



Wisconsin DATCP – A Resource and Partner

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

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

MADISON, Wis. – In 2023, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection worked to provide services, implement new programs, and continue to serve as a resource to the citizens of the state. While there were ongoing challenges this year, such as again responding to cases of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in commercial and backyard flocks, there were also numerous accomplishments.

Looking back on 2023, DATCP remained committed to strengthening the agriculture industry in Wisconsin. In Governor Evers' 2023 – 2025 State Budget, he included increased funding for both the Meat Processor Infrastructure Grants and Dairy Processor Grants. DATCP provided grants through these programs to assist with the long-term viability of the state's processing facilities. Additionally, DATCP licensed 18 new official meat establishments and nine custom meat establishments.

In 2023, DATCP used state funding to offer both crop insurance premium rebates for planting cover crops and Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program research grants. Just last month, DATCP announced the availability of \$800,000 for crop insurance premium rebates for planting cover crops and \$1 million for Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program research grants. These funds will further strengthen Wisconsin's land and water resources, while encouraging the planting of cover crops and research about nitrogen application.

The Wisconsin Farm Center at DATCP remains dedicated to providing free and confidential services to farmers. In fiscal year 2023, there were 217 farmer mental health counseling vouchers redeemed, which is the highest in program history. This increase can be attributed to many factors, including consistent funding from the Governor and legislature for farmer mental health programming, as well as the work of the staff at DATCP's Farm Center to reach farmers in the field and on the farm. This year also saw additional calls to the 24/7 Farmer Wellness Helpline (888-901-2558). As we enter the New Year, remember that this free and confidential helpline is always available to farmers who may be struggling with depression, anxiety, or chronic stress.

Through DATCP's partnerships at the state and federal levels, the agency was able to provide new programs to the industry this year. In order to strengthen local food systems and provide essential nutrients to those who face food insecurity, DATCP continued to work to implement the Wisconsin Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) Program. DATCP is also working to implement the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) Program, which aims to build resilience across the middle of the supply chain and strengthen local food systems.

This year, DATCP continued its efforts to share Wisconsin's top-notch products with stakeholders across the world through the work of the state's Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports (WIAE). In the past fiscal year, more than 180 dairy, meat, and crop companies participated in trade activities and attended trainings with DATCP. DATCP staff developed and led 34 trade promotion activities and provided more than 1,900 consulting services.

In 2023, DATCP's consumer protection team remained committed to reaching consumers across the state to share important information to prevent common scams and identify theft. In fact, the team expanded its presentation catalog to offer several new presentations to Wisconsin

consumers and businesses. By the end of 2023, DATCP staff will give more than 470 presentations sharing valuable information about consumer protection in the state, doubling the number of presentations provided in the previous year.

We have much to be thankful for, and I believe we have even more to look forward to in the New Year. In 2024, DATCP will continue to partner with the citizens of Wisconsin to grow the economy by promoting quality food, healthy plants and animals, sound use of land and water resources, and a fair marketplace.

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