



Join DATCP in Celebrating National Ag Day on March 23

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**Media Contact: Grace Atherton, Communications Director, (608) 224-5020,
Grace.Atherton@wisconsin.gov**

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



MADISON – Each year, National Ag Day presents an opportunity for all of us to recognize the impacts and contributions of agriculture throughout Wisconsin. We are fortunate to have an agricultural industry that produces an abundance of diverse products that are recognized around the world for their high quality. Our state is responsible for exporting more than \$3.3 billion of agriculture products to over 151 countries. Wisconsin ranks first in the U.S. for a variety of commodities and is internationally known as a leader in the dairy industry. With a \$104.8 billion contribution to our state’s economy each year and about 435,700 jobs, agriculture is extremely important to our state’s overall success.

It’s also an integral part of our heritage. About one in nine people working in our state hold a job related to agriculture across a variety of careers. From marketing to animal health to IT development and much more, Wisconsin agriculture offers a broad range of opportunities for workers across the state. National Ag Day is an opportunity not only to acknowledge the outstanding contributions of agriculture to Wisconsin’s economy and traditions, but to also determine opportunities where we can ensure a strong future for this critical industry.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us the importance of investing in resources to support the hardworking men and women in our agriculture industry who help provide food, fuel, and fiber to consumers everywhere. Now more than ever, it is critical that we support Wisconsin farmers, processors, and agri-businesses.

That starts with financial investment. In 2020, Governor Tony Evers allocated nearly \$80 million of Wisconsin’s federal CARES Act funding to help the state’s agriculture industry respond to the challenges presented by the pandemic. As part of that effort, more than 15,200 farmers received direct aid payments last year. Now, as we enter another state budget season, we have an additional opportunity to provide support for Wisconsin agriculture for the long term. That’s why Governor Evers has proposed a historic \$43 million investment in our state’s signature industry over the 2021-2023 biennium. The Governor’s budget includes recommendations that build on prior successes in five general areas:

- Encouraging market development for Wisconsin agricultural products
- Investing in Wisconsin’s dairy and meat processing industry
- Providing technical support for producer-driven soil and water solutions
- Providing resources to support producer resiliency
- Bolstering DATCP’s internal functions

In addition to financial investment, it is critical that we continue building connections within agriculture and across other areas like transportation, education, and broadband. Throughout the pandemic, DATCP has served as a facilitator and resource to Wisconsin agriculture. We

have organized regular pathways to help industry partners share ideas, identify opportunities, and develop solutions to shared challenges.

Looking ahead, this kind of continued connection will be important. In Wisconsin agriculture, we are stronger when we work together. We are all looking forward to the warmer weather and sunnier days of spring and summer, when county fairs, dairy breakfasts, and other signature Wisconsin events like State Fair and World Dairy Expo bring us together to celebrate what makes our state's agricultural industry so strong and vibrant.

This year, on March 23, join us and participate in National Ag Day by supporting Wisconsin agriculture and the dedicated people who keep our state's food supply chain moving. You can get involved by educating yourself on where your food comes from and seeking out opportunities to buy from local producers, processors, and vendors. Our economy, environment, and communities thrive when everyone contributes to our state. Supporting your local agricultural and food businesses is one way to do that.

For more information and resources on Wisconsin's vibrant agriculture industry, visit DATCP's website at datcp.wi.gov. For more on National Ag Day, visit AgDay.org.

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