



## The Importance of Agricultural Exports for Wisconsin

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*Editor's note: A photo of Secretary Randy Romanski can be found [here](#)*

*A commentary by Secretary Romanski of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP)*

MADISON, Wis. – Each year, we celebrate National Ag Day in March. In Wisconsin, agriculture contributes \$116.3 billion annually to the state's economy, and about one in ten people working in the state hold a job related to the industry. These statistics are just a few that demonstrate the central role and impact of agriculture in Wisconsin.

Gov. Evers recently introduced his fourth biennial budget, and, like his previous budgets, his investments lead the way on agriculture. This includes strategic investments in conservation, market development, and supports for farmers and agriculture. Many of the Governor's previous investments have been bipartisan wins, and I am hopeful that this continues. As I have long said, there is more we agree upon than we disagree on. I am optimistic that the legislature will review the Governor's budget and support the ongoing investments in agriculture included in this budget cycle.

Included in the Governor's budget is a doubling of the investment in the Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports (WIAE). State funding to help promote food and agriculture exports was first proposed by Gov. Evers in his 2021-23 budget, and I am glad that the Governor continues to invest in this valuable program at DATCP. While things continue to evolve and remain uncertain at the federal level with tariffs and trade negotiations, it is more important than ever to continue our momentum with Wisconsin agricultural exports. In 2024, DATCP staff supported dozens of trade missions and in-bound buyer missions with Wisconsin agribusinesses. Notably, the year was the second highest year on record for the state with \$3.97 billion in food, forestry, and agriculture exports.

Wisconsin's agricultural exports are diverse, and the state ranks first in the export of specialty cheeses, ginseng roots, prepared/preserved cranberries, mink, dairy bovine genetics, and prepared meats. Due to the hard work of Wisconsin producers, processors, and agribusinesses, as well as the support of programs like the WIAE, the past four years of the state's exports are the top four years on record. The Governor's proposed investments in the WIAE seek to build on this momentum and provide opportunities for Wisconsin agribusinesses to share Wisconsin products with people across the world.

Throughout the past few years, whether a business is hoping to export for the first time or currently exporting and seeking new markets, the DATCP team and the investments in the WIAE have been here to help. Wisconsin agribusinesses utilize these services to support their relationship building, navigating foreign markets, and providing opportunities at shows and exhibitions. The WIAE is critical to the work DATCP does to support Wisconsin farmers and processors as they create and export world-renowned products.

On the heels of Wisconsin moving up to 12th in the United States for food, forestry, and agriculture exports, there is additional incentive for the state to invest in our food, forestry, and agriculture exports through the 2025-27 budget. It is clear that agriculture is part of our past, present, and future and we cannot lose momentum for that future. By continuing to support agricultural exports, we continue to support Wisconsin agribusinesses while we strengthen old and find new markets abroad. On March 19, 2025, just a day after National Ag Day, we will celebrate Ag Trade Day in Wisconsin and across the nation. Thankfully, in Wisconsin, we have much to celebrate.

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