

## Fighting for America's Dairyland

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***We need a meaningful and comprehensive approach to help our farmers and rural communities succeed.***

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MADISON - When you say 'Wisconsin' what is the first thing that comes to mind? For me, I think 'America's Dairyland.' As Wisconsinites, that title is something we take deep pride in, knowing that our state produces the finest milk and cheese in the nation.

It isn't surprising that Wisconsin produces more than 26 percent of the nation's cheese and accounts for more than 14 percent of the nation's milk productions. Between cheese, dairy and vegetables, agriculture contributes almost \$105 billion to our state's economy.

What's easy to forget is the people whose sweat, hard work, perseverance, and dedication built the foundation of our state pride.

Despite this honorable farming heritage, Wisconsin has been losing dairy farms at an alarming

rate – roughly two farms a day – and our state leads the nation in farm bankruptcies. We cannot abandon those generations of families that have dedicated their lives to feeding our families and communities.



Our local farm families are the backbone of communities across Wisconsin, but the federal trade war is making it impossible for many to stay afloat. Rather than closing markets and eliminating trade opportunities, we should be supporting our local farmers and helping them compete on a level playing field.

The time for action is now, and Governor Evers is seizing this moment by calling a special session for the legislature to address these challenges head on. The package of bills he announced in his State of the State address aim to do the following: create the Wisconsin Initiative for Dairy Exports to help build Wisconsin's dairy brand in international markets, expand the Farm Center that currently provides no-cost services to farmers, increase staffing at UW Extension to ensure farmers have partners and resources closer to home, and help connect farmers and their produce to local universities, tech colleges, hospitals and businesses through a farm-to-fork program.

Additionally, the Governor wants to expand rural access to broadband services, improve access to affordable health care, and help rural communities harness the technologies, opportunities and jobs of the renewable energy economy.

This is a meaningful and comprehensive approach to help our farmers and rural communities succeed.

By promoting financial security and expanding economic opportunities, we can support Wisconsin's family farmers and ensure everyone can enjoy healthy, affordable and locally-grown food options.

My Democratic colleagues and I remain committed to working with Gov. Evers to advance these bold solutions and improve the economic security and prosperity of Wisconsin rural

communities.

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