



**WISCONSIN
CHEESE MAKERS
ASSOCIATION**

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NEWS RELEASE

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USDA Releases DBI Funds Following Industry Advocacy

MADISON, WI – Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association (WCMA) is applauding news that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is today releasing Congressionally-directed funding for the federal Dairy Business Innovation (DBI) Initiatives. USDA froze DBI grant monies last week, triggering grave concern for hundreds of dairy farmers and processors, and sparking a national advocacy push.

"The release of this critical grant funding comes as an enormous relief to dairy farmers and processors who had earned grants and needed reimbursement from USDA for business improvements already made," said Rebekah Sweeney, WCMA Senior Director of Programs & Policy. "We want to express our thanks for USDA's expedited review of this program and today's decision, and thanks to the dairy leaders who pushed to secure all committed funds, and to the members of Congress who championed our cause – in particular, Senator Tammy Baldwin and Representative Derrick Van Orden of Wisconsin."

This week, WCMA led a comprehensive advocacy campaign for the release of DBI funds, with staff and dairy processors meeting with Congressional leaders in Washington DC, joined by partners from International Dairy Foods Association. WCMA directly communicated with USDA leadership and coordinated a letter to the agency from 120 businesses in 29 states.

There are four DBI centers across the country, housed in California, Tennessee, Vermont, and Wisconsin to serve dairy farmers and processors regionally, supporting them with technical assistance, market analysis, research and development, as well as direct-to-business grants. All four DBI centers have now been notified of the USDA release of funding, and reimbursement requests from businesses may resume immediately. A total of 420 dairy farmers and processors were impacted by the freeze of \$28.6 million in awarded monies.

"The targeted, small-dollar investments in dairy businesses provided through DBI have helped to stabilize and strengthen our nation's food supply chain and rural economies," said Sweeney. "We're grateful for the opportunity to continue this important work, and will push for increased DBI funding in the year ahead, alongside our allies in industry and in Congress."



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WCMA, in partnership with the Center for Dairy Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, runs the Wisconsin-based DBI center, serving businesses in Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin. Since this center's launch in 2019, it has awarded over \$20 million in more than 250 grants to small and medium-sized dairy businesses.

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