



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Column from Rep. Joers & Rep. Prado: Supporting Small-Scale Farmers and Local Businesses

Economic uncertainty and instability from federal fiscal decisions have touched the lives of all Wisconsinites. Both farmers and manufacturers alike heavily rely on access to export markets, as well as the freedom to import materials used in daily operation from other countries.

Retaliatory tariffs issued by China, Canada, and the European Union in response to Trump's economic policies specifically target US agricultural and manufacturing industries, causing chaos in international agricultural and small-business markets.

The shifting industries directly impact Wisconsin farmers and their families due to the fact that Canada, China, and Mexico make up nearly half of Wisconsin's total imports. With these countries serving as Wisconsin's largest trading partners (Canada receiving 30.2% of WI exports, Mexico with 15.4%, and China at 5.3%), the federal tariffs and their accompanying international retaliatory tariffs are detrimentally impacting our state's economy. In total, according to the [American Farm Bureau Federation](#), tariffs could lower demand for U.S. agricultural exports by more than 20%.

The federal economic instability has also negatively affected Wisconsin local businesses. Approximately 87% of Wisconsin exporters are registered small businesses, and these exporters are likely to be disproportionately affected by the tariffs insofar as they are unable to relocate their production overseas as is common with larger corporations. Consequently, a [Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce](#) industry survey highlighted that sixty-three percent of respondents believe that Wisconsin is headed in the "wrong direction" economically.

To offset the effects of such legislation, Governor Tony Evers included numerous provisions in the 2025 – 2027 biennial budget released in February of this year to support small-scale farmers and local businesses. These programs total nearly \$80 million and include provisions to create new full-time positions in the *Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports* to help farmers navigate the recent tumult of the agricultural export markets that resulted from the newly-incited federal tariffs as well as to increase funding for the *Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Program* to overcome marketing, distribution, and processing hurdles, among many others.

We want these provisions to become law this year to better support hard-working Wisconsinites and their families, and we look forward to continuing our support of small-scale farmers and local businesses across the state of Wisconsin.

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