



BRAD PFAFF STATE SENATOR

Supporting Farmers in the Face of Global Uncertainty

Senator Brad Pfaff

Wisconsin farmers feed the world. Everyday people across the world enjoy the dairy and food products grown right here in America's Dairyland. But, if you know me, a farm kid, or have heard me talk throughout the year, you know I'm deeply concerned for our farmers and rural communities who produce these nutritious products and feed the world. Unfortunately, tariffs will make it more challenging for our farmers to export their products.

The farm economy is already tough enough with declining commodity prices and rising borrowing costs, so it's irresponsible to make matters worse through self-imposed obstacles, such as tariffs. While we can't control the weather and have limited influence over disease outbreaks, the federal government should not add insult to injury by launching trade wars that hurt our farmers' bottom lines. At a time when hardworking farmers are already experiencing razor-thin margins, the impact of tariffs on small family farms may be the last straw for many.

Wisconsin exported nearly \$4 billion worth of agricultural products last year, making it clear that consumers outside of the United States want to eat high-quality, Wisconsin products. I do agree that we must secure better trade deals for our producers and that fair trade should be a priority, but doing so at the risk of farmers' livelihoods is not the best solution.

In the first three months of 2025, more farms filed for bankruptcy than in the first three months of 2024. This concerning trend serves as a reminder of what farmers experienced in 2018 and 2019, when the administration's tariffs disrupted trade markets.

Tariffs threaten to eliminate the global markets that Wisconsin farmers rely on to export their homegrown goods. Put simply, without robust market access, farmers can't sell their products or turn a profit. Losing these markets could hurt the agricultural sector for years to come. The irresponsible tariff trade war must end—but until then, and even beyond, we need innovative state-level solutions to support Wisconsin's producers and farmers.

One such solution is expanding local markets to help offset losses in international markets. Unfortunately, the federal government has cut programs that support local food systems, such as the Wisconsin Local Food Purchase Assistance Program. This initiative enabled farmers to distribute through local supply chains via grant contracts, but it was eliminated in March. Losing access to locally grown, high-quality nutrition hurts both farmers and communities and could increase food insecurity across Wisconsin.

To help address this devastating cut, Representative Jenna Jacobson (D-Oregon) and I introduced a bill to create the Agricultural Purchase Program (APP). The program would strengthen Wisconsin's local food infrastructure by offering grants to local organizations, like food pantries and churches, to purchase food grown or produced in Wisconsin.

The Agricultural Purchase Program is a win-win. Our farmers benefit from a more stable local market, and rural areas gain access to a stronger food supply chain that provides nutritious, Wisconsin-grown products to our most vulnerable residents.

Putting Wisconsin farmers through another trade war will have devastating consequences, especially at a time when farm income is declining and input costs continue to rise. Farmers have already put seed in the ground and made investments in this year's crop. We cannot abandon key markets in times of economic stress, nor can we turn our backs on our fellow community members.

I recognize the economic struggles facing Wisconsin farmers and rural communities, and I remain committed to keeping their interests front and center.