



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Million Dollar Wisconsin Dairy Recovery Partnership Announced to Help Feed Wisconsinites, Benefit State Dairy Farmers

MILWAUKEE – (April 15, 2020) – Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin (DFW) and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) have joined forces with the state’s leading anti-hunger organization, Hunger Task Force, to help provide relief to the growing numbers of underfed and unemployed by connecting milk to emergency food organizations throughout the state.

With the substantial support of the local individual donor community during the COVID-19 pandemic, Hunger Task Force will commit up to \$1 million to the newly created Wisconsin Dairy Recovery Program. Wisconsin dairy farmers will be paid to supply milk to farmer-owned dairy cooperative Kemps, who will kick off the beginning phase of this week by processing thousands of gallons of milk at its Cedarburg, Wis. facility.

Hunger Task Force will distribute milk to Free & Local partner food banks and food pantries through the Hunger Relief Federation of Wisconsin, a statewide association that supports food distribution in local communities. Funds committed to the recovery will be used to purchase, process and distribute milk and dairy products.

“We’re proud to organize this new partnership with our friends at Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection” said Hunger Task Force Executive Director Sherrie Tussler. “The Wisconsin Dairy Recovery Partnership is the current best solution to feed the hungry while supporting Wisconsin dairy farmers and producers in these difficult and uncertain times.”

Half of Wisconsin’s dairy production was previously destined for the food service industry. With more than 75% of the nation’s more than 660,000 restaurants closed as a result of the pandemic, family dairy farms and processors statewide have been hit especially hard. Coupled with burgeoning unemployment numbers in the state, a partnership between farmers, the state and Wisconsin’s best food bank network was a necessary move in the right direction.

“This is an important partnership for our dairy farmers who, through no fault of their own, are faced with incredible challenges to keep product moving through the system,” says Chad Vincent, CEO of DFW.

Hunger Task Force provides a safety net of emergency food to a network of emergency food pantries and homeless shelters. It is the only food bank in Milwaukee that does not charge for food, delivery or network membership and allies itself with community based local hunger relief organizations that do the same. In the past two weeks, more than 725,000 Wisconsinites have become unemployed due to the pandemic, raising state unemployment from 3 percent in January to 27 percent today.

- more -

PG. 2 / Wisconsin Dairy Recovery

The \$45.6 billion dairy industry in Wisconsin is dealing with a sudden loss of business in schools and restaurants that account for nearly half the market. Without action, the entire state will feel the consequences and additional losses from a dairy and supply chain perspective. This partnership represents an important effort to align dairy processors with excess milk production to other emergency food organizations in the state. Business and community leaders, as well as donors are encouraged to rise to this challenge and support Wisconsin farmers and food producers.

“In order to keep Wisconsin’s food supply chain moving and support our farmers, we have to work together,” said DATCP Interim Secretary Randy Romanski. “That’s why DATCP is joining our partners in agriculture to help find ways to get milk from our dairy farms to consumers in need. We appreciate the partnership of Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin and Hunger Task Force and their generous contributors as we work to connect the dots between Wisconsin producers, processors and consumers.”

“We are proud to partner on this much needed program to help get wholesome and nutritious milk to where it is needed most, while helping Wisconsin dairy producers,” said Dan Williamson, General Manager for Kemps in Cedarburg. “As a farmer-owned organization, we understand how challenging the current environment is for dairy farmers, and are deeply appreciative of this collaborative effort.”

“The opportunity to do something for our communities is part of farmers’ DNA,” said Chad Vincent. “Keeping our farms as stable as possible is absolutely critical to the economic health of the communities where they live...and ultimately the state’s economy. We will continue to look for ways to get milk and dairy products to people in need. We are committed to developing new avenues for the movement of milk while the nation recovers from the pandemic.”

Hunger Task Force is Wisconsin’s leading anti-hunger organization, serving 50,000 people each month, nearly 40 percent of whom are children. Founded in 1974 by a group of parent advocates who were fighting for a school breakfast program in Milwaukee Public Schools, the organization eventually became Milwaukee’s first food bank.

To support the ongoing recovery of Wisconsin’s dairy industry, Hunger Task Force encourages the public to make an online donation at www.HungerTaskForce.org/dairy.

Contact:

Sarah Kikkert

Hunger Task Force

sarah.kikkert@hungertaskforce.org

414.238.6477 direct

414.610.5677 mobile

Liz Fitzsimmons

Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin

lfitzsimmons@wisconsindairy.org

608.203.7280 direct

Grace Atherton

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

grace.atherton@wisconsin.gov

608.224.5020 direct

608.982.7221 mobile

- more -

About Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin: Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin exists to be a tireless advocate, marketer, and promoter for Wisconsin dairy farmers and to drive demand for Wisconsin's dairy products. The organization represents Wisconsin farm families and works to increase the sale and consumption of Wisconsin milk and dairy products, as well as build trust in dairy farmers and the industry. Organizational initiatives include generating national publicity, managing digital advertising, and driving sales, distribution and trial through retail and foodservice promotions. Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin also supports in-school education about the benefits of dairy and funding for the Center for Dairy Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. For more information, visit wisconsinmilk.org and follow on [Facebook](#).

The **Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection's (DATCP)** mission is to partner with all 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. The agency is responsible for inspecting food businesses and lodging and recreational facilities, working with counties to assist farmers in protecting the state's environmental resources, protecting animal health, promoting Wisconsin products at home and abroad, and enforcing Wisconsin's consumer protection laws. During the COVID-19 public health emergency, DATCP is focused on two main goals: helping to keep food on Wisconsin shelves and supporting the essential industries it serves. To that end, the agency is in constant communication with stakeholders in the agriculture community, including the dairy industry. For more information, visit datcp.wi.gov.

Hunger Task Force is Milwaukee's Free & Local food bank and Wisconsin's anti-hunger leader. The organization provides healthy and nutritious food to hungry children, families and seniors in the community absolutely free of charge. Hunger Task Force was founded in 1974 by a local advocacy group who then formed Milwaukee's first food bank. Today, Hunger Task Force is 100% supported by the community and provides a safety net of emergency food with dignity to a network of 75 food pantries, soup kitchens and homeless shelters. Through legislative analysis, education and community organizing, Hunger Task Force continues to advocate for anti-hunger policy at the local, state and federal level. For more information, visit HungerTaskForce.org.

###