

# We Are Working For You.



# Government Affairs

Dairy Business Association is hard at work advocating for Wisconsin's dairy farms, large and small, to keep the state's dairy community strong. Our team, led by Director of Government Affairs John Holevoet, monitors economic, regulatory and legislative developments that affect our farmers. We provide an important voice for our dairy community at all levels of government, particularly at the State Capitol in Madison. We work with policymakers to advance science-based, common-sense laws and regulations that protect and support our strong dairy economy and culture.



## Workforce

Finding and retaining good workers is one of the main concerns for our farmers. DBA is working on the state level to provide a favorable environment for hardworking dairy farm employees, regardless of their immigration status. We also partner with organizations working on the federal level to give farmers the assurance that a consistent workforce will be available to keep their farms in business for years to come. We talk with policymakers about the status and makeup of our current and future workforce needs, so practical and workable solutions can be reached.

## Regulations

Complying with ever-changing permit and other requirements can be confusing and expensive for dairy farms of all sizes. DBA works toward providing permitting processes, environmental reviews and compliance standards that are clearer and more predictable. Where possible, farmers need to have the flexibility to change as their business needs dictate. We help ensure local and state regulations are scientifically sound and consider technology and practicality.

## Water Quantity

Wisconsin's abundant supply of groundwater is one of our state's selling points for farms and other businesses. Even though dairy farms are relatively modest users of groundwater, it is still important to us. DBA supports laws and regulations that allow farmers access to adequate groundwater resources to maintain their existing dairy farm investment and facilitate further growth in the state's dairy community. Our team has been at the forefront of this issue.

## Water Quality

Dairy farmers, like other Wisconsinites, value clean and safe ground and surface water. We rely on a quality supply of groundwater for our farms and our families. We appreciate our streams, rivers and lakes for their beauty, economic importance and recreational opportunities. DBA promotes how modern farming practices and technology have evolved and will continue to evolve to address water quality concerns. DBA continuously monitors proposed and potential regulations from the state and federal governments that are meant to address water quality concerns. We work to ensure any new rules are manageable, practical and effective.

## Transportation

Solid and well-maintained infrastructure is crucial to keeping Wisconsin's dairy community strong. Farmers depend on town, county and state roadways to ship milk to processors and for the processors to get the dairy foods out on grocers' shelves. Farmers are also dependent on these roads to transport equipment that is essential to plant, grow and harvest the crops used to feed their animals. Many rural roads are deteriorating and cannot handle modern farm equipment. We strive to ensure lawmakers understand the importance of having a sustainable way to pay for road projects, and that transportation priorities must always include rural roads.

## Food Safety

Wisconsinites deserve an abundant, nutritious and safe supply of dairy foods. Modern dairy farming and processing allows our farmers to ensure their products' safety from farm to table. DBA actively opposes the sale of raw milk because of the significant health risks associated with it. The dairy community cannot afford being associated with the illnesses that can be caused by drinking unpasteurized milk. It will hurt all of us, not just the lone farmer who sold it.

# DBA

## Relationships

**Member, industry and public relations services enhance our core policy efforts.**

### Member Relations

DBA has established a renewed focus on strengthening the relationships between the group's leaders and members and from member to member. Director of Member Relations Nicole Barlass strives to make sure our members find value in their membership, are being heard when they have suggestions or concerns, and have opportunities to get involved at deeper levels in the organization. Nicole's key strategies for ensuring top-notch member engagement:

- » Strengthening communications between the organization and members.
- » Making regular statewide member visits to hear from our members.
- » Expanding opportunities for member engagement, including statewide member meetings and committee involvement.
- » Offering networking opportunities, such as our annual golf outing and annual Packers tailgate party.

### Industry Relations

There is strength in numbers. Many farm and allied groups have missions that overlap, yet the organizations don't take full advantage of their collective power. Director of Industry Relations Maria Woldt tackles the critical assignment of bridging gaps between DBA and other statewide and national agricultural organizations. One important result was the development of our Dairy Strong Sustainability Alliance. Some key focus areas for Maria:

- » Facilitating important meetings between DBA and various other agricultural groups, such as Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation, Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board and more. The goal is to spark synergies between organizations so we can collectively work harder and smarter for all of our members.
- » Execute the annual Dairy Strong Conference. This major conference, held each January, is a high-level, fun, engaging experience for the dairy community's most progressive constituents.
- » Dairy Strong Sustainability Alliance (DSSA) - Read more about the DSSA on the back cover.

### Public Relations

Perhaps unlike ever before, farmers are under the microscope by customers who want to know and understand where the food they buy comes from, what's in it and how it was made. Customers want assurances that the food is safe, that it was produced through environmentally sustainable methods and, in the case of livestock farming, that the animals were treated humanely. This presents a major challenge for farmers, who for the most part have always just assumed that customers knew these things to be true. Recognizing the need to help better connect farmers and their values to customers and theirs, DBA developed a public relations emphasis. The key approaches used by Director of Public Relations Jamie Mara and Digital Communications Manager Joanna Wavrunek:

- » Help farmers think through their personal stories and make them feel comfortable telling those stories to customers, neighbors, visitors, the media and others.
- » Develop relationships with news media to ensure reporters have accurate information on farming practices as well as access to farmers and other experts in the dairy community.
- » Create and share stories, photos and videos about dairy farms and food to influential audiences through various social media platforms.
- » Collaborate with other statewide agricultural organizations on taking communications about the dairy community to the next level through various campaigns, sharing of our stories/photos/videos and extending the audience reach.
- » Facilitate training for farmers on developing a social media presence, making public presentations, communicating with government officials and working with news media.
- » Correct misinformation and bust myths circulating on social media and in news stories, including mistruths that are strategically spread by anti-farming activist groups.
- » Assist farmers facing on-farm emergencies when details need to be shared publicly.
- » Explore ways to partner with food processors, companies and retailers on more closely connecting customers to farmers through communications.



## What is the DSSA?

Organized in the spring of 2016, the goal of the Dairy Strong Sustainability Alliance is to show tangible improvements in the areas of land use, soil conservation, nutrient management, water quality and use, energy use, animal welfare, food safety, greenhouse emissions, economic health and social responsibility. The DSSA achieves these goals by applying existing sustainability tools to grassroots efforts led by farmers. Data from each group is compiled annually. DBA is a founding partner of the DSSA — a collaborative alliance that includes all aspects of the dairy community: farmers, processors, dairy product and service providers, transportation, conservation groups, consumer packaged goods companies, retailers, government agencies, universities and dairy and trade non-profits. Customers and retailers have certain expectations when it comes to food, and the DSSA provides a holistic approach that satisfies customers while preserving our dairy heritage.



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**OUR VISION:** Success at its fullest for America's Dairyland.