



DATCP: A Look Back at 2017

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MADISON – 2017 was a year of transition at the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). In August, Secretary Ben Brancel retired from state public service and returned to his family’s farm full-time. In November, Governor Walker appointed State Senator Sheila Harsdorf as the next Secretary. Even as leadership changed, the agency maintained its focus on Wisconsin’s farmers, consumers and businesses.

“When reflecting on 2017, the headline would undoubtedly be the challenge some dairy farmers faced in April when they suddenly lost their milk market,” said Secretary Harsdorf. “Even when the situation was dire, it was uplifting to see how the industry came together like never before to support each other and find a home for 99% of the milk that was displaced.”

DATCP’s Farm Center staff worked to connect farmers with processors who had capacity to take on the additional milk. State and federal government officials collaborated to emphasize the need for free, fair and transparent trade policies. Consumers were encouraged to purchase and donate Wisconsin dairy products to support Wisconsin’s dairy farm families. In May, then-Secretary Brancel shared lessons learned, highlighting the importance of communication between farmers, processors, milk handlers, ag lenders, ag organizations, universities and government officials going forward.

Wisconsin agriculture continued to find great success marketing its products locally and beyond our nation’s borders. The state exported \$2.6 billion in agricultural products to 144 countries during the first three quarters of 2017. This is an increase of 6.7 percent in value compared to the same period last year. In the New Year, DATCP will work to create new markets locally and internationally for Wisconsin’s diverse agricultural products.

Water quality continued to be a priority in 2017. DATCP entered into a three-year cooperative agreement with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Peninsula Pride Farms to establish a Door-Kewaunee Demonstration Farm Network. The goal of the network is to demonstrate and share how well specific practices work to achieve conservation goals.

The Alice in Dairyland Program entered its eighth decade when Crystal Siemers-Peterman of Cleveland was named the 70th Alice in Dairyland at Lambeau Field in May. Siemers-Peterman carries on the legacy of the program sharing positive messages about Wisconsin’s agricultural products to both rural and urban audiences.

Consumers across Wisconsin felt the impact of a data breach reported by Equifax in September. DATCP staff participated in online forums to give tips about what to do when your identity may have been stolen and provide resources on how to protect your personal information going forward.

When the Governor signed the state budget late this summer, Wisconsin farmers’ costs for pesticides and fertilizers were reduced. Local agribusinesses also benefitted from a fee holiday on surcharges they’ve been paying into the Agricultural Chemical Cleanup Program fund. The decreases were part of an overall effort to balance revenues and expenditures in DATCP’s Bureau of Agrichemical Management.

“At DATCP, our vision is to deliver efficient and effective programs and services,” explained Harsdorf. “We are committed to carrying out our core missions ensuring food and recreational safety for our families and protecting animal health in order to be competitive in the marketplace.”

The Division of Animal Health continued to implement its strategic plan to manage diseases by collaborating with industry and working with stakeholders. The Division of Food and Recreational Safety worked to answer questions and support those considering starting food, lodging and

recreational businesses. Through the first ten months of 2017, licensing specialists sent out 3,794 business packets to potential operators.

“While many will be happy to have 2017 in the rear-view mirror, I believe we need to remember the bright spots and be hopeful looking ahead to 2018,” concluded Harsdorf. “Just like on the farm, there is always more to be done. I look forward to working as part of the DATCP team to prepare for upcoming challenges and make the most of possible opportunities.”

The year will end with Wisconsin farmers receiving their 2017 Census of Agriculture in the mail. All farmers are encouraged to complete their Census to ensure decision makers have the most accurate information available when forming future budgets, services, program and policies. For more information on the Census, visit www.agcensus.usda.gov.

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