

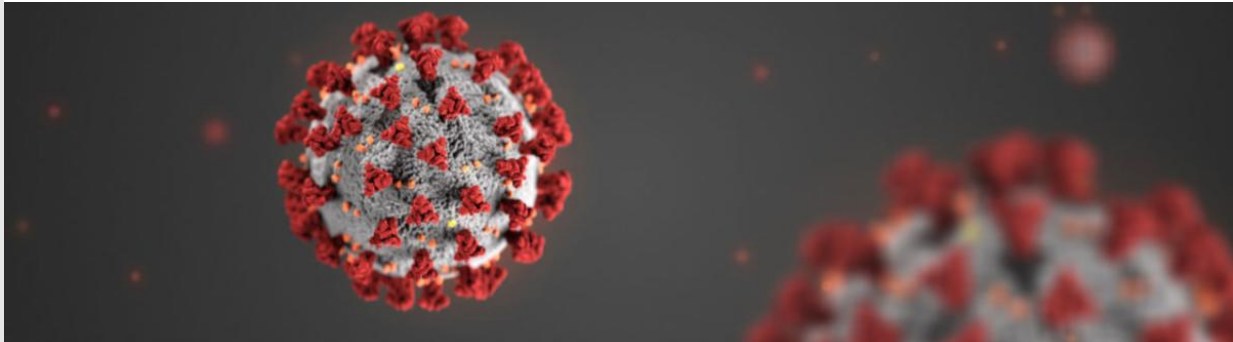


# WCMA NEWS

AN EXCLUSIVE UPDATE FOR MEMBERS OF THE  
WISCONSIN CHEESE MAKERS ASSOCIATION



## COVID-19 UPDATES



### CDC Relaxes Restrictions for Vaccinated Population in New Guidance

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shared [new guidance for fully vaccinated people](#), saying they may safely meet with one another or with other vaccinated people from a single household, so long as no one among the unvaccinated is at risk for severe disease if infected with the coronavirus.

The CDC guidance notes that fully vaccinated people should still wear masks and maintain social distance when in public places or larger gatherings. Recommendations against avoiding travel remain in place for now. Officials attribute these cautions to a lack of research on whether those who are fully vaccinated can still spread the COVID-19 virus, even if they do not show symptoms of illness.

### Wisconsin Emerges as Leader in Vaccine Rollout

Wisconsin has emerged as a leader in COVID-19 vaccine distribution, ranked first in the Upper Midwest for total doses administered per capita, and third in the nation for percentage of doses used. As of today, Wisconsin vaccinators had [administered 1.7 million doses](#), with 1.08 million residents fully vaccinated.

State officials now say all Wisconsinites are expected to become eligible for the vaccine by the end of May. Members of Wisconsin's Phase 1B population, including dairy manufacturing and processing employees, are eligible for vaccination now. To secure a vaccination appointment, individuals may contact their health provider or:

- Use the [Wisconsin COVID-19 Vaccine Registry](#). If no appointments are currently available, individuals are placed on a wait-list.
- Call Wisconsin's toll-free vaccination hotline at 844-684-1064. Call center representatives can schedule appointments and answer questions about COVID-19 vaccination.
- Contact one of Wisconsin's two Federal Retail Pharmacy Partners:
  - Call 1-800-Walgreens or visit

- [www.walgreens.com/findcare/vaccination/covid-19](https://www.walgreens.com/findcare/vaccination/covid-19).  
• Call Kroger's pharmacy hotline at (866) 211-5320 or visit <https://www.kroger.com/rx/covid-eligibility>.

Wisconsin vaccinators are asking for an individual's proof of eligibility, which could be a pay stub, work identification, [letter from their employer](#) or self-attestation.

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## Minnesota to Make Food Processing Workers Eligible for Vaccine Later This Week

Minnesota is [expanding COVID-19 vaccine eligibility](#) this week to nearly a third of the state's population, including 44,000 food processing workers in essential, front-line occupations. State health officials say most of these workers will be vaccinated at their place of employment. Minnesota's [Vaccine Connector](#) registration tool can also help individuals schedule a vaccination appointment.

### WCMA Offering Vaccine Eligibility Status Reports Each Thursday

WCMA is tracking vaccination developments in key dairy states nationwide, including California, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. Watch for status reports and links to resources each Thursday in our COVID-19 Member Bulletins.

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## USDA-AMS to Hold Listening Sessions on Coronavirus Relief, Purchasing Programs

The U.S. Department of Agriculture - Agricultural Marketing Service (USDA-AMS) announced this week it will hold listening sessions and accept public comments on two key topics: its pandemic food purchasing programs, including the Farmers to Families Food Box program, and coronavirus relief grants.

### Food Purchasing Program

The USDA-AMS [listening session on food purchasing programs](#) is set for March 22 from 1-4 p.m. (CT), and will be held via Zoom. You must register by March 17 at 11 p.m. (CT) to be considered for a speaking role, and you must [register in advance](#) to join the session. The agency will also accept comments via its [online portal](#) through March 31.

### Coronavirus Relief Grants

USDA-AMS is also seeking comments regarding the development and implementation of grant programs to support food processors, distributors and producers respond to coronavirus, including for measures to protect workers against COVID-19. A [listening session](#) will be held March 19 from 1-4 p.m. (CT), via Zoom. You must register by March 16 at 11 p.m. (CT) to be considered for a speaking role, and you must [register in advance](#) to join the session. The agency will also accept comments via its [online portal](#) through March 31.

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## House Readies Final Vote on \$1.9T Relief Plan

The U.S. House of Representatives is poised to hold a [final vote](#) on the \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package Wednesday, with President Joe Biden expected to quickly sign it into law. The Senate approved an amended version of the package on Saturday, removing a provision to raise the minimum wage, [lowering the unemployment enhancer](#) from \$400 to \$300 per week over state offerings, and lowering the income eligibility level for direct relief payments. This version will provide \$1,400 for a single taxpayer or \$2,800 for a married couple filing jointly, plus \$1,400 per dependent, with the eligibility cut-off at

individuals earning \$75,000 or more per year or married, joint filers earning \$160,000 or more per year.

The package also includes:

- \$7.25 billion for the Paycheck Protection Program
- \$25 billion to support restaurants and bars hurt by the pandemic
- An increase in the federal child tax credit to \$3,000 for each child aged 6-17 and to \$3,600 for each younger child
- \$46 billion to expand COVID-19 testing and contact tracing
- \$14 billion to expedite distribution of COVID-19 vaccines
- \$130 billion in aid to K-12 schools to reduce class sizes, facilitate social distancing, and install ventilation systems
- \$40 billion for colleges and universities
- \$350 billion to state, local and tribal governments to offset tax base hits and support pandemic-related initiatives

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## Evers Plans to Extend Wisconsin Mask Mandate, As Other States Lift Their Orders

Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers on Friday said he plans to [extend the statewide mask mandate](#) before it expires on March 20. The Wisconsin Supreme Court continued to consider lawsuits challenging Evers' authority to issue such orders, but has yet to set a date to announce a ruling.

Mask mandates are currently in effect in 35 U.S. states. To date, four states that once had mask mandates covering the general public have lifted them: Iowa, Mississippi, Montana, and North Dakota. Texas is set to become the fifth tomorrow, when Governor Greg Abbott says his eight-month-old mask order will expire.

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## WCMA Salutes Critical and Essential Employees



Throughout 2021, WCMA is saluting its members' essential and critical workforce, people who daily demonstrate their dedication to the mission of feeding the world delicious, nutritious dairy products.

This week, we are shining a spotlight on two employees from Milk Specialties Global, Bryan Castillo and Emmanuel Turner. Bryan and Emmanuel work to ensure the steady production of specialty proteins throughout the pandemic. Thank you both for your

dedication!

Watch for WCMA salutes in Tuesday e-newsletters, our printed [membership directory](#), and on our Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn pages. Have an employee or team you'd like us to celebrate? Just contact [WCMA staff](#).

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## Coronavirus Headline News

### Wisconsin

- *Wisconsin Public Radio*: [New COVID-19 cases in Wisconsin reach lowest point since June](#)
- *Associated Press*: [Two million more Wisconsin residents to be vaccine eligible](#)
- *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*: ['We've heard loudly': People with pre-existing conditions to be eligible for COVID-19 vaccine in next phase of Wisconsin's rollout](#)
- *Wisconsin State Journal*: [Alliant Center could become one of three federal COVID-19 vaccination sites in Wisconsin](#)

### National/International

- *Reuters*: [New U.S. COVID-19 cases fall 12 percent last week, vaccinations top 2 million a day](#)
- *Reuters*: [U.S. government to ship 18.5 million doses of vaccine this week](#)

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## Other Coronavirus Resources

WCMA will continue to provide links to both new and essential coronavirus resources for members in bulletins. We have also created a page on [WisCheeseMakers.org](#) with links to materials detailing employee safety best practices, operations guidance, federal and state support programs, and state orders impacting the dairy industry.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact WCMA staff. We are here for you.

### Key Contacts

- WCMA Executive Director John Umhoefer: [jumhoefer@wischeesemakers.org](mailto:jumhoefer@wischeesemakers.org) or 608-225-7130
- WCMA Communications, Education, and Policy Director Rebekah Sweeney: [rsweeney@wischeesemakers.org](mailto:rsweeney@wischeesemakers.org) or 608-386-3012

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## WCMA NOTES

### Resilient Artisan Makers Press On



In the past year, the dairy processing industry has experienced a number of unprecedented challenges from shifting markets to chain supply interruptions. However, we approach the one-year mark of the COVID-19 pandemic onset, artisan cheesemakers share a thread of hope.

[In the March edition of WCMA Notes](#), WCMA Executive Director John Umhoefer reports on finding both optimism, and an encouraging theme of business resiliency, among cheesemakers in the face of stunning change.

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## AMPI, First District CMA Brings Market Efficiencies, Strengths

The recent announcement of a Common Marketing Agency (CMA) between Associated Milk Producers Inc. (AMPI) and First District Association strengthens both venerable Minnesota-based cooperatives as they bring product lines to market.

The arrangement is unique and WCMA discussed opportunities for the new CMA with AMPI Co-President and Chief Executive Officer Sheryl Meshke last week.

“The agreement can optimize how we approach the supply chain, as well as how we function operationally and with our farmer-owners,” Meshke noted. Headquarters for the New Ulm-based AMPI and First District, in Litchfield, are only one hour apart, and the expansion into 40-pound blocks at Litchfield and AMPI’s specialization in 640-pound blocks and pepper cheeses are complementary, she added.

The CMA, established as the American Dairy Cooperative, maintains the independence of the partners, but allows the cooperatives to balance inventory and coordinate manufacturing. More advantages for the two cooperatives will become clear as the new CMA takes root, Meshke said.

Meshke emphasized that the CMA is arising among two healthy, growing partners. With the recent expansion at First District and upgrades at each AMPI cheese facility, the combined processing capacity of the two cooperatives is more than 7 million pounds of milk per day, and the shared focus is on quality cheese manufacturing. While weakness in the foodservice sector is a challenge across the industry, AMPI ended 2020 with nearly \$1.8 billion in sales, Meshke said.

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## Apply Now for DBIA Dairy Processor Grants

Dairy processors and farmers are invited to [apply now](#) for direct-to-business grants of up to \$50,000 through the Dairy Business Innovation Alliance (DBIA), a partnership between the Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association and the Center for Dairy Research. This spring, DBIA will award a total of \$1 million in grants.



Dairy processors and farmers in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota and Wisconsin are eligible to apply. Projects must focus on dairy farm diversification, the development of value-added dairy products, or dairy product exporting. Applications are due April 30. Complete details are available [online](#).

Questions? Contact [WCMA Communications, Education, and Policy Director Rebekah Sweeney](#).

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## USDA Awards Butter Contracts

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has [awarded contracts](#) worth a total of nearly \$29 million for the delivery of 14.8 million pounds of salted butter for Section 32 nutrition programs. WCMA members Associated Milk Producers, Inc. and Grassland Dairy Products are among the selected vendors.

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### ADVOCACY

## Wisconsin DNR Tallies Costs for Proposed Rule Limiting Manure Application

Wisconsin is moving forward with tighter nitrogen application standards for farms, attempting to limit nitrogen that reaches groundwater and wells in the state. An [initial summary of proposed new regulations](#) (released in January) raised concerns over prohibitions on landspreading manure, and yesterday, March 8, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) [released a required economic analysis](#) for the rule.

The proposed rule, which will face public hearings this summer, lowers nitrogen application on targeted areas including about 3 million acres of cropland in Wisconsin. Specifically, the proposal would prohibit application of commercial nitrogen fertilizer and liquid manure on fields in the fall and winter.

This prohibition on spreading manure after September 1, and through winter, has raised red flags in the farm community and the cost to build new manure storage pits is a large part of the new economic impact analysis. Three exceptions are offered to this ban on manure spreading, and some of these also have costs for farms.

As exceptions to a fall and winter ban, winter cover crops can receive manure application in the proposal; as can established perennial crops such as pastures for beef cattle. Finally, one fall application, capped at 25 percent of rates allowed under a farm's nutrient management plan, can occur in the fall.

The economic impact analysis released this week focuses on the cost of constructing new manure storage for dairy farms and the cost of adding cover crops to allow some fall spreading to continue. The agency arrived at a statewide cost of \$6 million to add concrete-lined manure storage structures – after assuming each farm would receive 70 percent of the cost of construction as a cost-share grant from the state. (In other words, 70 percent of this new regulatory cost, paid for by taxpayers, is removed from the “economic impact analysis” as if that money is “free” of an impact on farms or taxpayers.)

The cost of seeding new winter cover crops in the state is estimated at \$3.7 million in the analysis, although the report appears to be citing only the cost of seed, not the cost of fuel, labor and storage to sow and harvest the crops.

WDNR [will accept written comments](#) on the economic impact analysis until April 10, 2021. WCMA is coordinating with dairy farm organizations to assure concerns are heard over the proposed rule and its costs.

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### IN THE NEWS

## Wisconsin

- *Wisconsin Ag Connection*: [Wisconsin officially sets a milk production record in '20](#)
- *Dairy Foods*: [Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese's plant is a model of sustainability](#) (Featuring WCMA member Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese)
- *Wisconsin State Farmer*: ["For the Love of Cheese" campaign generates social media frenzy](#)
- *Austin American-Statesman*: [SXSU cheese party returns for 2021 online event with Nick Offerman](#)

## National/International

- *Argus Leader*: [South Dakota is emerging as a dairy leader; here's why](#) (Featuring WCMA members Agropur and Valley Queen Cheese Factory)
- *Politico*: [Vilsack is back at USDA after four years of Trump. The world has changed.](#)
- *The Providence Journal*: [Thanks to TikTok and baked feta pasta, Narragansett Creamery is having a moment](#) (Featuring WCMA member Narragansett Creamery)
- *Washington Post*: [How to understand and use feta, star of TikTok's viral pasta recipe](#)
- *The Counter*: [Can't find feta? Blame TikTok.](#)

## SIGNATURE EVENTS



## Join in 2021 Championship Cheese Auction

Celebrate the immense talent of cheesemakers around the world and support industry education during the live Championship Cheese Auction, part of the Chr. Hansen Spotlight Event at [CheeseExpo Global Online](#) on Wednesday, April 7 at 3 p.m. (CT).

As announced last week, as part of [WCMA's celebration of the World and U.S. Championship Cheese Contest](#), the Auction will feature 10 award-winning cheeses from past winners. Bidders can virtually vie for the following cheeses:

- Sharp Cheddar, 40 pounds, made by Agropur, Inc. in Weyauwega, Wisconsin
- Sharp Cheddar, 40 pounds, made by Cabot Cheese in Cabot, Vermont
- Grand Cru Surchoix, 18 pounds, made by Emmi Roth USA in Monroe, Wisconsin
- Original Dutch Gouda, 22 pounds, made by FrieslandCampina in Wolvega, Friesland, Netherlands
- Le Gruyère, one-eighth wheel of 72 pound wheel (9 pound wedge), made by

Michael Spycher of Gourmino & Bergkäserei Fritzenhaus in Bergkäserei Fritzenhaus, Emmental, Switzerland

- Baby Swiss, 5 pounds, made by Guggisberg Cheese in Millersburg, Ohio
- Evalon, 10 pounds, made by LaClare Farms with Mosaic Meadows in Malone, Wisconsin
- Marieke Gouda Mature, 18 pounds, made by Marieke Gouda in Thorp, Wisconsin
- SarVecchio Parmesan, 20 pounds, made by Sartori Company in Plymouth, Wisconsin
- Esquirrou, 5 pounds, made by Savencia Fromage & Dairy in France

The bidding process will run similarly to the 2020 virtual auction using the HiBid website. Bidders can watch a livestream of the Auction, where WCMA staff will supplement the auctioneer's live action with commentary.

Successful bids support the Contests, as well as WCMA's educational initiatives. In recent years, WCMA has contributed \$1.4 million to building and development projects at the Center for Dairy Research, University of Wisconsin-River Falls and South Dakota State University. WCMA also runs leadership skills training for member employees, and rewards \$15,000 per year in student scholarships.

Bidders who participated in previous Auctions will receive registration information via email this week. New bidders can also access registration details at [WorldChampionCheese.org](http://WorldChampionCheese.org) or by contacting [WCMA Events Manager Kirsten Strohmenger](#).



## Register Now for CheeseExpo Global Online

CheeseExpo Global Online offers three days of educational programming, networking, interactive online exhibits and celebrations of industry excellence April 6-8.

CheeseExpo Global Online is a great value for dairy processors, offering FREE access to Virtual Exhibits, live Ideas Showcase offerings and Spotlight Events that will bring industry together. By upgrading to [Full Registration](#), attendees gain exclusive access to a host of Keynote presentations and educational seminars.

[Keynote presentations](#) will kick off each day's official programming, offering attendees an in-depth look at timely industry opportunities, challenges and consumer trends. Attend the RELCO® Opening Keynote, DSM Keynote Event: WCMA Recognition Awards and the Amcor Flexibles North America Keynote Address to learn from dairy industry CEOs and top marketing experts.

A dozen seminars at CheeseExpo Global Online offer the latest in dairy processing technology and the science behind dairy quality, insights on opportunities in market sectors and sales abroad, practical guidance for crisis management, workforce development and much more.

CheeseExpo Global Online features unique business opportunities for industry suppliers, including personalized [virtual exhibits](#). Exhibiting supplier companies can connect directly with attendees via messaging, video, or audio during exhibit hours, allowing for maximum interaction. Live or prerecorded Ideas Showcase presentations, included in the main program agenda, create a platform for suppliers to highlight their businesses to a



high-volume audience.

Cap off each day of CheeseExpo Global Online with special Spotlight Events, including the Tetra Pak Spotlight Event, the Chr. Hansen Championship Cheese Auction and the WCMA Awards Banquet Highlights. Don't miss out! Access everything CheeseExpo Global Online has to offer and register for Full Registration now at [CheeseExpoGO.org](https://CheeseExpoGO.org).

**REGISTER  
NOW**

## EDUCATION



## Register Now for WCMA Leadership Training

Just two seats remain available in WCMA's popular Front-Line Leadership Training - Part C, which focuses on how to build a team. This class will be held Thursday, April 15. This training will be offered remotely via a digital platform facilitating small group and partner discussions, interactive polling features and participant chat. Tuition is \$135 per person.

**REGISTER  
NOW**

## Other Industry Trainings

WCMA is proud to host and promote opportunities for industry-specific training and

enrichment. Here's a look at some of those upcoming events:

- March 17: [Certificate in Dairy Processing | Center for Dairy Research](#)
- March 23: [Process Cheese Course On Demand | Center for Dairy Research](#)
- March 30: [Cheesemaking 101 What a Licensed Cheesemaker Should Know On Demand | Center for Dairy Research](#)

## WORKFORCE

WCMA



JOB FAIR

### Register Now for WCMA Virtual Job Fair

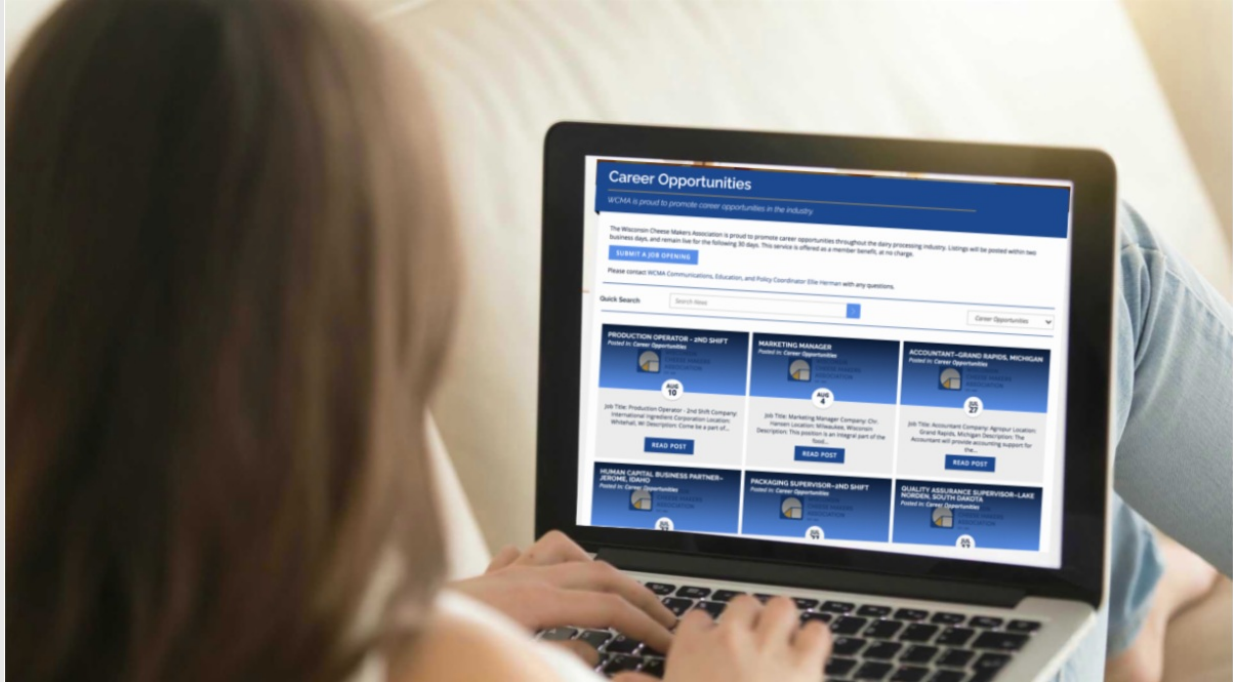
Find the career or the team member that's right for you at the [2021 WCMA Virtual Job Fair](#)! Set for **Wednesday, March 24 from 1:00-2:30 p.m. (CT)**, event registration is open now through March 17 at [WisCheeseMakers.org](http://WisCheeseMakers.org). This event is free for prospective employees and WCMA member employers.

WCMA is partnering with Collegiate Dairy Products Evaluation Contest organizers to invite participation from students from throughout the country pursuing dairy-related degrees, though the event is open to all job seekers, including those just graduating from high school or seeking a career change. Employers may highlight all openings, including hourly or salaried full-time, part-time, or internship positions.

The 2021 WCMA Virtual Job Fair will be held via Zoom on March 24, but WCMA will post basic profiles on each participant to a password-protected page on [WisCheeseMakers.org](http://WisCheeseMakers.org), one week in advance of the event. Employers and prospective employees may preview those joining in the job fair and contact them for an in-depth interview or information after it is held.

[JOB SEEKER REGISTRATION](#)

[EMPLOYER REGISTRATION](#)



## View Career Opportunities on WCMA Jobs Board

WCMA's [online jobs board](#) is featuring 30 industry career opportunities from member companies Agropur, Arena Cheese, Baker Cheese, Great Lakes Cheese Company, Klondike Cheese Company, LaClare Family Creamery, LLC, Lactalis American Group, Sartori Company and Winona Foods. Check out listings for processing line attendants, HR generalists, quality assurance supervisors and more!

All WCMA members are invited to [post openings](#). It's free and easy! Questions may be directed to [WCMA Communications, Education and Policy Coordinator Ellie Herman](#).

[ADD JOB OPPORTUNITIES](#)

## MEMBERSHIP

### WCMA Welcomes New Members

WCMA extends a warm welcome to two new supplier members to our Association: [A+ Heler's Dry Ice & CO2](#) and [FBF North America, LLC](#).

WCMA membership now includes nearly 700 companies operating in 39 states and around the world, employing tens of thousands of people. Check out our online, [searchable member directory](#) to connect with your colleagues in industry!

### Sign Up Colleagues for WCMA E-Newsletters

Thanks for subscribing to WCMA's weekly electronic newsletter! Please note, WCMA extends this benefit to all member employees. Let us know if we should [add your colleagues](#) to our mailing list, or if you'd like to share feedback on our communications products.

