



Wednesday April 12th, 2023

Dear Members of the Wisconsin Joint Committee on Finance,

This letter serves as a request from the agricultural community to allocate additional guidance and support related to PFAS in the food supply, as well as additional assistance for farms facing challenges from contamination via funding in the 2023-25 Wisconsin State Budget.

While significant progress has been made in understanding perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), there is much that still needs to be done. Across Wisconsin, communities face threats to their health and waterways due to PFAS contamination. We must take action now and ask our legislators to support \$106 million for PFAS remediation in the state budget. PFAS have been detected in over 70 communities across the state, impacting the drinking water of more than 2.2 million Wisconsinites. Governor Evers' \$106 million PFAS proposals in the 2023-2025 state budget would help protect Wisconsinites from PFAS contamination by providing direct support to communities facing contamination, new staff for testing and remediation, and expanded educational outreach to impacted communities.

As we learn more about PFAS, historic land applications of contaminated processing waste and biosolids spanning decades has led to concerns about plant uptake, use for crop production, accessibility for grazing, and impacts to wildlife and the environment. Farmers who discover these issues, through no fault of their own, need assistance in the form of more research on plant uptake and remediation, as well as access to resources including income support and funding to transition to alternate forms of production if necessary.

The story of New Mexico dairy farmer Art Schaap is one that we never want to see impact the agriculture community again. The 54-year-old second-generation dairy farmer learned that his water, his land, his crops – even the blood in his body – were contaminated with the PFAS chemicals that migrated to his property from nearby Cannon Air Force Base. Instead of selling milk, he dumped 15,000 gallons a day. Instead of working to keep his animals healthy, he had to exterminate all 4,000 of his cows, and lay off his 40+ employees. This heartbreaking reality is a wakeup call for what could happen to the booming dairy industry our state is proudly known for. Since the incident at Art's farm, we have seen PFAS contamination impact agricultural land in Michigan, Maine, and at home here in Wisconsin. The reality in Wisconsin is that there is still so much we don't know surrounding the impacts of PFAS on our agricultural production. The \$106 million in the state budget would go towards funding for the research, education, and support around PFAS.

We further support the state legislature passing legislation to eliminate civil liability of the farmer when it comes to PFAS-related ground or surface water contamination.

To ensure we're protecting public health, maintaining public confidence in the safety of our food supply, and providing a level playing field for our agricultural industries, it's clear that without state standards for ground and surface water related guidance and further research is needed.

We greatly appreciate and look forward to working with you on these critical needs.

Sincerely,



Julie Keown-Bomar
Executive Director
Wisconsin Farmers Union