

Wisconsin's Agriculture and Rural Leaders Commend Senator Baldwin's Work Doing Right by Farmers

“Senator Baldwin has been an outspoken supporter for rural communities and Wisconsin’s struggling dairy industry,” **said Wisconsin Farm Bureau President Jim Holte.** “Wisconsin Farm Bureau appreciates her vote for the 2018 Farm Bill so Wisconsin farmers will have programs in place to help them during these tough times.”

“The passage of the farm bill is welcome news in farm country, where net farm income is at its lowest point in more than a decade. Wisconsin Farmers Union appreciates the tireless work of Senate and House agriculture leaders and their staff to resolve differences in this incredibly important piece of legislation,” **said Darin Von Ruden, President of the Wisconsin Farmers Union.** “Farmers Union appreciates Sen. Baldwin's efforts to crack down on fraudulent organic imports and her role in bringing forth provisions of the Dairy Business Innovation Act and making sure they were incorporated in the farm bill. We also are pleased to see continued support for conservation programs like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). We are also encouraged by the reauthorization of the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network, a program that is direly needed given the current economic and mental health crises plaguing rural America, and we urge funding of that to be a priority in the next appropriations cycle.”

“I would like to thank Senator Baldwin for her leadership and support throughout the entire Farm Bill process. Family farms in Wisconsin are facing economic hardships not seen since the 1980’s coupled with unprecedented trade uncertainties. This Farm Bill will help provide stability through these turbulent times to the family farms that are the backbone of this great nation. Senator Baldwin has once again proven that she is an ally for Wisconsin farmers in Washington D.C. and I look forward to working with her and her staff into the future for the betterment of Wisconsin’s family farms,” **said Tony Mellenthin, President of the Wisconsin Soybean Association.**

“Wisconsin Corn appreciates Senator Baldwin’s support in passing the Farm Bill. It’s no secret that it is a hard time for producers with low prices, trade issues and barriers to ethanol. The passage of the Farm Bill shows our elected officials are listening and we hope this is the first step to a stronger future for Wisconsin corn growers,” **said Doug Rebout, President of the Wisconsin Corn Growers Association.**

“The Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association appreciates the hard work by and support of Senator Baldwin on the issues of importance to our growers in the Farm Bill. The Senator has been a strong supporter of agricultural research programs important to our growers and export promotion programs that help us as we develop new markets for Wisconsin’s largest fruit crop. Like all of agriculture we face challenges and the Senator has been a partner in taking action on behalf of our family farmers as we work toward continues to develop and implement sustainable practices,” **said Tom Lochner, Executive Director of the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association.**

“On behalf of the dairy farmer owners of AMPI I’d like to thank Senator Baldwin for her leadership and for working together with other leaders to come up with a much improved safety net for family dairy farmers in Wisconsin and across rural America. I believe the new policy will provide certainty in very uncertain times and hope for the future of our industry and the rural communities we live in and support,” **said Steve Schlangen, dairy farmer and Chairman of the Associated Milk Producers, Inc. (AMPI) Board of Directors.**

“Given the challenging times in agriculture, especially for dairy producers, the passage of the 2018 Farm Bill is great news and positions us to compete in the future. I commend Senator Baldwin for her leadership in listening to the needs of her constituents, including producers like me who need better solutions to manage operational risks. In addition, she supported measures to address those struggling with mental health concerns due to financial stress and uncertainty in rural areas. Senator Baldwin championed policy that addressed these concerns, in addition to several others included in this bill, and we are fortunate to have a leader like her in Congress,” **said Nic Schoenberger, Land O’Lakes dairy producer and board director, from Kiel, Wisconsin.**

“Senator Baldwin’s efforts were crucial to improving the risk management tools for dairy farmers to reflect the reality of today’s dairy economy. Edge was fortunate to be able to work collaboratively with the Senator on the new Dairy Margin Coverage program and on allowing farmers to use various tools simultaneously. Our dairy farmers need to be able to manage risk according to their management style and individual farm’s needs,” **said Brody Stapel, President of Green Bay-based Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative and a dairy farmer in Cedar Grove, Wisconsin.**

“Senator Baldwin championed dairy farmers once again with her efforts to get the 2018 Farm Bill passed in a timely manner, by advocating for beneficial reforms to the dairy title supported by FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative members. We look forward to working with her on future issues important to dairy farmers, including dairy labeling and standards of identity,” **said Jeff Lyon of FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative.**

“The 2018 Farm Bill includes major improvements in risk management options for dairy farmers. Times are very tough economically for dairy farmers right now, so these changes could not come soon enough. Senator Baldwin has been instrumental in pushing for meaningful reforms to help provide more economic stability for the dairy farmers of Wisconsin and throughout the nation. The members of the Midwest Dairy Coalition thank the Senator for her attentiveness to the needs of dairy farm families and her vigilance in achieving needed changes,” **said Steve Etko, Coordinator of the Midwest Dairy Coalition.**

“Cooperative Network congratulates the U.S. Senate on passage of the Farm Bill. As a member of the Senate Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies, we appreciate Sen. Baldwin’s leadership in helping to shepherd this legislation through the process,” **stated Dan Smith, President and CEO of Cooperative Network.** “Wisconsin’s dairy and farm supply cooperatives play an extremely important role in state’s economy. The Farm Bill contains measures that will continue to bolster the nation’s agricultural sector, as well as assist our co-ops and their member-owners throughout the state.”

“Senator Baldwin has been a champion for Wisconsin dairy farmers from start to finish during this Farm Bill process. She successfully advocated for improvements to the dairy safety net, including affordable higher coverage levels to ensure a more effective program for producers, and also secured the inclusion of dairy innovation provisions that will be helpful as the dairy sector seeks to innovate further in the coming years. We look forward to continued work with Senator Baldwin as the new bill is implemented, and on many other key dairy issues over the coming months,” **said Jim Mulhern, President and CEO of National Milk Producers Federation.**

“We are grateful for Senator Baldwin’s bipartisan efforts to protect Wisconsin’s dairy industry in the 2018 Farm Bill. She understands the issues that are critically important to dairy producers across the USA and her support of the Farm Bill shows that she is willing to fight for us. We greatly appreciate the Senator’s advocacy for the entire industry,” **said Louie Gentine, CEO of Sargento Foods, Inc.**

“The Dairy Business Innovation Act will help start-ups and existing companies accelerate and enhance their technology, product development, finance, and marketing. I’m delighted that Senator Baldwin is delivering this much-needed boost to the American dairy industry,” **said Bob Wills, Wisconsin Master Cheesemaker and President of Cedar Grove Cheese and Clock Shadow Creamery.**

“My family and I know the challenges firsthand of taking on the processing and marketing of our own dairy products. Senator Baldwin’s Dairy Business Innovation Act provides an opportunity for farmers and processors to grow and diversify their businesses to meet customers’ changing tastes,” **said Tom Crave, Vice president of the Dairy Business Association in Wisconsin and a dairy farmer and cheese processor in Waterloo, Wisconsin.**

“Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association is pleased to see the exciting concepts in Senator Baldwin’s Dairy Business Innovation Act in the new 2018 Farm Bill. Dairy farmers and processors believe a consumer focus – innovating delicious products for families – is the sustainable solution to revitalize the dairy industry. Innovation Centers can concentrate dairy expertise and help new ideas flourish in the marketplace,” **said John Umhoefer, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association.**

“The Wisconsin Specialty Cheese Institute supports action that will strengthen the critically important dairy industry. For the good of the Wisconsin economy, small and large dairy producers alike need a pay price and policies sufficient for dairy farming to be a sustainable enterprise. Our dairy plants and cheesemakers are world-renowned but need to preserve our outstanding milk supply to continue fueling their economic engine. Wisconsin rural entrepreneurs welcome policies and financial support that will continue to build our industry, and the dairy innovation provisions that Senator Baldwin secured in the Farm Bill will help our dairy entrepreneurs build a better future for dairy,” **said Shirley Knox of Maple Leaf Cheesemakers in Monroe, Wisconsin.**

“We support the Dairy Business Innovation Act that Sen. Baldwin championed as part of the recently passed 2018 farm bill. Her provision will promote innovation in the dairy sector and help industry members work together to address common challenges. We also appreciate Sen. Baldwin’s support for provisions in the bill that will improve dairy processor and producer access to new risk management tools,” **said Michael Dykes, D.V.M., International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA) President and CEO.**

“The Farm Bill contains the largest commitment of resources ever to ensure organic integrity remains strong. It includes better policy and funding for organic fraud prevention, especially in the international trade arena, which was really needed. Modernizing the organic regulations and increasing funding help the National Organic Program be in a position to better weed out fraud,” **said Melissa Hughes, Chief Mission Officer and General Counsel, of Organic Valley.** “A big thanks to our home-state U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin as well as Ranking Member Debbie Stabenow for leading efforts to strengthen organic oversight. They played a key role in making sure the Farm Bill updated the agency's ability to crack down on any suspected fraud no matter where it might originate. The work ahead of the organic industry is to now get these changes operational at the National Organic Program as soon as possible, and at Organic Valley, we are going to keep our foot on the gas pedal until these new provisions are fully realized and implemented.”

“We thank Sen. Tammy Baldwin for her leadership that resulted in the bill containing important steps to modernize and speed up federal efforts to prevent organic fraud and to create a transparent marketplace,” **said Laura Batcha, CEO and Executive Director of the Organic Trade Association.** “The Farm Bill strengthens the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Organic Program’s authority and capacity to conduct investigations to keep organic markets strong; it invests in technology and access to data to improve tracking of international organic trade; and requires increased measures that will strengthen global organic supply chain integrity. Reliable oversight and a level playing field are critical to the success of U.S. organic farmers and ensures that consumers are getting what they pay for every time they choose the USDA organic seal.”

“The National Organic Coalition is grateful to Senator Baldwin for her incredible leadership in the Farm Bill process to strengthen oversight of organic imports by introducing and successfully championing the Organic Farmer and Consumer Protection Act. There has been an urgent need to modernize and strengthen USDA’s infrastructure to prevent fraud,” **said Abby Youngblood, Executive Director of the National Organic Coalition.** “This farm bill is a huge win on that front, by providing USDA with enhanced authorities and resources to crack down on fraud. These provisions are a boon to farmers, especially those who are harmed by fraudulent imports, as well as consumers, whose trust in the organic seal depends on effective enforcement of clear and consistent standards across the board. NOC will play an active role in working with USDA to fully operationalize these changes to ensure integrity of organic products originating from both international and domestic farms and companies.”

“MOSES is excited to tell our farmers and supporters about Farm Bill wins for organic – more funding for organic research and data collection, provisions to address import fraud, and funding for organic certification cost-share,” **said John Mesko, Executive Director of the Midwest**

Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES). “We especially want to extend appreciation to our home-state Senator Tammy Baldwin for her leadership role in strengthening oversight of organic imports. The Senator has met with farmers on this issue and heard loud and clear about the need for a level playing field. We’re thrilled that she and other Congressional champions have succeeded in making sure that the USDA is armed with the resources and authorities to keep organic strong alongside tremendous growth in the organic marketplace.”

“The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) appreciates Senator Baldwin’s leadership in ensuring farmer stress and mental health was a priority in the Farm Bill. First and foremost, nothing is more important to American agriculture than the safety and wellness of our farmers. This provision will go a long way to put farmers and ranchers in touch with those who can help them through serious and personal struggles. State departments of agriculture are the closest connection to producers tackling these issues, so NASDA is pleased to see that all state departments of agriculture qualify as recipients and agents to implement this service,” **said Dr. Barbara Glenn, Chief Executive Officer of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture.**

“The National Rural Health Association is proud to support the rural health provisions in the recently passed 2018 Farm Bill, including policies to ensure the financial viability of rural hospitals, expand deployment of telemedicine, and improve access to mental health services. The reauthorization of the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN) will help support agricultural workers and their families in rural communities by providing at-home resources for mental health services. Many farmers struggling still with the economic consequences of the Great Recession are at higher risk of substance abuse and suicide, but the majority of rural counties do not have a single psychologist, psychiatrist, or social worker to meet these needs. We applaud the bipartisan work of rural health advocates who fought to ensure the future of the FRSAN program in this Farm Bill,” **said Jessica Seigel, National Rural Health Association.**

“Stress is part of the job, whether you're a farmer, rancher, farmworker, young or old. We all share a responsibility to ensure mental health assistance remains part of the national safety net for farm families. As growers weather this difficult farm economy, we're grateful that Congress has stepped up to include these critical resources in the 2018 Farm Bill. When these challenges are left unspoken, swept under the rug or stigmatized, our entire community is impacted. Inclusion of the *FARMERS FIRST Act* in the Farm Bill is an important first step,” **said Andrew Bahrenburg, National Policy Director of the National Young Farmers Coalition.**

“This is the strongest Farm Bill in history for its support of specialty crops and we appreciate Senator Baldwin’s tireless efforts to make it a reality. In particular, she was instrumental in pushing to enhance resources for specialty crop research. Senator Baldwin worked hand-in-hand with Ranking Member Debbie Stabenow to ensure that these vital funds are available for investment in cutting edge research to keep the industry competitive both nationally and internationally,” **said Tamas Houlihan, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association.**