



Wisconsin State Legislature

FOR MORE INFORMATION
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Celebrating June Dairy Month and Wisconsin's Ag Industry

There are 1.27 million dairy cows that call Wisconsin home and they are being celebrated this month during June Dairy Month in Wisconsin and across the nation. Today, I want to focus on the importance of agriculture and what all of these dairy cows mean to Wisconsin's economy because each one of those dairy cows typically generates over \$34,000 in economic activity each year. We are also known as "America's Dairyland" because Wisconsin has more than 9,500 dairy farms, more than any other state, and most of them are family owned. Wisconsin's dairy industry contributes \$43.4 billion to the state's economy each year and more than 78,900 people work in the dairy or related industries.

The dairy industry is part of the larger agricultural industry that is so critical to Wisconsin's economy and heritage. Agriculture contributes \$88.3 billion to the state's economy each year, with every dollar of agricultural activity generating an additional 79 cents for other parts of Wisconsin's economy. Our state's agricultural industry provides jobs; in fact 11.9 percent of the state's workforce, or 413,500 jobs, are in agriculture. Not only does the state lead the nation in the number of dairy farms, we are second in the nation for the total production, acres harvested, and value of production of the major processing vegetables such as snap beans, carrots, cucumbers and green peas. We lead the nation in cheese production with nearly 1,200 licensed cheesemakers producing over 600 varieties of cheese, almost double the number of any other state. In 2015, Wisconsin exported more than \$3.2 billion of agricultural products. Clearly, Wisconsin farmers have a lot to be proud of!

Those in the agricultural industry know that farming is about more than just selling the most crops, producing the best cheese or having the largest dairy farm. Farmers in our state are part of our communities and are keenly aware of the impact farming practices can have on the environment. This is why farmers have partnered with the UW-Extension on the UW Discovery Farms Program. The Discovery Farms program is a farmer-led research and outreach program focused on the relationship between agriculture and water quality. The program conducts research on privately-owned farms throughout the state and partners with University of Wisconsin faculty and farmers who serve on its steering committee. The program is currently working with more than 40 farmers on water quality monitoring and nitrogen use efficiency. They also initiate studies on special research projects on individual farms or covering multiple farm sites. An example of one of their current studies is called the “Nitrogen Use Efficiency Project” which will evaluate and hopefully provide a guide to effective nitrogen management decisions.

I was proud to work with my colleagues on the Joint Finance Committee to restore funding for the Discovery Farms program in the 2015-17 budget to continue this important partnership. To date, the Discovery Farms program has largely completed ten "core" farms studies intended to examine relationships between the type of soils in the state, land structure and water features, and different agricultural products and production methods. Participating farms have included an organic dairy farm, a no-till crop producer, large confinement dairy operations, a beef producer, a swine farm, and a dairy farm using management-intensive grazing. These studies have typically lasted five to seven years so that they can capture data based on multiple years of activity, different crop rotations and variability in weather seasons. The Discovery Farms program is planning additional core farm studies in the Janesville area and in Green Bay area watersheds.

The Discovery Farms program is just one of many state initiatives aimed at preserving and strengthening agriculture in the state. As we celebrate June Dairy Month, it is an excellent time to remember the contributions of agriculture to our state and our communities. I hope you've joined me in attending one of your community's farm breakfasts this month because it is

important to take a moment to recognize our hard-working farmers that continue Wisconsin's strong agricultural industry and earned our great state the recognition as "America's Dairyland."

If you have any questions about any of the information I have included or if you have suggestions on other topics or issues you would like learn more about, you may call my office toll-free at (800) 991-5541; write me at P.O. Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707; or e-mail me at: Sen.Olsen@legis.state.wi.us. You can also sign up for our newsletter at our website: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/senate/sen14/news/index.htm>.

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