



**BRAD PFAFF**  
**STATE SENATOR**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Farming is in our DNA**

Agriculture continues to grow and evolve. Sixteen and twenty four row corn planters have largely replaced the old four and six row planter. The majority of our state's hay crop is no longer harvested with "kicker" balers. Although the way we farm has changed, agriculture's significance in Wisconsin — culturally, socially and economically — continues to remain strong.

I grew up on a farm, raised with farm values in northern La Crosse County. Farming is in my DNA; it's in Wisconsin's DNA. As Wisconsin's former Agriculture Secretary and now State Senator, I share the pride that Wisconsin farmers and rural residents have for their work and communities.

Our agriculture industry is strong, creating a \$107 billion economic impact annually for our state with dairy accounting for nearly \$50 billion, but for Wisconsin agriculture to continue moving forward we need to create new markets, invest in infrastructure, fund conservation, keep our communities strong, and connect farmers with consumers.

We must create new markets. Expanding dairy and meat processing provides our farmers with new value-added product development opportunities. Opening new markets for our farmers extends beyond food; it includes renewable energy, ethanol, and biodiesel. Even small-scale solar and wind turbines that do not take valuable farmland out of production can open new revenue streams for Wisconsin farmers.

The economic success of agriculture relies upon a strong transportation system, but for too long, our rural roads and bridges have not seen enough investment. I'm proud to have voted for increased transportation funding in the last state budget, but there is more we must do. This session, I am a cosponsor of a bill which would create the Agriculture Road Improvement Program, giving them the investment they need and helping our farmers move their product to market. This will build upon the investments we have made in our western Wisconsin ports and other infrastructure.

As a member of the Governor's Task Force on Broadband Access, I recognize we need to continue to invest in broadband. Our world has grown increasingly connected through the internet, and in turn, accessible, affordable broadband is essential to participate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.

Farmers do more than just produce food, fiber, and fuel; they act as stewards of our land, conserving soil and enhancing water quality. Programs like the Farmland Preservation Program, producer-led watershed grants, and cover crop rebates have provided farmers with financial incentives for employing reliable conservation practices. Funding these conservation programs is a win-win, a win for production agriculture and a win for our environment.

Keeping our communities strong means investing in education, job training, and health care. When we fund rural schools and agriculture education programs like FFA, we make our communities better places to live and attract the next generation. When we expand BadgerCare, lower prescription drug prices, and fund farmer mental health support, we help Wisconsinites save money and enhance their quality of life.

Importantly, we need to continue to link the farmers who grow our food with consumers. This means expanding Wisconsin school lunch and breakfast programs with an emphasis on Wisconsin grown products. Wisconsin farmers provide nutritious and healthy food every day that kids enjoy, such as milk, yogurt, cheese, fresh fruit and vegetables. These meals improve student health, reducing the chances of obesity, diabetes, and other health conditions. This connects to food banks and food pantries as well. When we support food assistance programs who want to purchase locally sourced food, we in turn support farmers.

As we celebrate Wisconsin's legacy of dairy and agriculture throughout June Dairy Month, I stand ready to continue working for Wisconsin's family farmers.

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*Senator Brad Pfaff represents the 32nd Senate District, which includes La Crosse, Vernon, Crawford, and southern Monroe County.*