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Contacts: Laura Smith, Office of the Governor, 608-261-2162

John Dipko, Department of Workforce Development, 608-266-6753

## **Governor Doyle Announces \$296,997 Grant to Fund Training for Agriculture and Agribusiness Workers**

MADISON – Governor Jim Doyle today announced a \$296,997 grant to fund training for agriculture and agribusiness workers throughout Wisconsin. The grant is the latest award in the Wisconsin Industry Partnership initiative, a new approach to training that gives industry a leading role in worker training.

“Agriculture and agribusiness are the backbone of Wisconsin’s economy,” Governor Doyle said. “This grant will give our workers the skills they need to get good-paying jobs and to help make sure Wisconsin remains America’s agricultural leader.”

The grant is being awarded to the Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin, the Department of Workforce Development’s (DWD) regional partner based in Madison. The grant will support training activities on a statewide basis, with input from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection (DATCP) and its Wisconsin Agricultural Education and Workforce Development Council, whose 34 members include 12 representatives from industry employers across the state.

Through the grant, current employees and unemployed or underemployed workers will receive training in agriculture career pathways that focus both on and off the farm, from farm production to distribution-related financial, technical and manufacturing processes. Training will take the form of mentorship, programs and seminars, targeting some 200 farmers, farm workers and displaced manufacturing workers who are pursuing new careers in agriculture.

Jobs that will be supported through the grant project include engineering managers, marketing managers, and heavy equipment mechanics. Entry level wages for such positions can average over \$17 per hour for environmental engineering technicians and can reach as high as \$33 per hour for managers. With close to \$340,000 in local matching resources, total funding for the 12-month training project will reach nearly \$637,000.

Today, Governor Doyle also announced an Industry Partnership convening grant of \$25,000 for the Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington Workforce Development Board to work with employers in the Power Control sector to identify potential training opportunities.

These grants are part of Governor Doyle’s Wisconsin Industry Partnership, which focuses on the regional workforce needs of emerging and high-growth industry sectors. The effort is part of a nearly \$6 million worker training package that the Governor announced in March 2009. The Department of Workforce Development administers the innovative program, which partners with labor unions, area employers, economic development agencies, workforce development agencies, K-12 schools, technical colleges and University of Wisconsin institutions. Together, the Industry Partnership grant dollars are providing the funding for a long-term, sustainable effort to attract, train and retain a high-quality workforce necessary to support and grow the many agriculture related industries in Wisconsin.

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Under Governor Doyle's leadership, Wisconsin has invested and promoted its diverse agricultural economy, which has now grown to approximately \$59 billion annually and is responsible for more than 1 in 10 jobs in Wisconsin. Incentives to help modernize the dairy industry have helped increase milk production to record levels and have strengthened the state's status as the number one producer of cheese in the country. In addition, Wisconsin is second in the nation in the number of organic farms.

Earlier this year, Governor Doyle signed into law several bills to create jobs and support investment in the state's agricultural industries. These bills created a food processing tax credit to create investment opportunities for Wisconsin food processing and distribution businesses; extended the dairy modernization tax credits through 2012 to help hard-pressed dairy farmers invest in their operations; and created a Farm to School program to help more Wisconsin schools have easier access to locally grown fruits and vegetables.