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Contact: Laurie Fischer
Executive Director
Dairy Business Association
Phone: 920.366.1880
E-mail: lfischer@widba.com

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Wisconsin's Dairy Industry Plans Growth

Despite times of nationwide economic uncertainty, one Wisconsin industry looks forward with confidence to a sustainable future.

The state's most progressive dairy industry organization, the Dairy Business Association (DBA), recently polled 40 dairy producer members and found that they have plans to invest more than **\$116 million** into expansion projects in the next six months.

"Updating Wisconsin dairies with innovative technology and growing dairy facilities to accommodate more cows are more than just strides to maintain our identity as America's Dairyland. These advancements increase local job opportunities, generate local business growth, provide tax dollars to pay basic government infrastructure and services and increase the dairy industry's ability to better Wisconsin's economy," said Jerry Meissner, president of the Dairy Business Association and central Wisconsin dairy producer.

According to the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board, the state's dairy industry generates \$39,000 each minute and nearly \$21 billion each year. As an employer of 160,000 citizens, dairy directly stimulates the construction industry, manufacturing, trade jobs and other related service jobs.

"Each dairy cow in the state is turning out \$17,000 into local communities," Meissner added, "and that is why it is imperative that we continue to grow our state's dairy cow numbers." In fact, the National Agriculture Statistics Service showed growth in Wisconsin's state dairy herd in 2007, after a decade of decline where as many as three dairy producers exited the business every day and exponential dairy growth took place in the western United States.

However, good management, dairy investment tax credits, fair market prices for milk and a statewide attitude that promotes growth have led to a refueling of the dairy industry, says Laurie Fischer, DBA's Executive Director. "Despite living in a time of nationwide economic uncertainty, we feel confident that Wisconsin dairy producers will continue their plans to build dairy facilities, purchase more cows and manage nutrients and their operations with the latest technologies to move their businesses forward," Fischer said.

Keep in mind, warned Meissner, that while the price paid for milk has been at a comfortable place, the past year has seen certain inputs double and even triple in cost. "The rising cost of feed, fuel and fertilizer make good business management more important than ever," Meissner added.

Beyond economics, there is a green component to the growth of Wisconsin's dairy businesses. Wisconsin currently leads the nation with 22 on-farm bio-energy units that use manure to make electrical power. Meissner has added methane digesting to his dairy operation. "Renewable energy is a pressing concern for all of us, and installing a methane digester on my family's dairy will allow us to produce green energy for Wisconsin's citizens."

Looking ahead, Fischer sees a positive future for Wisconsin's dairy industry. "As savvy business men and women, conscientious land and animal stewards, technology adapters and economic contributors, dairy producers look ahead to serving in these many roles to better Wisconsin," she said.

The Dairy Business Association is an industry organization comprised of dairy producers, corporate and allied industry supporters. DBA promotes the growth and success of all dairy farms in Wisconsin by fostering a positive business and political environment. For more information about DBA, please visit our website at www.widba.com.