



WISCONSIN INITIATIVE FOR AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS

2021–2026 REPORT

Table of Contents

Key Takeaways page 3

Introduction page 4

Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports

Overview..... page 4

Wisconsin Agricultural Export Advisory Council..... page 4

Trade Promotion Activities..... page 5

Grant Programs..... page 5

5-Year Program Results

Overview..... page 5

Overall Results..... page 6

Dairy Results page 6

Meat Results..... page 8

Crop Results..... page 10

FY21–FY26 Trade Promotions page 11

Wisconsin Company Map 2021–2025

Overview..... page 12

Dairy Companies page 13

Meat Companies page 13

Crop Companies page 13

Program Successes

Export Expansion Grant and IMAG Programs..... page 14

Export Expansion Grant Highlights

Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin..... page 15

Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association page 16

Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association page 17

Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory..... page 18

IMAG Program Highlights

The DeLong Co., Inc..... page 19

GENEX..... page 20

WIAE Survey Results page 20

Challenges..... page 22

Program Growth page 23

Key Takeaways

- **The last five years are the highest five years of agricultural exports on record for Wisconsin.**
- **In 2025, the Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports (WIAE) supported 84 Wisconsin companies and 12 organizations through WIAE-funded trade promotion activities.**
- **Funding for this program over the last five years has created relationships between Wisconsin agribusinesses and foreign markets.**
- **Wisconsin is now the 11th largest exporter of agricultural products in the United States.**



Introduction

Governor Evers and the Wisconsin State Legislature authorized an investment of \$1 million per year for five years to support a partnership between the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) in the 2021-2023 state budget. This effort created the Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports (WIAE), administered by DATCP's International Agribusiness Center (IABC) in collaboration with WEDC to increase Wisconsin's share of global markets for agricultural products.

As part of the state budget, Governor Evers enacted objectives that required DATCP and WEDC to increase the value of Wisconsin's milk and other dairy exports, meat and meat products exports, and crop and crop product exports by 25 percent over their value as of December 31, 2021, by June 30, 2026. The enacted legislation also required a report to be submitted to the legislature that showed the [program enactment plan](#) and an update which [outlined program progress](#) made in achieving a 25% increase in exports by June 30, 2024.

With actions in Washington D.C. causing chaos and uncertainty in international agricultural markets, the Governor proposed investing an additional \$2 million plus staff resources in his 2025-27 biennial budget for the Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports to further strengthen the program. Specifically, his budget included a new full-time position to help farmers navigate the challenges of agricultural export markets at the state level amid the impacts of trade uncertainty at the federal level. Unfortunately, the Legislature rejected this proposal.

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the international trade activities that DATCP and WEDC developed and participated in to promote export growth in Wisconsin since the enactment of the program in 2021.

Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports

The WIAE's initial efforts focused on trade promotion activities, financial support, export consultation and education, and marketing promotion assistance to promote and support agribusiness export opportunities. As the program evolves, the WIAE continues to leverage funding from the Governor and legislature, as well as federal programs, to achieve the statutory objectives by continuing participation in the following export activities:

Wisconsin Agricultural Export Advisory Council

The Wisconsin Agricultural Export Advisory Council (WAXC) was created under s. 15.04(1)(c), Stats. to advise the DATCP Secretary on strategies, make recommendations, and to evaluate WIAE progress toward its objectives. WAXC provides a platform for industry representatives to collaborate on current issues, inform on challenges and future opportunities across product sectors, and to promote agribusiness export movement in Wisconsin.

DATCP holds semi-annual meetings that consist of two full council and two industry-driven meetings. The council guides the initiatives created through WIAE and consists of international trade experts from WEDC and DATCP, state legislators, agriculture organizations, and agribusiness representing crop, dairy, and meat products.

Trade Promotion Activities

Part of the WIAE mission is to enhance and expand trade promotion activities. The IABC team hosts trade promotion activities in Wisconsin and throughout the world to increase product visibility, sales, and market awareness while promoting export activities and connecting partners at trade shows, outbound buyers' missions, and inbound buyers' missions.

Grant Programs

DATCP has partnered with WEDC to support the International Market Access Grant (IMAG) program. Coordinated by WEDC, the IMAG program provides funding to help companies implement targeted export development and market expansion strategies. Through WIAE, dedicated funding was established specifically for Wisconsin agribusinesses to support and advance their export goals.

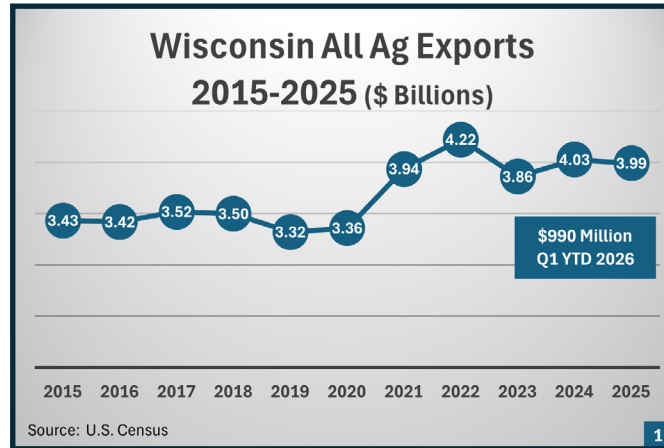
In addition, DATCP administers its own Export Expansion Grant Program, which is designed to accelerate the growth of Wisconsin dairy, meat, and crop exports by supporting innovative approaches to expanding agricultural products into international markets. Applicants must be not-for-profit organizations located in Wisconsin that are currently serving or can serve Wisconsin agribusinesses.

5-Year Program Results

The WIAE objectives as stated in statute were to increase dairy, meat, and crop exports by 25% over the value as of December 31, 2021. Since the launch of WIAE, exports have been impacted by a constrained and volatile global trade environment, the COVID-19 pandemic, buyer uncertainty, disruptions in U.S. processing capacity, and recent tariff and trade disputes. While Wisconsin did not achieve the 25% increase across all agricultural export categories due to significant global market disruptions, WIAE contributed to measurable export growth in key sectors, particularly dairy, which increased 35% from 2021 to 2025. The initiative also significantly expanded Wisconsin's global trade engagement, increased the number of export ready agribusinesses, diversified international market outreach, and strengthened long-term export infrastructure and partnerships. This expansion and growth is punctuated by the fact that in 2021, Wisconsin was the 13th largest exporter of agricultural products in the United States. As of 2025, Wisconsin was the 11th largest exporter of agricultural products in the United States.

5-Year Program Results cont.

Overall Results



Wisconsin's agricultural exports (in billions) from 2015-2025.



Wisconsin's top five markets for all agricultural exports for years 2021, 2024, and 2025.

Wisconsin food, forestry, and agriculture product exports reached \$3.99 billion in 2025, the third highest year on record. This is an increase of 1.38% above 2021, the base year for WIAE. In total, there was a \$54,373,750 increase in agriculture exports from December 21, 2021. Since that time, dairy exports have increased considerably, and meat and crop exports have weathered trade disruptions with concerted effort toward market development.

As a whole, the last five years of agricultural exports are the highest five years on record. This performance underscores the continued strength, resilience, and global competitiveness of Wisconsin's agricultural products, alongside growth and diversification in several key markets. Representing 63% of Wisconsin's total agricultural exports, the top five markets in order are Canada, Mexico, China, Korea, and Japan.

Dairy Results

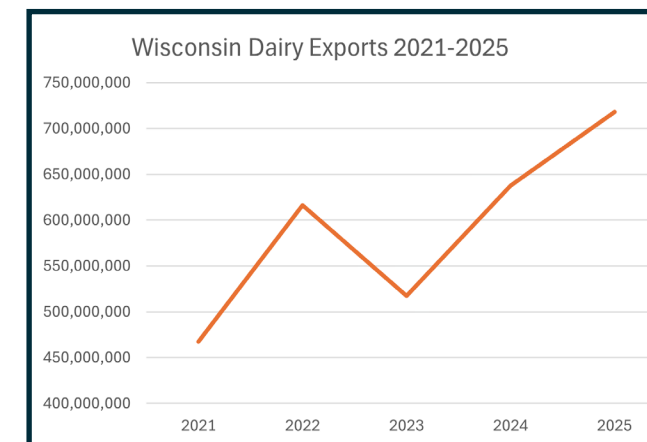
Wisconsin dairy exports increased from \$467 million in 2021 to \$718 million in 2025, representing 35% growth. Utilizing WIAE funding, DATCP and Wisconsin agribusinesses have been able to expand Wisconsin cheese into international markets. Globally, dairy products are increasingly recognized as a healthy and accessible source of protein, and as countries improve nutritional standards and household incomes rise, protein is often among the first additions consumers make to their diets. Wisconsin's specialty cheese sector has also benefited from growing demand among middle and higher-income consumers worldwide, where these products are viewed as premium, high-quality offerings.



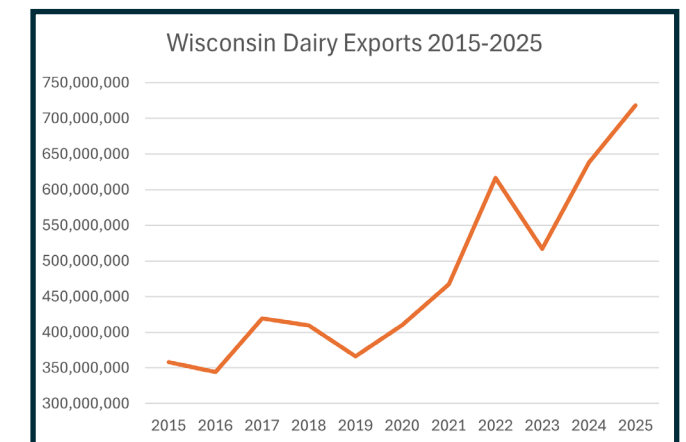
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Continued efforts to expand dairy exports remain a priority, as dairy is one of Wisconsin's signature industries and offers products that can meet the needs of consumers across all income levels. The industry has faced challenges in certain markets, including regulatory restrictions, President Trump's tariff barriers, and the need to introduce Wisconsin's lesser-known artisanal and specialty cheeses on a broader world stage. Consumer education and strong collaboration with industry partners have been critical in overcoming these barriers and strengthening Wisconsin's reputation abroad. Dairy's share of Wisconsin agricultural exports also increased significantly, rising from 12% in 2021 to 18% in 2025.

Wisconsin's dairy export growth is driven by a coordinated network of partnerships that bring together state agencies, industry organizations, and external partners to build sustained market access and expand global demand. Recent examples include WIAE-supported Wisconsin Cheese trade promotion activities in Thailand in partnership with Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin (DFW) and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), which expanded product presence and strengthened buyer relationships across Southeast Asia, as well as Fine Food Australia 2025, where Wisconsin companies engaged importers and distributors across Oceania in collaboration with DFW and federal partners.



Trends in Wisconsin dairy exports from 2021-2025.



Trends in Wisconsin dairy exports from 2015-2025.

5-Year Program Results cont.

Dairy Results cont.

Additional efforts include USDA-led trade missions to Indonesia and the Philippines focused on expanding dairy demand in high-growth markets, WEDC-led trade engagement in Mexico supporting Wisconsin's largest dairy export destination, and Food Export-coordinated charcuterie-focused buyer missions that integrate Wisconsin cheese into higher-value retail and foodservice applications. These activities are complemented by inbound programs such as European cheese buyer delegations to Wisconsin and World Dairy Expo-linked international feed and livestock buyer missions, which provide direct exposure to Wisconsin production systems and strengthen understanding of product quality and differentiation. Together, these coordinated initiatives demonstrate a deliberate strategy of combining in-market promotion, inbound education, and public-private collaboration to expand Wisconsin dairy exports and strengthen long-term global demand.

Wisconsin dairy exports increased from \$467 million in 2021 to \$718 million in 2025, representing 35% growth.

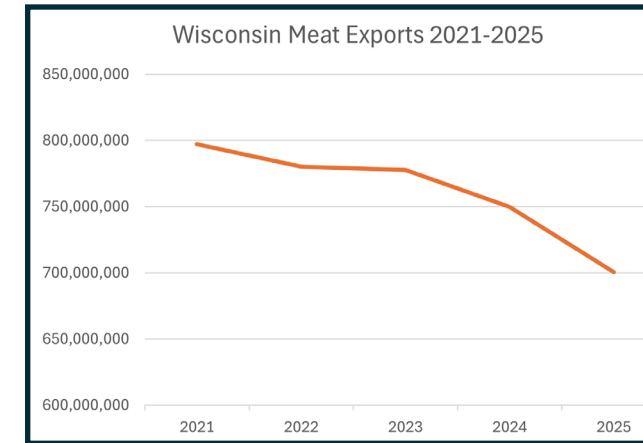


Meat Results

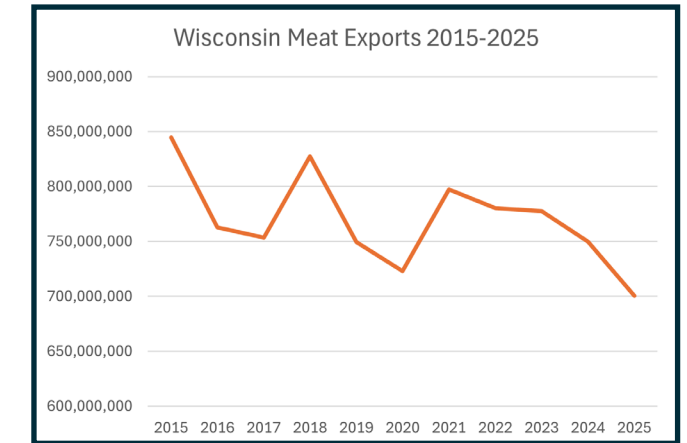
Wisconsin meat exports declined from \$797 million in 2021 to \$700 million in 2025, a decrease of 14%. Several market conditions contributed to this decline. Rising domestic meat prices, driven in part by drought conditions and reduced U.S. cattle inventories, have made Wisconsin beef less price-competitive in global markets. As a result, many international buyers have increasingly sourced meat from lower-cost suppliers such as Argentina and Brazil. Exports of bovine genetics also declined due to regulatory disputes between the United States and China, creating ripple effects across the broader livestock export market. China, traditionally a top trading partner for Wisconsin agribusinesses, has had a marked decline in exports due to these disputes.

Although meat exports declined during this period due to global pricing pressures, reduced cattle inventories, and trade disruptions, WIAE helped position Wisconsin businesses for future export growth through targeted buyer education, livestock genetics promotion, inbound trade missions, and expansion into higher-value premium market segments. Additionally, live cattle exports have increased as foreign governments seek to strengthen domestic livestock production and food security. Livestock purchases in several markets have created new opportunities for Wisconsin exporters. Ongoing WIAE efforts continue to position Wisconsin beef, livestock, and genetic products for future export growth despite current market challenges.

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Trends in Wisconsin meat exports from 2021-2025.



Trends in Wisconsin meat exports from 2015-2025.

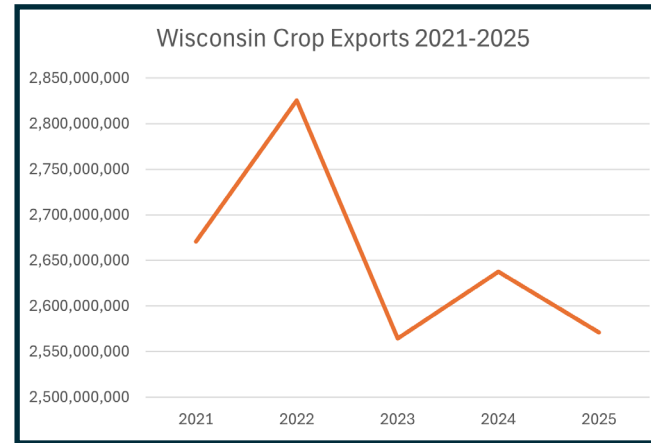
To address challenges and reverse the downward trend in meat exports, Wisconsin is actively pursuing a more targeted and diversified export development strategy focused on expanding demand in high-growth and underserved markets. This includes WIAE-supported trade promotion activities such as buyer-focused education and training programs in Africa to strengthen understanding of U.S. meat and livestock genetics, as well as targeted market development events such as the charcuterie-focused trade mission in Mexico designed to position Wisconsin products within higher-value retail and foodservice applications.

Additional WIAE efforts include participation in strategic inbound trade events such as the 2025 World Dairy Expo, which reinforced commercial relationships and assisted in identifying new distribution channels. Across these activities, the emphasis is on shifting from transactional export promotion to

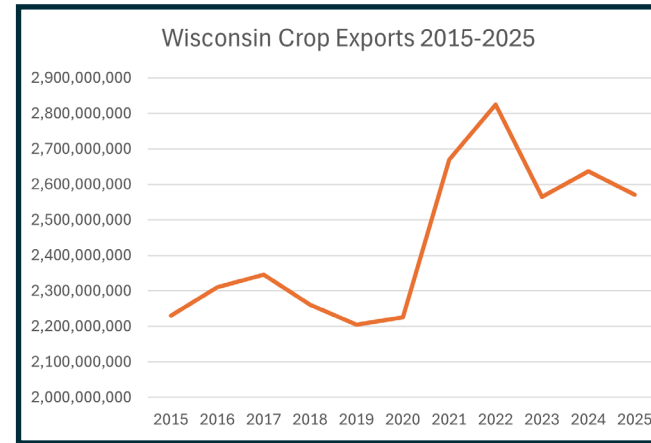
sustained market building. This comes through expanding buyer knowledge, strengthening in-market partnerships, and positioning Wisconsin meat, livestock, and genetics products in premium and experience-driven consumption channels where differentiation and quality can overcome cost competitiveness constraints.

5-Year Program Results cont.

Crop Results



Trends in Wisconsin crop exports from 2021-2025.



Trends in Wisconsin crop exports from 2015-2025.

Wisconsin crop exports decreased slightly from \$2.67 billion in 2021 to \$2.57 billion in 2025, representing a 3.9% decline. This category includes a broad range of agricultural products outside of dairy and meat, meaning multiple market factors influenced overall performance. Declines were seen in prepared vegetables and wood products, particularly in exports destined for Canada. Additionally, China, traditionally a top trading partner, had a considerable decline in exports affecting products such as ginseng, corn, and soybeans. At the same time, food preparations experienced growth, increasing by \$86 million during the period, helping offset declines in other product categories.

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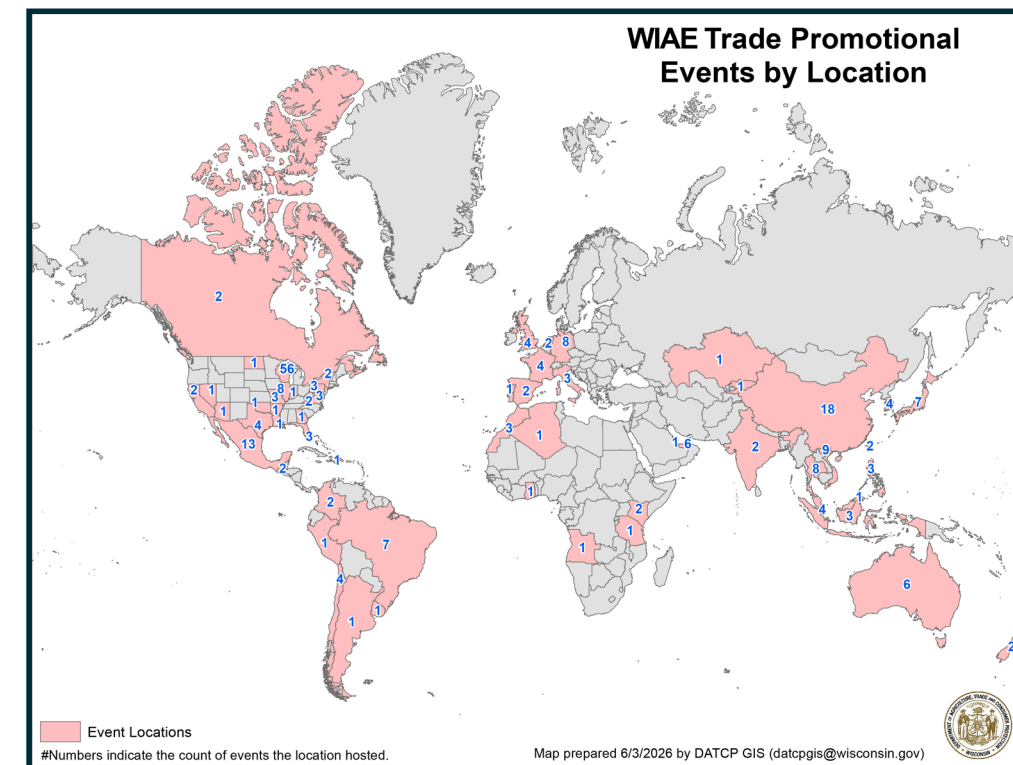
The decrease reflects a combination of softening demand in key legacy markets such as China and Mexico, increased global competition in bulk and intermediate crop commodities, and persistent market access constraints in certain destinations, particularly Canada. To reverse this trend, Wisconsin is prioritizing market diversification and growth in higher-value crop and food preparation categories through targeted trade promotion activities. These activities include WIAE-supported international trade shows, outbound trade missions, and buyer engagement programs in emerging markets.

Efforts are also focused on expanding access in Latin America, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia, while strengthening in-market relationships, improving buyer pipelines, and supporting companies in shifting from bulk commodities to differentiated, value-added export products.

FY21-FY26 Trade Promotions

In FY22, IABC supported five trade promotion activities focused primarily on North America and Europe. By FY23, activities increased to 26 trade promotion activities and expanded into new regions including Africa, Asia, Central America, the Middle East, Oceania, and South America.

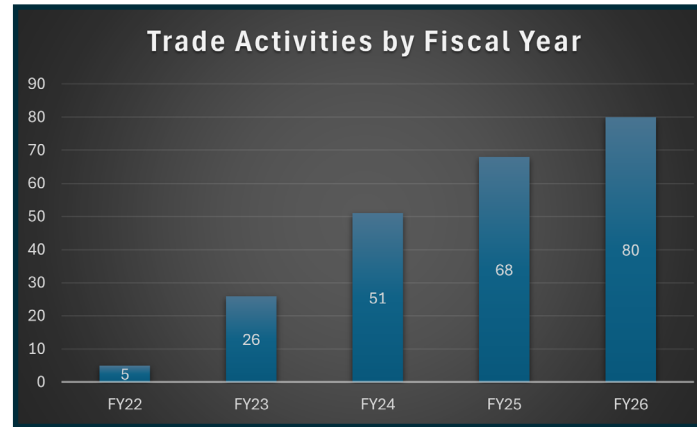
Growth accelerated further in FY24 with 51 trade promotion activities spanning Africa, Asia, Central America, Europe, the Middle East, North America, Oceania, and South America. In FY25, the program reached 68 activities across all major global regions, demonstrating continued diversification of export markets and stronger international outreach. Finally, in FY26 IABC conducted 80 trade promotion activities, maintaining engagement across Africa, Asia, Central America, Europe, the Middle East, North America, Oceania, and South America.



The image above shows the reach of the IABC trade promotion activities over the past five fiscal years, reflecting growing global engagement by Wisconsin agribusinesses and increasing international demand for Wisconsin products.

5-Year Program Results cont.

FY21-FY26 Trade Promotions cont.



Wisconsin's trade activities have increased every fiscal year, from five activities in FY22 to 80 in FY26.



Wisconsin's trade activities vary per region, but tops out at 104 activities in North America.

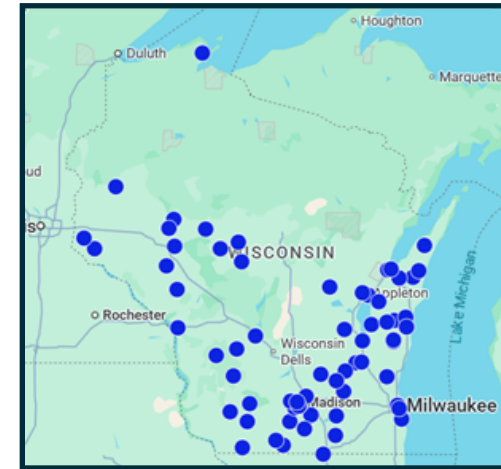
Through these efforts, more than 160 Wisconsin-based companies participated in trade promotion activities. This figure reflects companies headquartered or substantially based in Wisconsin and excludes firms without a Wisconsin headquarters or operational presence, such as companies with only distribution or representative activities in the state. Since the launch of WIAE, participating Wisconsin businesses have included dairy, meat, crop, and value-added agricultural companies across the state. These businesses ranged from small, family-owned processors and farms to larger corporations, demonstrating that WIAE support reached companies of different sizes, sectors, and export-readiness levels.

Wisconsin Company Map 2021-2025

WIAE-supported activities benefit agribusinesses across rural and urban Wisconsin communities, supporting companies and helping to strengthen export opportunities tied to Wisconsin manufacturing, dairy processing, livestock production, specialty foods, forestry products, and value-added agriculture.

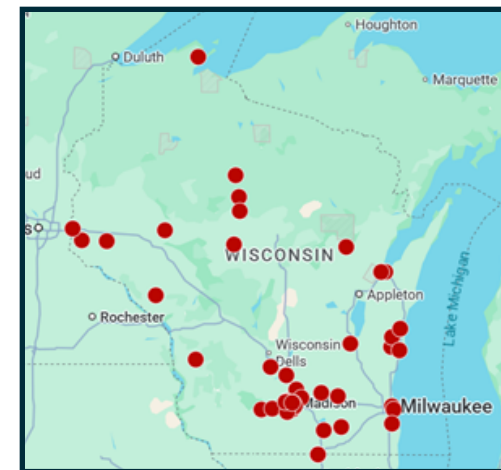
“WIAE support has really helped Wisconsin’s wood industry get in front of more international buyers and tell our story. It gives us opportunities to showcase the quality of Wisconsin forestry products, build relationships in key markets, and open doors that can lead to long-term export growth for Wisconsin companies and communities.”

- Larry Krueger, General Manager, Krueger Lumber



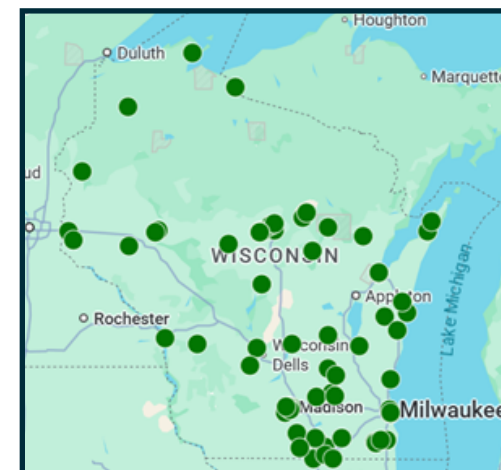
Dairy Companies

This map highlights 64 Wisconsin dairy companies in 74 locations across 34 counties that have participated in trade promotion and export development activities. The distribution reflects the strong statewide participation of Wisconsin dairy businesses and underscores the importance of dairy exports to communities across the state.



Meat Companies

This map highlights 44 Wisconsin meat companies in 45 locations across 22 counties that have participated in export development and trade promotion activities. The map demonstrates the broad geographic representation of Wisconsin's meat sector and the growing interest among companies pursuing new domestic and international market opportunities.



Crop Companies

This map highlights 60 Wisconsin crop and ingredient companies in 70 locations across 32 counties that engaged in export assistance and trade development activities. The map demonstrates the geographic diversity of Wisconsin agricultural businesses participating in domestic and international market expansion efforts.

Program Successes

Export Expansion Grant and IMAG Programs

DATCP collaborated with WEDC on IMAG funding while also administering the Export Expansion Grant program.

Since the inception of the WIAE, IMAG awards totaling \$485,000 have been issued to 36 companies. In Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) alone, the IMAG program approved five WIAE projects, generating more than \$2 million in sales for Wisconsin.

“The WIAE grant has helped us create meaningful growth opportunities for Wisconsin dairy farmers by expanding our global footprint and building demand for Wisconsin dairy products around the world.”

– Chad Vincent, Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin



In addition, DATCP funded Export Expansion Grants in FY22, FY23, and FY25, awarding a total of \$1,478,838 across 29 projects. These awards represent more than 49% of the \$3 million in spending authority available during FY22, FY23, and FY25, and more than 29% of the overall 5-year spending authority of \$5 million.

WIAE-supported activities generated millions of dollars in immediate and projected export sales, strengthened long-term buyer relationships, expanded Wisconsin products into new international markets, and leveraged partnerships with USDA, WEDC, industry associations, and federal export programs to maximize state investment.



Export Expansion Grant Highlights

Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin (DFW) utilized a \$100,000 Export Expansion Grant to promote Wisconsin dairy in foreign markets, drive global awareness, elevate perception, and support sales of Wisconsin cheese and dairy products. Through this funding, DFW brought in vetted cheese buyers and distributors to Wisconsin for an immersive buyers’ mission that led to an estimated \$2 million in export sales and three new markets accessed in one year. Supported by the Export Expansion Grant, these initiatives marked the first time Wisconsin cheese was exported to markets like Vietnam and Thailand, paving the way for future growth opportunities in these markets.



Wisconsin cheese booth within the USDEC pavilion at the Food & Hospitality Asia (FHA) tradeshow in Singapore.



Buyer missions include a visit to a Wisconsin dairy farm to learn about farm practices including caring for the land, animals, and water.

“The WIAE grant has helped us create meaningful growth opportunities for Wisconsin dairy farmers by expanding our global footprint and building demand for Wisconsin dairy products around the world. Today, Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin supports export efforts in more than 50 countries, has helped grow Wisconsin dairy’s presence to more than 50 stock-keeping units (SKUs) in Thailand, secured new product placements with key retailers in the Philippines and Singapore, and expanded promotional programs throughout the MENA region. These efforts are strengthening international demand for Wisconsin dairy and creating long-term value for our farm families, processors, and rural communities.”

– Chad Vincent, Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin

“In 2024, the export access programs provided by Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin through the DATCP grant, including in-bound buyer missions and in-market tradeshow, have been truly transformative for our export expansion efforts.”

– Cynthia Liu, Orange Cheese Company

Program Successes cont.

Export Expansion Grant Highlights cont.

The Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association was awarded a \$100,000 Export Expansion Grant that allowed for the creation and expansion of their Dairy Export Consultation Program partnership with MCT Dairies, Inc. This program assisted 19 Wisconsin dairy processors interested in starting or growing their exports through consultative services, technical support for marketing campaigns, shipping and logistics costs for buyer samples, in-store demo costs, and retail sampling and merchandising. In the first year of this consultation program, 550,000 pounds of cheese were added to the monthly contract exports with five new markets accessed, three companies beginning new export projects, seven expanding existing programs, and two undergoing an evaluation process to plan a future export program. Since then, there has been a 3% increase in export sales with an additional \$750,000 in aggregated export sales.



Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association hold a meeting.



Various cheese products made in Wisconsin on display.

“The Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports has proven that strategic, targeted investments can deliver extraordinary results. Through hands-on export consulting, trade missions, buyer connections, and market development activities, participating dairy companies have secured new customer relationships, entered new international markets, and overcome barriers that once put exporting out of reach. In the most recent reporting year alone, the program generated a reported 200-to-1 return on investment, demonstrating that even modest public investments can unlock significant economic growth. As global demand for dairy products continues to expand, sustained—and ideally increased—support for WIAE will help more Wisconsin processors compete internationally, create jobs, strengthen rural communities, and ensure Wisconsin remains a global leader in agricultural exports.”

– Rebekah Sweeney, Senior Director, Programs & Policy, Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association

“In the most recent reporting year alone, the program generated a reported 200-to-1 return on investment, demonstrating that even modest public investments can unlock significant economic growth.”

– Rebekah Sweeney, Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association

With a \$30,000 Export Expansion Grant, the **Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association (WPVGA)** was able to explore new markets and promote Wisconsin fresh, chipping, and seed potatoes to both Mexico and Canada. Utilizing Export Expansion grant funds, they brought on two consultants to translate communications with Mexican buyers and set-up visits for a Trade Mission to Mexico.

During the Trade Mission to Mexico, WPVGA coordinated business meetings with Mexican importers and gained an understanding of the markets and processes. In Canada, they attended the Canadian Produce Marketing Association to connect with major stakeholders in the produce supply chain. Through these efforts, WPVGA’s partners had a 900% aggregated increase in exports during the grant performance period with \$1.5 million in expected sales the year following the closure of their grant.

“As a result of being awarded Export Expansion Grants from DATCP, the WPVGA has incorporated this continued work of building on relationships established in Canada and Mexico into its Long-Range plan.”

– Tamas Houlihan, Executive Director, Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association



One of the several tour stops along the way on the Mexican Reverse Trade Mission was Coloma Farms during potato harvest.



Juan Carlos Díaz (left) of Kronchis and Reynaldo Santamaría (right) from NaturaSol took the opportunity to ride along in the tractor during potato harvest at the Alsum Farms & Produce north farm in Grand Marsh.

Program Successes cont.

Export Expansion Grant Highlights cont.

“At the [ANTAD] expo, WPVGA representatives and Wisconsin producers met with potato importers, several of whom expressed interest in getting quotes from Wisconsin growers, shippers, and packers.”

- Joe Kertzman, Badger Common'Tater

Through a \$49,719 Export Expansion Grant, the **Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (WVDL)** supported export promotion and buyer training activities to expand the market for Wisconsin-produced bovine semen and embryos. This work primarily targeted Tanzania while building on related market development efforts in Algeria and Ethiopia.

The Export Expansion Grant was used to strengthen buyer and partner understanding of animal health requirements, export certification processes, and the application of bovine genetics to improve herd productivity, increasing confidence in U.S. genetic materials and reducing technical barriers to trade. A significant milestone from the Algeria mission was the approval and signing of the export health certificate for U.S. bovine germplasm, resulting in Wisconsin's first tank of bovine genetics arriving in Algeria in June of 2024.



WVDL meet with the Ethiopian Minister of Livestock in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.



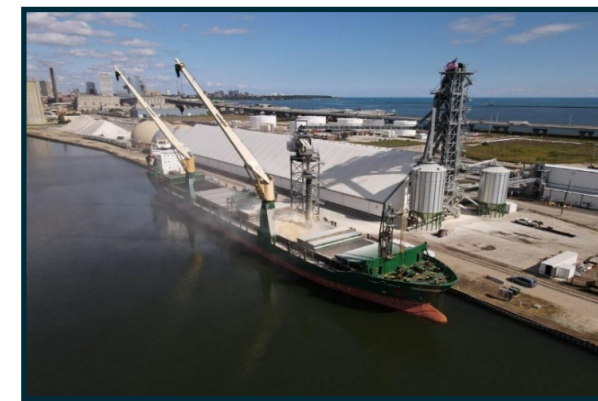
WVDL meet with Kilimanjaro Fresh, a milk processor in Arusha, Tanzania.

“Following visits and consultations with the Ministry of Livestock and the Animal Health Institute, the trade certificate to Ethiopia from the USA was approved with favorable terms within two weeks. This certificate has been difficult to move over the past decade.”

- Dr. Keith Poulsen,

Director of the Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory

IMAG Program Highlights



Agricultural Maritime Export Facility in Milwaukee, WI.

The DeLong Co., Inc., a sixth-generation, family-owned agricultural enterprise headquartered in Clinton, Wisconsin, is a leading provider of grain, seed, and agronomy services and the top containerized agricultural exporter in the United States. In 2023, the company expanded its global trade capacity with the launch of the Agricultural Maritime Export Facility in Milwaukee. This is the first facility of its kind on the Great Lakes and is capable of loading up to 10,000 metric tons of feedstuff per day, significantly enhancing Wisconsin's export infrastructure and global competitiveness.

With support from the IMAG program, DeLong has leveraged state support to advance targeted export development initiatives that strengthen market access and expand international reach across Asia, Europe, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and North America for commodities including soybeans, corn, and wheat. The IMAG program-supported activities have helped DeLong deepen buyer relationships, improve market intelligence, and increase containerized export volumes. This work has reinforced Wisconsin's position as a key supplier of high-quality agricultural commodities in global markets.



The IMAG program-supported activities have helped DeLong deepen buyer relationships, improve market intelligence, and increase containerized export volumes.

Program Successes cont.

IMAG Program Highlights cont.



GENEX uses IMAG funds to improve their marketing.

Through the IMAG program, **GENEX** strengthened its ability to adapt to shifting global market access conditions while maintaining growth in priority export markets for bovine genetics. The grant supported the development of localized, high-quality marketing assets that improved distributor engagement and customer conversion. This was done by better aligning messaging with production systems and farmer realities in target countries.

Following the suspension of U.S. cattle genetics exports to China in 2025, GENEX redirected efforts to key European markets, including Poland, Portugal, and

Spain, helping preserve and expand market presence despite trade disruptions. IMAG program support also enabled GENEX's first participation in the Japan Dairy Show, increasing brand visibility and generating new customer engagement opportunities in a high-value Asian market.

Overall, the IMAG program-supported activities strengthened GENEX's global marketing effectiveness, improved resilience to market disruption, and supported sustained export growth for U.S. bovine genetics in strategically important international markets.

WIAE Survey Results

In 2025, DATCP conducted a survey of 230 Wisconsin agribusinesses and organizations engaged in or exploring international markets. The survey received 76 responses totaling a 33% response rate. The survey combined quantitative data with qualitative feedback to assess export trends, program effectiveness, market opportunities, and the barriers that Wisconsin exporters are facing. Overall, the results demonstrate that WIAE programs are helping companies expand into global markets while highlighting areas where additional support could further strengthen Wisconsin's international agricultural competitiveness.

Respondents represented companies at a wide range of export experience levels. Thirty-nine percent stated they have been exporting for more than 10 years, while 29% indicated they are not yet exporting but are exploring international opportunities, illustrating WIAE's role in supporting both established exporters and companies entering global markets. Export revenue levels also varied significantly across respondents, with 47% reporting less than \$100,000 in annual export revenue, while 22% reported more than \$5 million in exports annually.

Survey results indicated positive export growth trends among participating companies. Fifty percent of respondents reported increased export sales since 2022, with an average reported increase of approximately 25%, while one-third of reported exports remained stable. In addition, 67% of respondents entered new international markets since 2022. These results demonstrate how WIAE programs are supporting Wisconsin companies as they diversify and expand their global market presence.

Companies participating in WIAE activities reported engagement across multiple regions, particularly Asia (63%), Latin America and the Caribbean (34%), and Europe (32%). Additionally, participants rated WIAE programs highly across several areas. Assistance from WIAE staff received the highest satisfaction rating, with 61% of

respondents rating it as excellent. Trade shows, trade missions, and buyer engagement activities were also widely viewed as effective tools for connecting Wisconsin companies with international buyers. Despite these positive outcomes, respondents identified several barriers affecting their ability to export. The most commonly cited challenges include tariffs and trade disputes, complex regulatory requirements, high transportation and logistics costs, and the strength of the U.S. dollar, which can reduce the competitiveness of U.S. products abroad.

Survey results also indicate strong demand for continued export promotion support. Sixty-three percent of respondents indicated that current funding levels are insufficient, suggesting that many companies rely on WIAE programs to help offset the significant costs associated with international market development. In addition, 55% of respondents indicated that WIAE should continue to prioritize a balanced mix of inbound and outbound trade promotion activities, reinforcing the importance of maintaining a diversified approach to global engagement.

Overall, the survey findings demonstrate that WIAE programs are playing an important role in helping Wisconsin agribusiness build international relationships, expand into new markets, and increase export opportunities. At the same time, the feedback highlights ongoing challenges and opportunities to further strengthen the program's impact as Wisconsin companies continue to compete in an increasingly complex global marketplace.

“DATCP makes export attainable or affordable for a small company like Hinterland. Without the contribution for marketing and travel dollars, we simply could not afford to attend a tradeshow like FoodEx or travel to meet and establish customers abroad.”



- Bill Tressler, CEO of Hinterland Brewery

Challenges

Since launching the WIAE in 2021, Wisconsin's dairy, livestock, and crop sectors, including major row crops, specialty and heritage crops, and forestry products such as wood, paper, and value-added timber, have operated in a constrained and highly volatile global trade environment that has slowed progress toward the 25% export growth target. The pandemic had a lasting structural impact on export growth across these sectors. Global lockdowns significantly reduced foodservice demand, the primary channel for high-value dairy products and livestock exports, while simultaneously disrupting U.S. processing capacity due to labor shortages and intermittent plant closures. International logistics systems became unpredictable, with port congestion and equipment shortages limiting the reliability of export timing and fulfillment. At the same time, the suspension of in-person trade missions, buyer engagement, and market development activities slowed the formation of new commercial relationships. Increased buyer uncertainty and shifting global sourcing patterns further delayed contract formation and, in some cases, led to temporary displacement of U.S. suppliers in key markets.

As markets began to recover, supply chain instability persisted, compounded by geopolitical conflicts such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which increased input costs for feed, fertilizer, and energy and further strained global logistics. These pressures were particularly significant for crop producers, given Wisconsin's reliance on fertilizer-intensive corn and soybean production systems, as well as input-sensitive specialty and heritage crops. A persistently strong U.S. dollar has also reduced price competitiveness for dairy products, meat, grain commodities, processed foods, and wood and forest products in international markets.

President Trump's trade policies have added further constraints. In China, ongoing tariffs, retaliatory measures, and trade disputes have continued to suppress demand for U.S. agricultural exports across multiple categories. Wisconsin's livestock products, including pork and beef, have been subject to elevated tariff rates that increase overall export costs and limit recovery to pre-trade dispute levels. The federal government's erratic tariffs and retaliatory measures have significantly affected corn and soybean exports, while also contributing to broader price volatility in specialty and heritage crop markets tied to feed and food ingredient demand. Forestry and wood products have also experienced indirect impacts through reduced industrial demand and shifting global construction activity linked to trade tensions and slower Chinese import growth.

In Canada, Wisconsin's largest agricultural export market, policy and quota restrictions in dairy and poultry limit growth despite strong demand and close proximity. Crop and livestock exports have also faced periodic friction tied to regulatory compliance standards, border processes, and pricing dynamics influenced by exchange rates and quota administration. Wood and forestry products, while benefiting from established cross-border supply chains, have similarly been affected by regulatory requirements and cyclical demand fluctuations in construction and manufacturing sectors. Together, these overlapping shocks have required producers, processors, and exporters to adapt quickly to shifting demand, higher costs, and increased risk across global markets.

Across all sectors, including dairy, livestock, major and specialty crops, and forestry and wood products, these combined pressures of federal, tariff-related constraints, macroeconomic headwinds, pandemic-related disruptions, and persistent logistics challenges have reduced price competitiveness, limited market penetration, and slowed export growth trajectories, making achievement of the WIAE's 25% target a challenge.

Program Growth

The WIAE funding allows Wisconsin to create programs that address trade challenges directly and supports flexibility in market development with shifting conditions. With ongoing legislative and industry support, DATCP will continue to work to increase exports for Wisconsin agribusiness and offer an increase in technical expertise, market development initiatives, and trade promotion activities (international trade shows, trade missions, and inbound buyers' missions), supporting Wisconsin agricultural companies in their pursuit of increased exports and the development of trade-enhancing partnerships.

“As global demand for dairy products continues to expand, sustained—and ideally increased—support for WIAE will help more Wisconsin processors compete internationally, create jobs, strengthen rural communities, and ensure Wisconsin remains a global leader in agricultural exports.”

- Rebekah Sweeney, Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association

The strength and diversity of Wisconsin agribusinesses, supported by the work of the WIAE through state funding, helped move Wisconsin agricultural products to markets around the world. This collaboration assisted Wisconsin's rise from the 13th to the 11th largest exporter in the United States, and supported the last five years of agricultural exports to be the highest five years of agricultural exports on record for the state.

The WIAE has strengthened Wisconsin's international trade capacity, expanded export opportunities for agribusinesses statewide, increased Wisconsin's visibility in global markets, and created long-term partnerships that position Wisconsin agriculture for future growth. Continued and increasing investments in export development remain important to maintaining Wisconsin's competitiveness in an increasingly global economy.



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