

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
COMMERCE
HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

April 1, 2025

Brooke Rollins
Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture
Jamie L. Whitten Building
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington DC, 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins:

I am writing to bring your attention to the need for disaster relief for dairy farmers, particularly those in Wisconsin. The unprecedented weather conditions over the past few years have severely impacted Wisconsin farmers and producers at no fault of their own. I am requesting that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) administer the remaining disaster aid Congress provided in the bipartisan American Relief Act expeditiously and in a manner that meets the diverse needs of the dairy industry.

Wisconsin, America's Dairyland, has faced increasingly severe weather in the past two years. In 2023, unprecedented flooding, unseasonably cold temperatures, and irregular precipitation caused extensive damage to dairy farms, impacting both on-farm infrastructure and feed quality for herds. These conditions, compounded by high input costs and market instability, placed extreme financial pressure on Wisconsin dairy farmers. The following year brought another round of extreme weather, including severe drought and flooding conditions. Fields were saturated for extended periods of time during the growing season, damaging crops or making it impossible to plant. Wisconsin leads the nation in silage production, and the lost growing season created additional costs in supplemental feed for herds.

Over the past few years, Wisconsin has lost one to two dairy farms a day to bankruptcy, and family farmers have done everything in their power to keep their livestock healthy, feed their families, and maintain farm operations. However, it is not getting any easier for the industry due to mounting financial stress from severe weather, market instability, and increased input costs. The disaster aid funding included in the American Relief Act is an opportunity for your agency to make good on the bipartisan promise to provide much needed relief. Dairy farmers and producers in Wisconsin deserve a fair share of the disaster assistance to help mitigate the devastating losses they have incurred these last two years.

Therefore, I urge USDA to ensure that the disaster aid made available through the American Relief Act is allocated expeditiously and in a way that recognizes the challenges of this diverse industry. The agency should consider the unique impacts of severe weather and milk loss on the whole industry, as opposed to a one-size-fits-all approach. Any final package should include aid for organic and conventional dairy farmers, as well as processors. Moreover, I ask that the agency take into consideration the financial impact of feed availability as a result of severe weather and the subsequent loss of dairy production.

The dairy industry is the backbone of Wisconsin's rural communities and our economy. Wisconsin's dairy farmers provide vital nutrition and food security for families and children across the nation. It is imperative that they receive the assistance that Congress directed in the American Relief Act to weather these difficult times, in a manner that is both timely and meets the needs of diverse industry partners. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tammy Baldwin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "T" and "B".

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator