, annual online survey helps WCMA

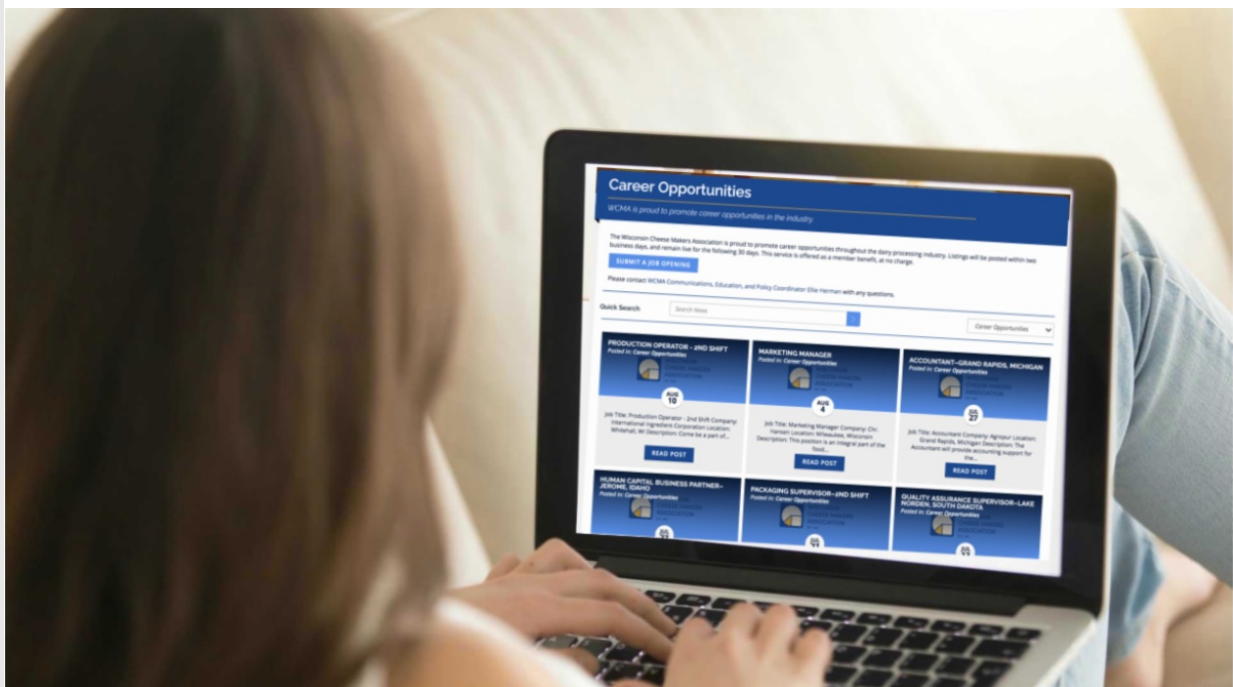


empire critical data employees need to successfully attract and retain top talent in an increasingly competitive labor market. Thanks to member feedback, this year's survey features additional careers including EHS positions, comptroller, and supply chain analyst.

COMPLETE SURVEY

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](#).



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.

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.

REGISTER NOW



Front-Line Leaders Learn New Coaching Strategies in WCMA Training

Kudos to member employees from Complete Control Solutions, Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery, Emmi Roth, Great Lakes Cheese Company, Nelson-Jameson, Inc., Sartori Cheese, Teinnovations, and Winona Foods, who last week engaged in WCMA Front-Line Leadership-Part B. They focused on learning new ways to provide performance feedback that inspires productivity and positivity – and we were so impressed with their care for their teams and mission.

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
- On-demand: [Online Dairy Science and Sanitation \(English and Spanish\)](#) - Cornell University
- On-demand: [Artisan Dairy Food Safety Coaching](#) - Cornell University
- On-demand: [Online HACCP Training](#) - North Carolina State University
- On-demand: [Environmental Monitoring in the Dairy Industry](#) - North Carolina State University
- On-demand: [Preventive Controls for Dairy Processors](#) - North Carolina State University
- On-demand: [Food Safety Basics For Artisan Cheesemakers](#) - North Carolina State University

IN THE NEWS

Wisconsin

- *WDATCP*: [Announcing Adam Brock as Division Administrator](#)
- *Wisconsin State Journal*: [Why hasn't Wisconsin embraced raclette, the melting cheese?](#) (Featuring WCMA member Alpinage Cheese)

National/International

- *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*: [Boozman: Senate Republicans' framework for next farm bill in progress](#)
- *Los Angeles Times*: [Another California exodus: Dairy cows leave for greener pastures in Texas, Arizona as farms squeezed](#)
- *Olean Times*: [Great Lakes Cheese begins packaging operations at Franklinville plant](#) (Featuring WCMA member Great Lakes Cheese)
- *Mashed*: [False facts about cheese you thought were true](#)
- *Martha Stewart*: [When is it okay to eat moldy cheese?](#)
- *HuffPost*: [Cillian Murphy's cheese eating habit helped him 'decompress' from 'Oppenheimer' stress](#)

INDUSTRY UPDATES

USDA Awards Cheddar Contracts

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has [awarded contracts](#) to WCMA member Associated Milk Producers Inc. and to Dairyland Trading Company, to deliver 1.34 million pounds of barrel cheese for federal nutrition programs. To learn how to become a USDA-certified vendor and vie for federal contracts, find [complete details online](#).

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](#).



Dairy Industry Suppliers



New WCMA supplier member [Findorff](#) takes great pride in a 134-year history of providing extraordinary craftsmanship and construction and general contractor services to clients, partners, and communities across the United States.



New WCMA supplier member [Leybold Vacuum USA](#), founded in 1850, offers a wide range of vacuum components, standardized and fully customized vacuum solutions, complemented by vacuum technology accessories and instrumentation for dairy processors and other manufacturers.



New WCMA supplier member [Lyco Manufacturing](#) has been serving the dairy industry for 50 years helping solve process and wastewater challenges using the best customer-aligned, innovative food processing equipment.

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

WisCheeseMakers.org
(608) 286-1001





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