

AG DAY AT THE CAPITOL

March 29, 2023

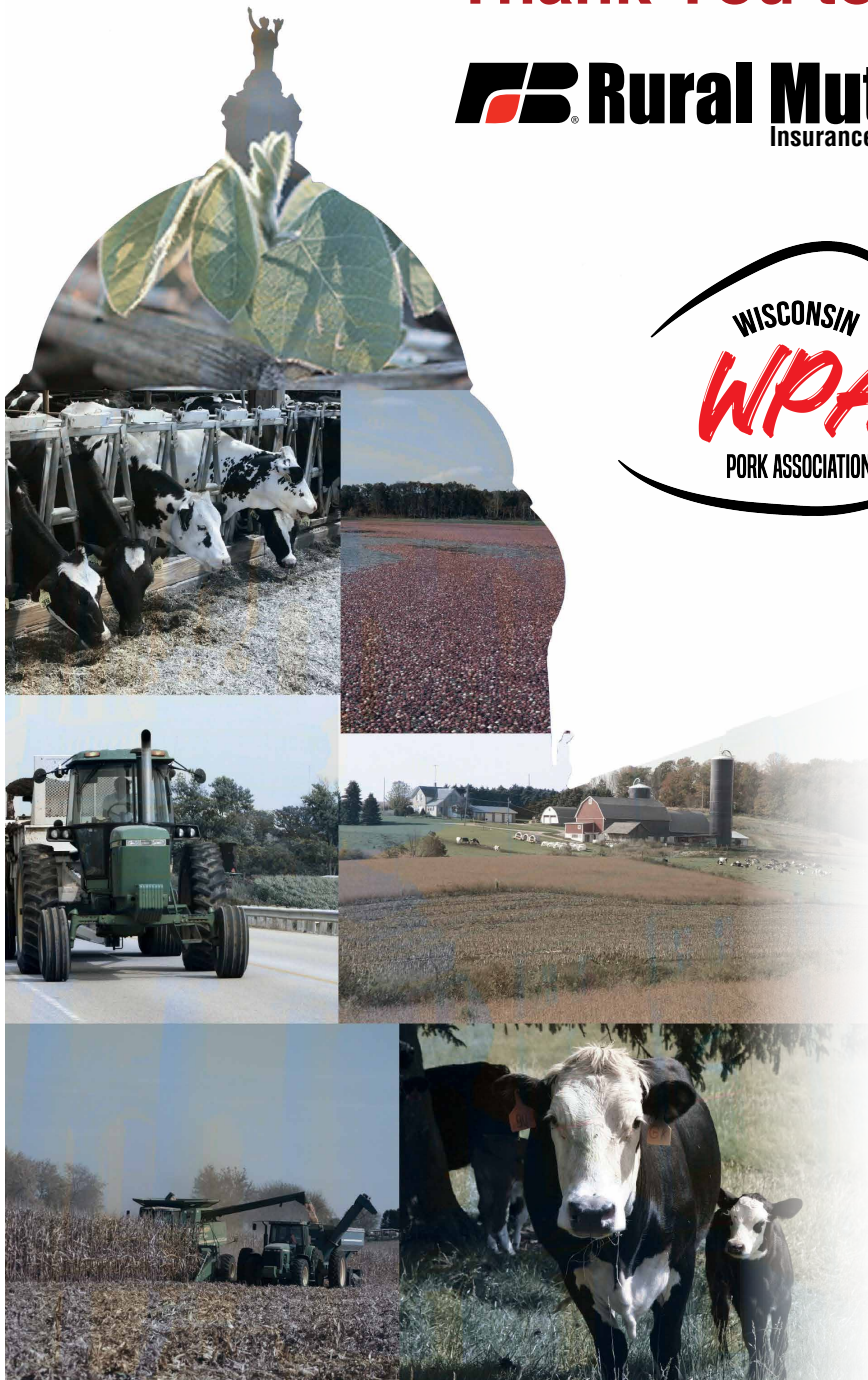
Presented by:  **Wisconsin Farm Bureau[®] Federation**

Thank You to Our Sponsors:

 **Rural Mutual**
Insurance Company



GROWMARK



Food Supply Chain Protection

Help address food supply chain challenges worsened by recent events.

TRANSPORTATION

ANIMAL HEALTH

LABOR

DISTRIBUTION/
AGGREGATION

Local Transportation

Critical Agricultural Road Improvement (DOT)

Wisconsin farmers' biggest hurdle to get products to market are the roads right outside their farms.

WFBF and the Wisconsin Ag Coalition are requesting \$150 million of one-time funding for improvements to local roads, culverts and small bridges which uniquely impact Wisconsin's agricultural economy. This program focuses on the infrastructure farms use most by providing grants to improve roads which are posted for weight restrictions. Funding would allow them to be built to standards that allows modern agricultural practices to operate.

"For one customer, we call them an hour out from delivery, meet them with their truck to offload ½ a feed load so we can continue to the farm to finish the delivery. It takes a lot of extra work, but if we don't do it this way, we are looking at an \$8,000 fine each time."

"When we have to drive milk on posted roads with weight restrictions and alternate routes, any efficiencies to keep costs low are just thrown out the window. Longer miles, thinner margins, lots of time wasted."

"Whether it's getting milk to a processor, spreading manure, or receiving feed, fuel, or other supplies, the impact these road restrictions have on the state's farmers are causing a huge ripple effect through the entire food supply chain!"

Animal Health and Disease Prevention

Increase in funding for critical animal disease outbreak prevention and traceability within the Wisconsin Livestock Identification Consortium program. (DATCP)

The Wisconsin Livestock Identification Consortium (WLIC) works to protect animal health and prevent the spread of disease through livestock. The recent outbreak of Avian Influenza and other emerging diseases has created greater workloads and additional costs. WFBF supports providing an additional \$100,000 annually to maintain critical animal disease outbreak prevention systems.

Wisconsin Diagnostic Veterinarian Lab (WDVL) Whole Genome Sequencing (UW)

WDVL is leading a national project protect bovine genetic material the event of a foreign animal disease outbreak in North America. WFBF supports funding to build whole genome sequencing (WGS) and next generation sequencing (NGS) fee-for-testing to support animal health and prevent animal disease outbreaks.



Labor Challenges

Support state bonding for a groundbreaking agricultural education center in Plover. (Capital Budget)

The Food+Farm Exploration Center will be a groundbreaking agricultural education center located in Plover. The goal of this project is to help citizens understand the many components of agriculture and how they intersect to bring food to the table. The Center will provide hands-on learning experiences, workforce development training for K-12, technical college, university students, and the public, as well as research plots and event and meeting spaces. To date, the Farming for the Future Foundation has raised \$26 million in private sector funding to support this \$36 million project. We support \$10 million in state funding to help this project be completed and open in 2023.

Reestablish a for-credit, on-campus Farm & Industry Short Course. (UW)

WFBF firmly supports the return of the University of Wisconsin's 137-year-old agricultural training program, the Farm & Industry Short Course. The 16-week residential program will now be hosted on UW-River Falls' campus, in collaboration with UW-Madison and UW-Platteville. It is imperative that the Farm & Industry Short Course remain as an in-person and for-credit course to provide the future of Wisconsin's agricultural workforce the hands-on experience they need.

Food Distribution & Aggregation

Support the continuation of the successful Wisconsin Commodity Food Bank Purchasing program. (DATCP)

Over the past two years, DATCP has created and administered a state commodity food purchasing program to supply Wisconsin foodbanks with Wisconsin commodities. This program was funded with federal funds during the pandemic. WFBF supports the continuation of this Wisconsin commodity food purchasing program. It will continue to allow Wisconsin farmers to connect with food banks and pantries to provide for families experiencing food insecurity. Please support \$10 million annually (\$20 million over the biennium) to continue this successful partnership between DATCP, Wisconsin's network of food banks and pantries and the Wisconsin agricultural producers.

Support to increase exportation of agricultural products by 25% by June 2026 (DATCP/WEDC)

The Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports was created in the 2021 legislative session with one goal in mind: boost the export of dairy, meat, crop and other agricultural products by 25 percent by June 2026. The strategic five-year plan details the ongoing implementation and benchmarks identified to achieve this goal. WFBF supports fulfilling the funding needs identified to help build Wisconsin's agricultural brand in international markets and increase agricultural exports.

Farmer-Led Conservation

Maintain funding for Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant program. (DATCP)

Support for agricultural producer-led groups that focus on nonpoint source pollution abatement activities in local watersheds has shown incredible results. DATCP grant-funded projects have prevented 219,638 pounds of phosphorus and 342,163 tons of soil from leaving farm fields on nearly 1 million acres across the state. In 2023, DATCP received 45 grant requests, totaling \$1.53 million. WFBF supports maintaining funding for this critical program.

Maintain funding for County Conservation staffing. (DATCP)

County conservation staff are critical to maintaining and implementing state conservation and agricultural programs. These positions are funded through DATCP's Soil and Water Resources Management Program budget. WFBF supports continued funding for county conservation staff to fulfill the state's obligation under Wis. Stat. s. 92.14(6)(b) nonpoint source pollution grant program.



Maintain funding for Agricultural Nonpoint Source Pollution program. (DNR)

DNR administers several grant programs to prevent or reduce nonpoint source water pollution. The targeted runoff management (TRM) program provides financial assistance to rural and agricultural projects addressing water quality concerns or impairments. Historically, the program has met a significant majority of funding requests, however in the last two years, TRM had only met 53% of demand. WFBF supports continued funding of the TRM program through general obligation bonding revenues by the nonpoint account of the segregated environmental fund.

Provide additional funding to incentivize practices to protect groundwater by increasing funding for crop insurance premium rebates for cover crops and farmer-led nitrate optimization grants. (DATCP)

WFBF supports increasing funding to encourage farmers to plant cover crops by providing \$1 million in each year of the biennium. Planting cover crops benefit the successful growth of future crops by limiting soil erosion, improving soil health, controlling weeds, pests, and diseases, increased biodiversity and can increase profitability. Despite funding being made available after a typical planting season, the program had 88% utilization in its first year.

The farmer-led nitrogen optimization grant program has attracted a lot of interest across the industry and received more requests than funding available. The legislature provided \$1.6 million over the 2021-23 biennium to provides grants to farmers to engage in two-year nitrogen conservation research projects on their farms working with UW System researchers. This farmer-led conservation is critical to driving improved agricultural innovation. WFBF supports funding this program with \$1 million in each year of the 2023-25 biennium. We further support expanding eligibility to projects utilizing nitrogen from any source.

Rural Prosperity

Support the Dairy Processor Grant program by providing funding to match industry demand for innovation, expansion and modernization grants. (DATCP)

These grants have provided Wisconsin's dairy industry with critical opportunities to modernize and expand creameries across the state. In the 2021-23 state budget, the Legislature provided an additional \$400,000. Due to the program's ongoing success, DATCP received 43 applications totaling over \$1.7 million. To match industry demand, WFBF supports expanding the Dairy Processor Grant program to \$1 million in each year of the biennium.

Support continued funding for the Dairy Innovation Hub. (UW)

Since its inception in 2019, the Dairy Innovation Hub has funded more than 130 research projects on dairy production and processing. More than 400 undergraduate and graduate students have collaborated on research or studied about modern dairy practices through the Hub. WFBF supports maintained funding of this industry-leading resource.

Support efforts to increase access to mental health resources in rural communities. (DATCP/DHS)

Mental health is a continued challenge across the state. However, in rural communities and farm families, these challenges are compounded by lack of access to resources, cultural stigmas, and substance abuse. In 2022, the Wisconsin Farm Center saw an all-time high farmer mental health voucher redemption rate and a 150% increase in participation in online support groups over the prior year. WFBF supports providing additional resources to the Wisconsin Farm Center to increase access to mental health resources for farmers and their families.

Provide an increase in funding for Ag in the Classroom (DATCP)

Wisconsin Ag in the Classroom program provides free, hands-on, and interactive agricultural teaching resources and lesson plans for teachers and classroom volunteers to help K-12 students develop an understanding of how their food is grown and raised. The program is funded by agricultural groups, through a grant from DATCP and by donations to the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Foundation. WFBF supports providing additional funding to maintain continued programing and future initiatives.

WFBF 2023-24 Legislative Session Priorities

Support LRB-2210 to modernize and simplify Wisconsin's Farmland Preservation tax credit program to combat farmland acreage loss and spur farmer participation.

The Farmland Preservation Program helps farms and local governments to preserve farmland and safeguard our soil and water from pollutants. While this program helps farmers to offset the cost of certain conservation practices, the program needs adjustment and modernization to remain a viable option for farmers continued participation. Support LRB-2210 to provide vital updates to this legacy program.

Support Senate Bill 66/Assembly Bill 74 to align Wisconsin law with the federal requirements on employee eligibility to obtain a Farm Service Commercial Driver's License.

Currently, employees who work 180 days or less in a farm service industry are eligible to get a Farm Service Commercial Driver's License (CDL). The federal bipartisan infrastructure Law recently changed this timeframe to 210 days or less. Senate Bill 66/Assembly Bill 74 would align Wisconsin statutes with federal law and allow Wisconsin drivers to operate under the same guidelines.



Help farms curb crop and livestock loss by co-sponsoring legislation to update Wisconsin's Wildlife Damage Abatement Program.

Create vital reforms to ensure that farmers aren't left with huge bills and less crops because of damages that are no fault of their own. Whether it be deer, elk, bear, birds or other critters, farmers are left on the hook when significant damage to their crops and herds occur by wildlife.

Co-sponsor LRB-0767 to establish a Community Solar Program.

Farmers know the best economic use for their land. Allowing these small innovative projects like these on 20-30 acres, which are compatible with farming operations, are a much better alternative to taking several thousand acres of quality farmland out of production.

Support Senate Bill 59/Assembly Bill 65 to expand eligibility and ease regulatory hurdles for Producer-Led Watershed Protection groups.

Senate Bill 59/Assembly Bill 65 will allow these farmer-led groups to expand their footprint and collaborate in adjacent watersheds and also capture additional funding for conservation practices through the Surface Water Grant Program.



THANK YOU for attending Ag Day at the Capitol. Your attendance strengthens the voice of Wisconsin agriculture.

A special thanks to the sponsors of Ag Day at the Capitol. Their support, promotion and attendance ensure that farmers are speaking with an informed, effective and unified voice.