



Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

October 29, 2025

The Honorable Ron Johnson
328 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
141 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bryan Steil
1526 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mark Pocan
1026 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Derrick Van Orden
1513 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gwen Moore
2252 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Scott Fitzgerald
2444 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Glenn Grothman
1211 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Tiffany
451 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tony Wied
424 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Duly Elected Members of Wisconsin's Congressional Delegation:

I write to emphasize the urgent need to advance federal legislation to support our nation's farmer and producers through a reauthorization of the federal Farm Bill. Despite the ongoing federal government shutdown, Wisconsin's farmers need our congressional delegation to show up and continue to make progress on this critical piece of legislation. Indeed, it is in large part because of the ongoing federal government shutdown and the impact it is having on our farmers and producers that timely passage of a comprehensive Farm Bill is perhaps more important than ever as President Trump prioritizes foreign nations' farmers and producers over American farmers, producers, and our agricultural industries. The president's reckless tariff policies, for example, have caused China to effectively halt all U.S. soybean purchasing, opening the door to other countries filling the void and significantly impacting the U.S. soybean industry, including Wisconsin producers. Additionally, President Trump's plan to drastically increase foreign beef imports will harm American cattle farmers, a move to which the Wisconsin Farmers Union and bipartisan elected officials—including me—continue to object.

As governor, I have made supporting Wisconsin's farmers and producers a top priority, and we've made important investments that provide resources to our agricultural industry. For example, in the most recent state budget I signed into law, I increased funding for the Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant Program and local county conservation staffing, created a statewide food security grant program, continued support for the successful Tribal Elder Food Security grant program, and bolstered support for the state's dairy and meat processor grant programs.

Complementary to our state-level work, programs traditionally reauthorized in the Farm Bill provide important assistance to private landowners to promote conservation practices while supporting agricultural and forestry objectives. Private landowners and the public benefit from numerous positive outcomes from all these programs, including stabilizing agricultural soils, conserving water resources, providing fish and wildlife habitat, and sustainable forestry management.

The state of Wisconsin works with a wide range of partners who benefit directly from funding provided through the Farm Bill. These include farmers and landowners adopting runoff management practices, communities protecting drinking water and groundwater, and local governments advancing watershed and shoreland management. Farm Bill investments also support habitat restoration, outdoor recreation, community financial assistance, and coordination with rural energy and utility projects. Together, these programs safeguard Wisconsin's water resources, sustain wildlife habitat, and strengthen the economic vitality of rural communities across the state.

I previously wrote to the full Wisconsin congressional delegation in November 2023 to highlight specific programs and make recommendations on provisions important to Wisconsin farmers and producers in a federal Farm Bill. Now, two years later, a long-term Farm Bill reauthorization has yet to be finalized. As Congress continues to draft revised Farm Bill legislation to reauthorize and invest in critical federal programs for our farmers and producers, I once again highlight specific programs critical for Wisconsin farmers and respectfully ask for your advocacy on these important programs.

Wisconsin FoodShare (SNAP)

As Republicans refuse to work across the aisle to end the federal government shutdown and extend tax credits that will lower the cost of healthcare coverage for millions of Americans, and as the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) refuses to use powers already authorized under federal law to ensure nearly 700,000 Wisconsinites will be able to access basic food and groceries, November SNAP benefits for Wisconsinites will already be delayed, and future benefits beyond three days from now are also under threat. This concerning situation, coupled with President Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), which requires states to implement extensive new red tape to administer SNAP, is creating a simply untenable situation. The changes that went into effect upon enactment of the bill will take additional time to comprehensively implement within the Wisconsin Department of Health Services' (DHS) policies and automated eligibility systems. This unrealistic timeline for the new red tape requirements puts Wisconsin at risk of a potential increase in our state's SNAP error rate, which is typically one of the lowest in the nation, which could cost Wisconsin taxpayers tens of millions of dollars.

To mitigate this risk, I recommend that the next Farm Bill include provisions for FNS to implement a new effective date of June 1, 2026, for the expanded SNAP work requirements included in the OBBBA, and establish a six-month hold harmless period for states regarding SNAP quality control efforts following the issuance of regulations after new legislation is enacted. As FNS implements new policies, Congress should require a consistent, reasonable hold-harmless period for SNAP quality control that allow states to properly execute these changes by establishing the necessary policy updates and system upgrades.

Additionally, I recommend requiring that FNS continue to allow waivers for face-to-face quality control interviews for states with low error rates. This change disrupts well-established, successful practices around

quality control case review. The waiver allows states to be effective and efficient with limited resources while simultaneously maintaining high-quality standards. Beyond the changes in OBBBA, eliminating these waivers places states at even higher risk for more errors and greater financial liability as a result.

Finally, I recommend restoring exceptions that ensure that Americans who are experiencing homelessness can still access basic food necessities. OBBBA removed a longstanding exemption, making people who are homeless ineligible for SNAP benefits unless they satisfy various red-tape requirements that they will not likely be able to meet without stable housing. SNAP was designed and intended to support kids, families, and seniors across America who cannot afford basic necessities like food, including those experiencing homelessness. Removing this exemption was as wrong-headed as it was callous.

Agriculture

Wisconsin is the nation's top producer of cranberries, ginseng, and snap beans, and ranks in the top 10 for other important crops such as potatoes, cherries, maple syrup, carrots, sweet corn, green peas, onions, oats, and corn for grain. The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBG) supports growers of these crops by providing funding for research, market development, and education. Without this program, hundreds of thousands of dollars in crop research and outreach to growers of distinctive and important crops for Wisconsin would be lost. This could reduce crop productivity and result in income loss for thousands of farmers across the state. Because of the significant benefits it provides to Wisconsin growers, I strongly recommend that the SCBG program be reauthorized in the next Farm Bill.

Wisconsin is also a national leader in organic farming. The National Organic Certification Cost Share Program provides cost-share assistance to organic growers and producers, processors, and handlers who have achieved USDA organic certification. Wisconsin has seen high rates of participation in this program, as it helps defray a portion of the higher initial costs of organic farming. As such, I recommend that this program be reauthorized as part of the next Farm Bill to continue supporting Wisconsin organic producers.

Continuing programs that assist Wisconsin farmers in accessing international markets is also crucial, especially as the Trump Administration continues to create roadblocks and barriers to getting Wisconsin commodities into these new markets. For example, the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service's Market Access Program (MAP) provides critical funding for the Food Export Association of the Midwest, a key partner of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) in promoting and developing export markets for small and medium enterprises in Wisconsin. In 2024, 52 Wisconsin companies participated in the Food Export Midwest Branded Program, receiving nearly \$1.8 million of MAP funding and reporting more than \$93 million in actual export sales. In 2025, there are 40 companies in the Branded Program, and they have requested \$1.2 million in funding so far. Due to resource constraints within their businesses, market expansion activities are challenging without the support of this program. I recommend Congress increase funding for trade promotion, development, and assistance programs such as MAP in the next Farm Bill.

In addition to international support, local and regional food programs play a key role in supporting Wisconsin's family farms and processors. In 2022, DATCP signed a cooperative agreement with the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to create the Wisconsin Local Food Purchase Assistance Program (LFPA). This program helped strengthen local and regional food systems, support Wisconsin farmers, and distribute fresh food to underserved communities. It involved collaboration with producers, distributors, food security organizations, and Tribal partners to coordinate logistics and purchase food from local farms. Despite this success, USDA terminated this cooperative agreement in March 2025. I urged the Trump Administration to reverse course then, and I recommend that the next Farm Bill reverse this harmful decision and provide new funding to states to continue impactful local food purchase assistance programming.

To support Wisconsin farmers and producers in addressing supply chain disruptions, in 2023, DATCP also signed a cooperative agreement with USDA AMS to create the Wisconsin Resilient Food Systems

Infrastructure Program (RFSI). This program focuses on building capacity in the middle of the food supply chain for locally produced foods and opening new markets for small and mid-sized producers. It also provides access to resources to support food processing, storage, aggregation, and distribution. Without USDA grants, small and medium agribusinesses would struggle to get the funding needed to remain productive and contribute to the state's agricultural economy. I recommend that the next Farm Bill provide additional funding for Wisconsin's RFSI program so that we can continue addressing agriculture supply chain issues and ensure a seamless pipeline for Wisconsin products to get to Wisconsinites.

In addition, the USDA Certified Mediation Program provides grants to state-designated organizations that offer mediation services, an alternative way to resolve disputes, for farmers, their creditors, and people affected by USDA actions. Wisconsin was one of the first states to offer an agricultural mediation program, starting in 1986. With more than 58,000 farms in the state, Wisconsin is home to many agricultural producers and their family members who rely on the program's free and confidential mediation services. These services are just as critical today as they were in the 1980s, as mediation can help reduce farm stress and lower suicide rates by allowing trained professionals to guide farmers through conflicts, debt challenges, and other stressful situations in a supportive, non-adversarial way.

From 2020 to 2024, Wisconsin mediators and farm advisors helped resolve more than 85 mediation cases, and Wisconsin Farm Center consultants supported over 335 farms through credit and transition services. Given the growing demand for this vital program, I recommend that the next Farm Bill reauthorize the program and that the original program funding cap of \$7.5 million, set in 1987, be increased to \$10 million to ensure continued and expanded support for farmers across the country.

Dairy

Wisconsin remains America's Dairyland, and the Farm Bill should continue important programs that assist dairy producers and processors. Since its creation in the 2018 Farm Bill, the Dairy Business Innovation Initiative (DBII) has assisted dairy farmers and processors in creating new revenue streams through farm diversification and the creation of "higher value" food and beverage products containing a dairy ingredient. DBII has enabled more than \$19.4 million in grants to 255 dairy businesses in the region, and Wisconsin farmers have been awarded 109 grants totaling more than \$8.1 million. These grants are an important factor in supporting the growth of dairy businesses in the region while they continue to innovate, create new products, and expand their markets. I strongly support this effort and recommend that funding be increased from \$20 million to \$36 million annually for DBII in the next Farm Bill.

Additionally, the Dairy Margin Coverage program is a voluntary program that provides dairy operations with risk management coverage that pays producers when the difference between the national price of milk and the average cost of feed falls below a certain level selected by the program participants. As a valuable option to insulate Wisconsin farmers from significant market volatility, I recommend that this program be maintained and updated to reflect the needs of dairy producers in Wisconsin to give them the risk management coverage they need.

Animal Diseases

A proactive national animal disease program is needed to protect the safety and security of our nation's food supply. Wisconsin has a large livestock and poultry industry that could be at risk during an emerging or foreign animal disease outbreak, such as highly pathogenic avian influenza. These diseases can spread quickly and cause serious problems for human health, the economy, and foreign trade. To better equip states and increase efficient collaboration, I recommend that the next Farm Bill create a program to develop and quickly deploy all necessary tools to prevent, identify, and control animal disease outbreaks. I also support continued funding for preparedness and diagnostic work through the National Animal Health Laboratory Network.

I also support increased funding for animal disease and response research. Research regarding ways to reduce problem animals that often carry disease, like feral swine populations, would improve biosecurity, animal health, and human health, as well as help protect farms against African Swine Fever. Research regarding large-scale depopulation and disposal of cattle would also improve animal health and disease responses in the event of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and other high-impact diseases.

Relatedly, Wisconsin and partners in the livestock industry support continued funding for a FMD vaccine bank to protect the nation's livestock industry. Safeguarding U.S. livestock is essential for maintaining the strength of the agricultural economy and ensuring a stable food supply. Without fast access to vaccines, farmers and ranchers may be forced to cull large numbers of animals, which would cost the livestock industry far more than the investment required to build and maintain a fully stocked, domestic vaccine bank. To better protect U.S. agriculture and avoid catastrophic losses, sustained funding for the FMD vaccine bank is essential.

Finally, composting is becoming more widely used as a method of animal mortality disposal due to the increasing costs of rendering, burial, and incineration, as well as the potential adverse effects on groundwater and air quality. Additional research and support programs to develop on-farm composting skills for livestock disposal would benefit both small-scale routine mortalities and large-scale animal disease responses, ensuring neighboring communities are protected. I recommend that the next Farm Bill invest in animal composting research and funding to provide more tools and options for Wisconsin farmers.

Conservation

Voluntary conservation programs benefit Wisconsinites by diversifying farm income and infusing tens of millions of dollars into rural Wisconsin communities every year, while protecting our air, water, soil, plants and forests, and fish and wildlife resources. Voluntary conservation efforts support important conservation practices that can be cost-prohibitive for many producers and forest landowners. Without the assistance of conservation program funding, these practices might not otherwise be implemented. These practices help maintain Wisconsin's outdoor heritage by creating and improving fish and wildlife habitat and by expanding public access on private lands, which benefits fish and wildlife-based recreation.

Two such programs that I have previously advocated for, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the Conservation Stewardship Program, were recently extended and funded through 2031. These investments are already delivering positive results in Wisconsin and provide a strong foundation for future progress. However, several critical conservation and research programs face a lapse without congressional action. Passage of a Farm Bill reauthorization bill is necessary to maintain continuity, prevent disruption for producers and conservation partners, and preserve the bipartisan coalition that has historically supported Farm Bill legislation.

Specifically, critically important programs like the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and its subprograms such as Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement are valuable tools assisting working farms and ranches with the management of environmentally sensitive lands by putting perennial grass on the landscape, building soil health, improving water and air quality, and reducing soil erosion while enhancing wildlife habitat especially for threatened and endangered species. In 2024 alone, CRP directed \$33.7 million to Wisconsin farmers covering 188,732 acres and helping implement conservation practices that might otherwise be cost-prohibitive. In order to support CRP in the next Farm Bill, your support is especially needed to ensure rental rates fairly compensate farmers and ranchers for the ecosystem services they are providing, make updates for emergency haying to benefit soil, water, and wildlife by permitting this emergency use is available on up to 50 percent of eligible contract acres, ensure any rental rate restriction on CRP reenrollment do not impact highly erodible soil types, water, and wildlife practices that have been enrolled via the continuous enrollment option, and exempt Grassland CRP with base crop history and all Agricultural Conservation Easement Program-Wetland Reserve Easements from the 25 percent county acreage cap. This program serves as a tool that can help stabilize agricultural commodity prices and diversify farm income, which

is of vital importance to Wisconsin farmers, and I ask that you prioritize this program and these recommended improvements in the next Farm Bill.

Additionally, the United States Forest Service's (USFS) Reforestation, Nurseries and Genetic Resources Program (RNGR) provides technical assistance, expert consultation, and financial assistance to Wisconsin's State Nursery Program, allowing the program to distribute over 4.6 million seedlings annually to landowners across the state. This represents a doubling of demand for seeding since 2017, when only 2.3 million seedlings were sold. The technical assistance and expert assistance that Wisconsin relies on from RNGR are not readily available elsewhere. If not implemented in separate legislation, I recommend including authorization and funding for RNGR in the next Farm Bill.

Through the Farm Bill, the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) also provides funding to strengthen the nation's infrastructure for pest detection, surveillance, identification, and threat mitigation while working to safeguard nursery production. As such, I recommend that the Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention program be retained and fully funded at \$90 million—a \$15 million increase over federal fiscal year 2024. A related concern is federal line-item reductions to the APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine budget, which are pushing states and APHIS to use this competitive funding to fill gaps created by the line-item budget reductions to initiatives such as the wood boring pest budget line. It is crucial that the Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention program funding be maintained based on the certainty that it provides to states that are implementing long-term pest response programs to existing infestations.

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) has allowed the USDA to provide opportunities to successfully collaborate with state and local governments as well as private organizations to meet the demand for services addressing the conservation challenges today's farmers and ranchers are facing. Improvements to this program can be made in the next Farm Bill by allowing advanced payments to lead partners through Alternate Funding Arrangement agreements, as well as repealing the statutory prohibition on partners recovering indirect and administrative costs.

Finally, one of the most endangered habitat types in Wisconsin is our grasslands. Between 2001 and 2021, Wisconsin lost approximately 102,000 acres of grasslands via land conversion to other uses such as urban expansion. As a result, grassland-nesting bird populations have declined by 53 percent since the 1970s. Through inclusion of grassland protection initiatives such as the American Prairie Conservation Act and its "Sodsaver" provision in the next Farm Bill, we can address this troubling trend head-on.

Water Protection

Farm Bill programs are central to Wisconsin's Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy and play a direct role in meeting the Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan. They help reduce nutrient runoff, protect sources of water, safeguard water resources, and enhance fish and wildlife habitat. These benefits extend far beyond environmental outcomes, supporting a more than \$116 billion agricultural sector, a \$42 billion forestry products industry, and billions of dollars in outdoor recreation and tourism. Sustained federal investment is essential not only to maintain conservation progress but also to secure the economic viability of Wisconsin's rural farm families and strengthen the resilience of communities across the state.

In particular, funding provided to the Grassroots Source Water Protection Program has enabled Wisconsin communities to take important steps in safeguarding drinking water at its source. Yet, the demand for source water protection continues to grow as rural areas grapple with nitrate contamination, aging infrastructure, and increasingly extreme weather events. Expanded investment in this program would allow Wisconsin to work more closely with farmers, local governments, and conservation partners to protect drinking water, strengthen the resilience of rural communities, and ensure that farm families can remain both environmentally responsible and economically viable.

I also recommend the inclusion of U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin's bipartisan Healthy H2O Act in the next Farm Bill. As water contamination is addressed at the source, Wisconsin households and organizations also need support to ensure their current water supply is safe. To complement state-level actions my administration has taken to ensure households that rely on private wells have clean, safe water, Senator Baldwin's Healthy H2O Act would provide funding to conduct water quality testing and install point-of-use water filtration systems to individuals, childcare facilities, and nonprofit organizations. Wisconsinites in all corners of the state deserve safe, clean drinking water, and including this legislation in the next Farm Bill will help continue our significant progress in this work.

Congress should also establish programs and authorize grants for states to provide financial assistance to farmers who have been impacted by PFAS. Additionally, resources should be provided to expand monitoring and testing of land, crops, livestock, and biomonitoring of farmers and their families. Programs and resources should also be made available to support upgrading or purchasing equipment for farms, to relocate or develop alternative production systems if warranted, and to create and offer practical solutions for managing contaminated soil. Addressing PFAS contamination while holding polluters accountable and ensuring innocent landowners like our farmers are not left out to dry remains one of my top priorities as governor.

Forestry

Various programs authorized in the Farm Bill support Wisconsin's working forests by assisting woodland owners in promoting healthy, resilient forests that ensure a secure supply of fiber for the forest industry and provide various ecosystem services such as wildlife habitat, water quality, and air quality. The forest products industry in Wisconsin employs nearly 50,000 individuals and contributes \$7.5 billion to Wisconsin's GDP, and supporting programs that ensure our forests remain healthy and sustainable is critical to this industry.

The 2008 Farm Bill established requirements for statewide assessments and strategies for forest resources, alternatively referred to as Statewide Forest Action Plans (SFAP), to be completed every 10 years. Wisconsin's SFAP is a useful tool for engaging in collaborative statewide forestry planning between the state's Department of Natural Resources and forestry partners. Supplemental federal funding opportunities through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act have offered states the ability to implement strategies identified in these plans to a significantly greater degree than previously possible. In Wisconsin, the state has used these funds to support significant work in areas of forest health, forest stewardship, urban and community forestry, and forest inventory and analysis initiatives. I recommend including additional flexible funding opportunities for SFAP implementation in the next Farm Bill to support state forest agencies in addressing their highest forest management priorities as established through the collaborative SFAP process.

In addition, Wisconsin has an established history of Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) agreements with the USFS. GNA is an important tool to ensure management and associated ecosystem projects are accomplished across the landscape for the overall health of our forest ecosystems, industry, and the environment. With the intent of expanded GNA, Wisconsin has recently entered a third 10-year GNA agreement with the USFS that includes increasing the timber harvest goal by 5 million board feet (MMBF) per year, for a new total of 30 MMBF per year. This agreement is currently being updated to add a \$1 million allocation from the USFS to support needed forest management work. This will help reduce issues caused by the lag in timber sale payment from when the work occurs to when it is paid for. As this program continues to expand, Wisconsin must balance increased demands with capacity and statutory obligations, so I recommend increasing up-front federal funding options to support the successful implementation of Wisconsin's GNA agreements. For example, currently, GNA revenues can only be spent on activities conducted on federal lands. I recommend adopting the proposed 2023 Farm Bill language that would allow funding to be used on both federal and non-federal lands, which would enable increased landscape-scale restoration work that often is needed across ownership boundaries, as forest health issues don't end when the ownership boundary changes from national forest to state forest.

Passage of shorter-term legislative support for GNA can make managing these agreements difficult as a result of the inherent uncertainty that comes with expiring Farm Bills. As noted, Wisconsin has historically entered into 10-year GNA agreements. To enable more comprehensive planning and long-term sustainability, I recommend removing the sunset date established in the current Farm Bill to provide for longer-term certainty for GNA partnerships and enable GNA agreements up to 20 years in length.

Finally, the 2018 Farm Bill allowed states to retain and reinvest revenues from timber sales and other commercial projects on federal lands. I recommend removing or extending the sunset date for states to retain GNA project revenue, which would allow for more projects to be completed and longer-term planning to occur. Additionally, Tribal Nations and counties were not granted this same authority to retain and invest timber sales revenues, so I recommend expanding this authority to those governments to increase the collective ability to meet increasing national forest harvest goals and support intergovernmental coordination and partnership.

Here in America's Dairyland, our farmers and producers and their families have been the backbone of our state for generations. I urge you to consider these important programs and recommendations as you continue to develop a timely, comprehensive, farmer-focused Farm Bill, most especially as decisions made in Washington are making things increasingly difficult for farmers and producers in Wisconsin. Please do not hesitate to reach out to my office with any questions about these critical recommendations.

Yours in service,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Tony Evers", written in a cursive style.

Tony Evers
Governor