



## Wisconsin Continues to Find Ways to Connect People with Food

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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. – The holiday season in Wisconsin is a cherished time of year, often filled with holiday celebrations, family gatherings, and special meals shared with friends and loved ones. However, not everyone in our state has access to food for their holiday dinner tables. The fact that anyone would be hungry during the holidays, or at any time of the year, is unacceptable, and addressing hunger in Wisconsin has been a priority for leaders of our state for the last several years.

During the pandemic, Governor Evers allocated \$70 million in federal funding to the Food Security Initiative, which connected those who are food insecure to Wisconsin farmers and food. To build upon this work, Gov. Evers' 2025-2027 biennial budget funds a new Food Security and Wisconsin Products Program. The \$5 million annual investment in this program will provide grants to Wisconsin's nonprofit food assistance organizations for the purpose of purchasing and distributing food to communities across the state. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) is proud to continue the work of connecting those who are food insecure with Wisconsin food producers and processors, further bridging the gap between farm gate and dinner plate. The recipients of these grants will be announced soon.

Another program DATCP administers to connect consumers with locally sourced food is the Wisconsin Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) Program, a federal cooperative agreement awarded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Marketing Service. RFSI allows DATCP to assist in strengthening the middle of the food supply chain while also bolstering local and regional food systems. The program provides more markets for small farms and food businesses, supports the development of value-added products for consumers, and creates new job opportunities. By aiding processing, manufacturing, transporting, and other mid-supply chain functions, more Wisconsin food products can be accessed by those who need them most.

The Tribal Elder Community Food Box Program is another important state-led effort first created through Gov. Evers' 2023-25 biennial budget. The focus of this program is to support nonprofits purchasing and distributing food to Tribal elders in order to foster growth and operations of food producers. In the 2025-27 budget signed into law earlier this year, Gov. Evers and the legislature once again invested in this program at \$1.5 million per year. It is important to continue supporting the Tribal Nations while working to address food insecurity.

Food pantries and food banks throughout the state also deserve our gratitude for what they do to connect people to food. Though the number of people who have visited food banks has risen in recent months because of uncertainties at the federal level, these feeding programs are still able to meet that demand and connect people to food. Thank you to the communities, volunteers, supporters, and businesses who partner together to fill this important need.

Wisconsin is a state full of people who value kindness, community, and sharing appreciation for one another with food. Farms across Wisconsin, from Bayfield to Beloit, need a way to reliably sell their products. Likewise, people throughout the state, from La Crosse to Sheboygan, sometimes need some assistance to feed their families. This holiday season, let's do what Wisconsinites do best: continue supporting one another, and continue supporting programs that support Wisconsin agriculture, as well as those experiencing food insecurity.

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