

# Wisconsin Agricultural Education and Workforce Development Council Annual Report

July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022



Department of Workforce Development

September 8, 2022

To Governor Tony Evers  
Members of the Legislature  
Secretary Randy Romanski, Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection  
State Superintendent Jill Underly, Department of Public Instruction  
Secretary Preston Cole, Department of Natural Resources  
Secretary and CEO Missy Hughes, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation  
President Jay O. Rothman, University of Wisconsin System  
President Morna K. Foy, Wisconsin Technical College System  
Chancellor Jennifer L. Mnookin, University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Interim Chancellor Tammy Evetovich, University of Wisconsin-Platteville  
Chancellor Maria Gallo, University of Wisconsin-River Falls  
Chancellor Thomas Gibson, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point  
Dean and Director Karl Martin, University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension

The Department of Workforce Development (DWD) is pleased to present the following report on the goals and activities of the Wisconsin Agricultural Education and Workforce Development Council for state fiscal year 2022. This report also includes reviews of agricultural education programs provided by Wisconsin's educational systems and institutions: the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Wisconsin Technical College System, University of Wisconsin System, and University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension.

Competition for workers is strong statewide and agriculture is no exception. Agriculture is a significant driver of the state's economy, contributing \$104.8 billion in sales annually and accounting for nearly 12% of the state's employment. Going forward, promoting these employment opportunities and working with partners to develop career pathways will be essential to attract young talent and maintain a thriving agricultural sector. DWD welcomes the recommendations of the Wisconsin Agricultural Education and Workforce Development Council as we continue to build and strengthen Wisconsin's workforce for the 21st century and beyond.

The Council's diverse expertise and knowledge of agricultural education, agricultural and natural resource industries, and agricultural workforce development needs are key to ensuring a bright future for agriculture in Wisconsin. The Council and DWD look forward to continuing to advise and assist state agencies, educational institutions, and the Wisconsin Legislature on matters related to agricultural education and workforce development.

Sincerely,



Amy Pechacek, Secretary-designee  
Department of Workforce Development

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## INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to Wis. Stats. s. 106.40(5), this report provides updates on the goals and activities of the Wisconsin Agricultural Education and Workforce Development Council (WAEWDC, or the Council) for state fiscal year (SFY) 2022. In addition, under Wis. Stat. s. 106.40(4), the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, the Wisconsin Technical College System, and University of Wisconsin System and Extension shall prepare an annual review of the agricultural education programs under their purview. This report also includes the reviews of agricultural education programs provided by Wisconsin's educational systems and institutions.

## ABOUT THE WISCONSIN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

After several years of inactivity, the Council was reformed in 2020 under Governor Tony Evers' leadership to serve a key role in Wisconsin's economic and workforce development efforts. Under the guidance of DWD leadership, the WAEWDC continued the rebuilding process throughout SFY2022 and advanced its work to fulfill its purpose and functions, under Wis. Stats. s. 106.40(2) to:

1. Increase the hiring and retention of well-qualified employees in industries related to agriculture, food, and natural resources.
2. Promote the coordination of educational systems to develop, train, and retrain employees for current and future careers related to agriculture, food, and natural resources.
3. Develop support for employment in fields related to agriculture, food, and natural resources.
4. Recommend policies and other changes to improve the efficiency of the development and provision of agricultural education across educational systems.

In addition, the Council provides advice and assistance to state agencies, educational institutions, and the Wisconsin Legislature on matters related to agricultural education and workforce development. The Council also focuses on the integration of agricultural education and workforce development systems through the coordination of programs, the exchange of information, and the monitoring and evaluation of programs. In addition, the WAEWDC helps attract, develop, and retain the superior workforce required to grow Wisconsin's production in agriculture, agribusiness, food, and natural resource sectors.



## COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

WAEWDC is a function of DWD and consists of state agency secretaries (or their designees) from DWD, the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP), Department of Public Instruction (DPI), Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), and Department of Natural Resources (DNR); as well as the following appointees, pursuant to Wis. Stats. s. 15.227(15):

- ◆ President (or their designee) of the University of Wisconsin System;
- ◆ Director (or their designee) of the Wisconsin Technical College System;
- ◆ Chancellor (or their designee) from UW-Extension – now known as the Dean/Director of the UW-Madison Division of Extension;
- ◆ A member chosen jointly by the dean of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the dean of the School of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the dean of the College of Business, Industry, Life Science, and Agriculture of the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, the dean of the College of Agriculture, Food, and Environmental Sciences of the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, and the dean of the College of Natural Resources of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point to represent the colleges and school;
- ◆ A technical college district director appointed by the director of the technical college system;
- ◆ A technical college dean with authority over agricultural programs appointed by the director of the technical college system;
- ◆ Members of the legislature: two senators and two members of the assembly representing the standing committees on education and agriculture;
- ◆ Public member representatives appointed by the Secretary of DATCP to serve three-year terms:
  - Two representatives:
    - General agriculture,
    - Agribusiness; and
  - One representative
    - Wisconsin Association of Agricultural Educators,
    - Environmental stewardship interests,
    - Businesses related to natural resources,
    - Businesses related to plant agriculture
    - Landscaping, golf course, greenhouse, floral, and related businesses,
    - Food product and food processing businesses,
    - Businesses related to animal agriculture,
    - Businesses related to renewable energy,
    - Agricultural communication interests,
    - Businesses providing engineering, mechanical, electronic, and power services relating to agriculture,
- ◆ Board of agriculture, trade, and consumer protection; and
  - Public member representatives appointed by the State Superintendent of DPI to serve three-year terms:
  - One teacher who teaches classes in science, vocational technology, business, math, or a similar field,
  - One school guidance counselor,
  - One school board member,
  - One school district administrator.

## WAEWDC membership for SFY2022 is as follows:

**Chair:** Sara Schoenborn, Wisconsin Agri-Business Association

### Executive Committee:

**Amy Pechacek**, Secretary-designee, DWD

**Randy Romanski**, Secretary, DATCP

**Sharon Wendt**, designee on behalf of the State Superintendent, DPI

**Gwen Boettcher**, DeForest School District

**Jeff Edgar**, Silver Creek Nurseries, Inc.

**Erik Huschitt**, Badger State Ethanol

**Betsy Leonard**, Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS)

**Paul Palmby**, Seneca Foods

### Members at Large:

**Kevin Bernhardt**, University of Wisconsin-Platteville

**Gary Besaw**, Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, Department of Agriculture and Food Systems

**Greg Cisewski**, Northcentral Technical College

**Alberta Darling**, State Senator, 8th Senate District

**Jeff Eide**, Blair-Taylor School District

**Monica Gahan**, Vincent High School of Agricultural Sciences, Milwaukee

**Dale Gallenberg**, University of Wisconsin-River Falls

**Tom Gillis**, WI Corn Growers Association

**Bob Hagenow**, Rio Community School Board

**Pete Kondrup**, Westby Cooperative Creamery

**Corey Kuchta**, Wisconsin Public Service

**Larry Lee**, Brownfield Ag News

**Miranda Leis**, Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation; CROPP Cooperative/Organic Valley

**Howard Marklein**, State Senator, 17th Senate District

**Karl J. Martin**, UW-Madison Division of Extension

**Shelly Mayer**, Dairy farmer/Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin

**Loren Oldenburg**, State Representative, 96th Assembly District

**Kristin Olson** (resigned in March) / **Daniel Smith** (appointed in March), Cooperative Network

**Pam Porter** (retired in April) / **Scott Loomans** (appointed in April), DNR designee

**Sam Ridders**, Deputy Secretary, WEDC

**John Rosenow**, Rosenholm Wolfe Dairy Farm/Cowsmo Compost

**Jill Runde**, McFarland School District

**Nick Stadnyk**, Rusk County Land and Water Conservation Department

**Gary Tauchen**, State Representative, 6th Assembly District

**Jason Wood**, Southwest Wisconsin Technical College

## SUMMARY OF THE COUNCIL'S ACTIVITIES – SFY2022

In SFY2022 (July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022), after rebuilding a strong foundation, the WAEWDC focused on advancing its purpose and goals. In brief, during SFY2022, the Council:

- ◆ Re-adopted its statement of purpose.
- ◆ Developed and approved its first annual report since 2015.
- ◆ Held three full council meetings virtually due to the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic and held a hybrid (in-person & virtual) meeting in May 2022.
- ◆ Created subcommittees to work on developing ideas for how to achieve the three key goals the Council identified in SFY2021.
- ◆ Partners and agricultural education and industry stakeholders provided presentations to help the Council reflect on the status of agricultural education in Wisconsin, particularly its role in encouraging future generations to pursue careers in agriculture and natural resources.

In September 2021, the Council held an extra meeting to review and approve its annual report, which identified the re-building activities of the Council over SFY2021 and included reviews conducted by educational institutions and systems. Council members from educational institutions and systems (DPI, WTCS, and the UW System) provided high-level overviews of their reviews of the status of agricultural education in Wisconsin. Thereafter, the Council recommended and approved that the Council remain in place with its current structure and continue to carry out its functions as defined in state statute.

At its regular meeting in October 2021, the WAEWDC held a brainstorming session on how to achieve the three goals that were adopted at the June 2021 meeting. The goals, synthesized through the ideas generated and priorities identified by the Council, serve as the Council's north star of its focused efforts to fulfill its purpose:

- Goal 1:** Support agricultural education instructors and find effective ways to reach every student to highlight the opportunities available in agriculture in a positive, purposeful way.
- Goal 2:** Partner with DPI to embrace and promote the development of a statewide agriculture pathway.
- Goal 3:** Research current trends, evaluate established perspectives, and develop a branding, marketing, and public outreach plan for careers in agriculture.

The Council decided to create three subcommittees to focus on developing ways to actualize each of the three goals. By its next regular meeting in March 2022, the WAEWDC developed the three subcommittees comprised of current Council members:

### Goal 1 Subcommittee

Co-Chair – Betsy Leonard  
 Co-Chair – Greg Cisewski  
 Gwen Boettcher  
 Jeff Edgar  
 Erik Huschitt  
 Jeff Eide  
 Tom Gillis  
 Corey Kuchta  
 Miranda Leis  
 Representative Loren Oldenburg  
 Jill Runde  
 Sara Schoenborn  
 Jason Wood

### Goal 2 Subcommittee

Chair – Sharon Wendt  
 Kevin Bernhardt  
 Monica Gahan  
 Shelly Mayer  
 Sec. Amy Pechacek  
 Deputy Sec. Sam Ridders  
 Sec. Randy Romanski  
 Sara Schoenborn

### Goal 3 Subcommittee

Chair - Paul Palmby  
 Gary Besaw  
 Dale Gallenberg  
 Bob Hagenow  
 Pete Kondrup  
 Larry Lee  
 Scott Loomans  
 Karl Martin  
 John Rosenow  
 Sara Schoenborn  
 Daniel Smith  
 Nick Stadnyk  
 Rep. Gary Tauchen

At the March 2022 WAEWDC meeting, the subcommittees held their first breakout sessions to kick off work on each of their assigned goals. This work continued for the duration of SFY2022.

"The Wisconsin Agricultural Education and Workforce Development Council is focused on its three goals to support agricultural education instructors, develop a statewide agriculture pathway, and promote agricultural careers," said DATCP Secretary Randy Romanski. "I am proud to collaborate with government, education, and industry partners to advance this work and develop Wisconsin's future agricultural workforce."

By the end of SFY2022, the three subcommittee chairs were pleased to report the following workgroup activities:

- ▶ **Goal 1 Subcommittee** – Identified two actionable items to help support instructors and highlight the opportunities available in agriculture.
  1. The subcommittee will create a visual for use by faculty at all levels and a handout for students to see what, when, and where there are agricultural educational opportunities. This will support instructors by building a pipeline of students.
  2. The subcommittee started an assessment of middle school, high school, and post-secondary institutions to understand where students are introduced to agricultural education, what continuing opportunities they have, and areas for improvement.
- ▶ **Goal 2 Subcommittee** – Discussed the process for the development of a statewide agriculture pathway. The development of a career pathway in agriculture would provide a transparent way to showcase the diverse career opportunities in agriculture and the types of courses and experiences necessary to prepare students for these high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand career areas.

The subcommittee will seek input from other Council members to provide important employer/industry group feedback on in-demand careers and the types of training/education necessary for success. Moreover, after the formalization of the pathway, the subcommittee will look for ways to inform students and student organizations about the pathway.

- ▶ **Goal 3 Subcommittee** – Discussed current trends regarding agricultural education and the workforce shortages in the industry. The subcommittee also identified some organizations that are working on public outreach regarding careers in agriculture. The subcommittee will meet with these organizations in SFY2023 to identify partnerships and ways to support existing outreach and marketing efforts.

In addition to the development and work of the three subcommittees, the WAEWDC also used Council meetings to provide updates about programs, initiatives, and opportunities across the state that connect agricultural education and agricultural workforce development. This included the following formal presentations and report outs:

- A briefing about the Meat Talent Development Program by DATCP Secretary Romanski and Betsy Leonard from WTCS, and an overview of agricultural education across WTCS.
  - The WAEWDC was also provided report outs about the agricultural and natural resources educational programs available at Northcentral Wisconsin and Southwest Wisconsin Technical Colleges.
- A presentation about the agricultural and natural resources education at the College of the Menominee Nation by Dr. Frank Kutka and Gary Besaw with the Menominee Nation's Department of Agriculture and Food Systems.

As the Council continues to hear from educators and industry experts about the opportunities and needs of agricultural education and agricultural workforce development, the WAEWDC and its subcommittees will move forward with further implementation of its goals in SFY2023.

"This council is comprised of individuals dedicated to the future of Wisconsin agriculture. Together, we have developed goals which will strengthen the agriculture industry and its next generation of leaders," said WAEWDC Chair Sara Schoenborn. "It is inspiring to see what a difference the council is making today and the plans they are making for an even greater impact tomorrow."

## STATE AGENCY HIGHLIGHTS - SFY2022

### Department Workforce Development

DWD is committed to efficiently delivering effective and inclusive services to meet Wisconsin's diverse workforce needs and advocates for the protection and economic advancement of all Wisconsin workers, employers, and job seekers. DWD envisions a thriving Wisconsin economy in which:

- All workers are treated fairly, with dignity and respect;
- Employers, government, educational institutions, and workers collaborate to ensure workforce programs meet current and future needs; and
- Every job provides the wages and benefits necessary to support workers' basic needs, invest in their future, and actively engage with their families and communities.

DWD is charged with building and strengthening Wisconsin's workforce for the 21st century and beyond. The Department's primary responsibilities include providing job services, training, and employment assistance to people looking for jobs, while also helping employers find the necessary workers to fill current job openings.

### WISCONSIN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

DWD continued its oversight and support for the WAEWDC, ensuring the continued growth and advancement of its purpose and goals. The WAEWDC provides advice and counsel to state agencies, educational institutions, and the Wisconsin Legislature on matters related to agricultural education and workforce development. In addition, the Council helps attract, develop, and retain the superior workforce required to grow Wisconsin's production in agriculture, agribusiness, food, and natural resource sectors. The work of the Council and its members help to build the connections necessary to ensure a bright future for Wisconsin's agricultural industry and economy.

### WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS INITIATIVES

In July 2021, Governor Evers announced a \$130 million investment into solutions to help address the state's post-pandemic workforce needs, with an additional \$28 million provided in June 2022. With funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), the resources support connecting unemployed or underemployed workers with new opportunities while also incentivizing innovative solutions to regional workforce challenges that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. The programs include:

- **Workforce Innovation Grant program** – The \$128 million Workforce Innovation Grant program, a partnership between DWD and WEDC, to encourage regions and communities to develop leading-edge, long-term solutions to the workforce challenges the state faces in the wake of COVID-19. Throughout SFY2022, DWD and WEDC completed several rounds of grantmaking. Programs and projects related to the focus and goals of the WAEWDC that were funded include:
  - UW-Stevens Point was awarded \$8 million to support post-high school training programs available through regional training hubs that will lead to stable, well-paying jobs in the forestry sector.
  - Sauk Prairie School District was awarded \$2.4 million to provide an innovative solution to address the workforce needs of the region's advanced manufacturers, agricultural science employers, and healthcare providers.



- **Worker Advancement Initiative** - \$20 million of ARPA funding is going toward the Worker Advancement Initiative, which will offer subsidized employment and skills training opportunities with local employers to unemployed individuals. DWD awarded grants to Workforce Development Boards (WDB) around the state to provide subsidized employment and skills training opportunities to participants, including a focus on those who will be co-enrolled in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs. The purpose is to leverage existing resources available through the greater workforce system to connect participant job seekers more effectively to employers and allow them to obtain enhanced case management and training services.
  - For example, \$1.5 million was awarded to the Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Board (WWWDB) to serve 150 participants, largely in rural Buffalo, Trempealeau, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Juneau, Vernon, and Crawford counties. The WWWWDB is using these funds to provide paid work experience opportunities, hard and soft skills training in in-demand jobs, on-the-job training opportunities, and enhanced supportive services, including childcare, housing, transportation, and worker stipends.
- **Worker Connection Program** – DWD awarded \$10 million for the Worker Connection Program to two workforce development areas (WDAs), which will provide workforce career coaches who will connect with individuals attempting to reengage in the workforce since the pandemic. WDA 2 (Milwaukee County) and WDA 5 (Florence, Marinette, Oconto, Outagamie, Menominee, Shawano, Brown, Kewaunee, Door, Manitowoc, and Sheboygan Counties) are engaging coaches to help participants identify a career pathway available in Wisconsin that offers the wages and benefits necessary to support their basic needs, invest in their future and engage with their families and communities.
  - The coaches will facilitate assessments and connect participants with appropriate training providers.
  - They can also assist participants with filling out any application requirements or grant requests.
  - The program also offers participants the opportunity to take in-demand, sector-focused training with local employers who are ready to hire. Local training opportunities are designed to focus on sector and employer needs. Employers ensure that the training meets their workforce needs and provides job opportunities to participants.



## POLICY UPDATES TO SUPPORT SELF-EMPLOYED PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

On July 1, 2021, DWD's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) made changes to its Existing Business policy to make it easier for self-employed individuals with disabilities to access funds for assistive technology. With input from DATCP and statewide agricultural groups, the revised policy will allow more farmers and other agribusiness owners to benefit from DVR services. The policy also covers self-employed individuals in other business sectors.

The policy changes expand opportunities for self-employed individuals with disabilities to become eligible to receive DVR services under the Existing Business Policy. This includes money for qualifying assistive technology and access to assistive technology experts. DVR's Existing Business policy serves as the standard policy DVR staff follow when working with people with disabilities who want to maintain self-employment through their existing business. Revisions to the policy expand the criteria for determining whether a DVR eligible self-employed individual is eligible to receive services under this policy. The main revision to the policy allows for broader consideration of business wages that may allow business owners earning less than minimum wage to qualify for services using a debt-to-asset ratio calculation. In determining DVR eligibility, the revisions to the policy also allow outside income, if related to the business, and expenses that may be viewed as assets in subsequent financial periods to be considered.

In June 2022, DWD Secretary-designee Amy Pechacek and DATCP Secretary Rand Romanski, both members of the WAEWDC, toured farms assisted by DWD's DVR program. DVR plays an important role in the agriculture industry to help offer reasonable accommodations to help individuals with disabilities keep farming or find careers in agriculture. Through the services and partnership of AgrAbility, DWD, DATCP, and other partners, Wisconsin farmers can continue doing what they love. Program staff are friendly, helpful, and eager to work with farmers to understand their unique situations. DVR's full spectrum of services includes onsite farm assessments, vocational guidance and counseling, self-employment planning, and assistive technology services including assessments, customization, repair, and training.



## Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection

DATCP is committed to attracting workers to consider careers in agriculture and ensuring Wisconsin's farms and agribusinesses have access to a trained workforce. Approximately one in nine people working in Wisconsin holds a job related to agriculture. These jobs are diverse and include production, processing, transportation, distribution, and marketing. The state continues to hear about the challenges of recruiting and retaining workers in agricultural careers, and DATCP remains committed to identifying opportunities for the future.

### WISCONSIN AGRICULTURE YOUTH COUNCIL

The purpose of the Wisconsin Agriculture Youth Council is to encourage young people to engage with state government and increase their awareness of DATCP's interactions with Wisconsin's agriculture industry. The goals of the Wisconsin Agriculture Youth Council are to highlight agricultural-related careers, share resources available to farmers, provide insight into agricultural policy development, and increase networking opportunities across the industry. DATCP first formed the Wisconsin Agriculture Youth Council in 2020 and has selected a new council each year since.

Each Wisconsin Agriculture Youth Council is comprised of 15 Wisconsin high school seniors from across the state. Students serve a one-year term and receive a certificate at the completion of their year of service. To be a member of the Wisconsin Agriculture Youth Council, members nominate themselves by completing an application form, sharing a letter of recommendation, writing a brief essay, and making a one-minute video. Council members are selected based on their submitted materials and plan to meet the Council's determined goals.

Council members attend virtual monthly sessions and rotate taking leadership roles, including as council chair. For each session, members listen to presentations, ask questions, and participate in discussions about a variety of agricultural topics. Examples of topics include conserving land and water resources, maintaining animal health, marketing agricultural products, and ensuring plant and pest health. All council members must also complete a final written reflection about their experience. Throughout the year, DATCP coordinates optional office hours for the Wisconsin Agriculture Youth Council members to meet with and ask questions to professionals who work in Wisconsin agriculture to encourage them to consider an agricultural career. Each May, council members conclude their year by attending their final session and a DATCP board meeting.

### MEAT TALENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

In 2022, Governor Tony Evers announced up to \$5 million, funded by the American Rescue Plan Act, in meat talent development assistance funds. In the meat processing industry, there is a need for trained professionals in a variety of careers including production, management, and executive level positions. This funding will focus on four key areas: (1) attraction to careers in the meat processing sector, (2) tuition assistance for students seeking skill development, (3) educational program development, and (4) placement in meat processing establishments. The meat talent development program will build upon existing education and training structures to develop new opportunities. The program was developed based on input from stakeholders including meat processors, allied industries (rendering, equipment sales, research and development, and meat animal livestock farmers), and technical colleges and universities.

To attract students to careers in the meat processing industry, an interactive meat pathways website will be developed to highlight available careers and link to training opportunities. There will also be career fairs for potential employees to learn more about available careers. Educational programming will be developed at the technical college level and in the University of Wisconsin System to equip students with meat career skills, including business development training. The funds are anticipated to also allow for the purchase of two mobile harvest and processing units for teaching purposes. Finally, this investment will assist in placing potential employees in meat processing establishments. Meat processing businesses have committed to hiring students from these programs at competitive wages.

The meat talent development program builds on the Governor's continued commitment to invest in and support programs that reduce barriers to employment, provide skills and job training opportunities, and ensure growth and retention of Wisconsin's workforce, in addition to building long-term success in the state's food processing industry. Considering the need for qualified employees in many segments of the agriculture industry, it is envisioned that the career pathway and training program structure developed for the meat talent development program could be replicated in other training programs, assuming future funding would be made available to build the structures.

## Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation

WEDC is committed to creating and maintaining a business climate that allows individuals, entrepreneurs, businesses, and communities to maximize their potential. WEDC, along with its economic development partners, offers a suite of tools, resources, and assistance to support economic growth and development in the state. As the voice for Wisconsin businesses, WEDC champions efforts in workforce development to address current challenges in agriculture and all key sectors in the state.

### WISCONSIN WORKFORCE INNOVATION GRANT

In partnership with DWD, the Workforce Innovation Grant program aims to help Wisconsin's regions solve their most pressing workforce challenges by financially supporting collaborative, sustainable, and innovative pandemic-recovery plans developed by regional organizations. In addition to the projects listed in DWD's highlights above, the grants have funded several projects that support education and workforce development in the agriculture sector. Specifically:

- \$9 million was awarded to Mid-State Technical College to build a regional collaboration around workforce challenges in the central region of Wisconsin to target 2,500 unemployed and/or underemployed individuals, underserved communities, and youth with skill training and barrier-remediation support services. This includes the construction of the region's Advanced Manufacturing, Engineering Technology, and Apprenticeship Center.
- Wisconsin Heights School District will receive \$264,000 for a project serving Columbia, Dane, Iowa, Jefferson, and Sauk counties to tackle the extraordinary teacher shortage faced by rural districts and exacerbated by the pandemic.

### OFFICE OF RURAL PROSPERITY

WEDC's Office of Rural Prosperity led a multi-agency effort to help identify and target assistance to the state's most environmentally vulnerable communities. A new online directory of resources is available at [ruralwi.com](http://ruralwi.com), with lists of government contacts and nonprofit providers, as well as a range of success stories illustrating the resilience and creativity of rural residents and communities. WEDC's Rural Prosperity team experts work with rural communities to create strong digital economies and help them chart their courses toward prosperity. Through the Rural Innovation Initiative, WEDC has helped communities raise more than \$13 million in federal funding and matching dollars through the highly competitive Economic Development Administration's Build to Scale Venture Challenge Grant.

### INTERNATIONAL MARKET ACCESS GRANTS AND AGRICULTURE EXPORT COLLABORATIONS

WEDC collaborates with the DATCP on export development by partnering to provide International Market Access Grant (IMAG) awards to agricultural businesses. As part of the Wisconsin Initiative for Agriculture Exports (WIAE), WEDC contracted 11 agricultural company IMAG grants in SFY22. WEDC's Global Trade and Investment division and DATCP are partnering to highlight the International Market Access Grant to agricultural companies and groups around the state. DATCP is also a sub-awardee for the Small Business Administration's STEP grant, which WEDC writes. WEDC collaborates with DATCP to secure that critical funding that allows Wisconsin agricultural companies to attend important trade show events.

### WISCONSIN COOP FEASIBILITY STUDY GRANT

The program is designed to support the success of current and future cooperatives by allowing them to explore all facets of their business before significant investments are made. WEDC has currently funded three agriculture feasibility projects through the grant to date.

### FABRICATION LABORATORY GRANTS

For the past six years, this program has supported hands-on science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) education by assisting public school districts with equipment purchases used for instructional and educational purposes in fabrication laboratories in Wisconsin schools. This year, WEDC awarded funding to 21 communities, in mostly rural areas.

## Department of Natural Resources

DNR employs a large, diverse workforce throughout the state who work with many aspects of the agricultural industry and deal with issues ranging from water quality to wildlife damage to the management of agricultural plastics. DNR employees have a strong customer service philosophy and attitude of helpfulness with jobs in the areas of natural resources, environmental sciences, engineering, law enforcement, business, and information technology.

Individuals who train for jobs at the DNR have skills that are directly transferable to the agriculture industry and generally support rural prosperity. DNR's outdoors skills programs, learning and education programs at state parks, forestry, and safety education program all serve to expose people to the outdoors and to natural resource professionals.

### STATE OF WISCONSIN STUDENT DIVERSITY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

The State of Wisconsin Student Diversity Internship Program (SWSDIP) offers paid internship opportunities for students interested in exploring different careers and gaining valuable experience. This program is designed to advance career goals and skills while providing an understanding of various agencies of state government. It is one initiative DNR uses to employ a diverse workforce that more accurately mirrors the citizenry of Wisconsin.

DNR provides professional work experience to students, especially students of color, students with disabilities, student veterans, women, and non-traditional students to apply. The goal is to get more interns to pursue careers with DNR. A listing of the DNR internships can be found at: [2022\\_intern\\_positions\\_DNR.pdf](#) ([wisconsin.gov](http://wisconsin.gov))

### WISCONSIN YOUTH CONSERVATION CONGRESS

The Youth Conservation Congress is a new initiative by the Wisconsin Conservation Congress and supported by DNR staff. The group functions under the umbrella of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress. The purpose is to give young people under the age of 18 a voice and instill a sense of civic pride and responsibility in these future stewards of Wisconsin's natural resources.

Wisconsin's natural resources and foster a conservation ethic through participation in the Wisconsin Youth Conservation Congress. In 2021, 26 counties were represented, and participation included 10 graduating seniors and 10 new members.

### MACKENZIE CENTER

The MacKenzie Center has unpaid internships available for students interested in environmental education, wildlife managements, and facility and grounds operations. Learn more about the MacKenzie Center Internship Program.

### SUMMER TRIBAL YOUTH PROGRAM

Matching funds are available to Wisconsin tribes for the development of a summer program that provides tribal youth (ages 13-19) with an opportunity to work on projects related to natural resource conservation. Tribes and bands have flexibility to design projects that suit cultural needs, location, resources, and youth. All projects must promote student knowledge of natural resources careers.

The Summer Tribal Youth Program operates on a cost-share basis. Wisconsin statutes require that grant funds provided under this program may not exceed 50% of total eligible project costs. The balance of project costs is the responsibility of the participating tribe or band.

### LIMITED-TERM EMPLOYMENT OPENINGS

Limited-Term Employment (LTE) openings with DNR are located throughout Wisconsin. LTE jobs are temporary and vary in length but cannot exceed more than 1,039 hours of work within a 12-month period.

Many people find that the training and experience gained during limited-term employment is beneficial when competing for similar permanent positions. Limited-term jobs can be an important learning tool for career development. Students especially enjoy the flexibility offered through limited-term jobs.

# ANNUAL AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION PROGRAM REVIEWS

## Department of Public Instruction Review

### AGRICULTURE EDUCATION IN WISCONSIN'S PK-12 PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Agriculture education continues to prepare students for careers in the agriculture industry, while developing students' leadership skills through FFA and their Supervised Agriculture Experience (SAE). Today's agricultural education departments have developed a comprehensive structure that includes areas such as biotechnology, veterinary science, alternative energy, food science, horticulture, and landscaping. With such variety, students are being prepared for a variety of careers and opportunities in agriculture.

#### PROGRAM STATUS

- DPI is pursuing the development of an Agriculture Career Pathway. This pathway would be developed at the statewide level and made available for regional adoption. It would join the list of other career pathways already developed in high skill, high wage, and in-demand occupational areas. More information on Regional Career Pathways can be found at: <https://dpi.wi.gov/pathways-wisconsin>

- Over 23,100 agriculture education students are also members of the Wisconsin Association of FFA. The pandemic and disruption of events caused membership to see a slight decrease but has since seen membership increase to even higher than what it was before the pandemic as the Wisconsin Association of FFA and National FFA Organization commit to in-person activities and events when possible.

Year	FFA Membership
2018-19	20,830
2019-20	21,273
2020-21	19,804
2021-22	23,179

- Of the 260,979 students enrolled in grades 9-12 in Wisconsin for the 2020-21 academic year, over 29,100 high school students took at least one agriculture course. This 2020-21 school year saw a slight decrease in enrollment due to the pandemic's impact on schools. The table below demonstrates the enrollment breakdown by race:

Race	Enrollment
Asian	400
Black-African American	1,124
Hispanic	2,065
American Indian Alaskan Native	344
Native Hawaiian-Pacific Islander	15
White	24,395
Two or More	771
<b>Total</b>	<b>29,114</b>

- DPI continues to implement an agriculture/science equivalent credit process to award science credits for agriculture courses.
- The implementation of career clusters and pathways in Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources, as well as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields, expands career development opportunities and helps students transition from secondary to post-secondary education.

### AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION CHALLENGES - PRE-K THROUGH 12 IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- Shrinking supply of qualified agriculture education teachers continues to be a challenge.
- Expanding agriculture education programs in Wisconsin with limited teachers.
- Expanding agriculture education programs in urban school districts.
- Sustaining rural agriculture education programs during periods of declining Pre-K-12 enrollments.
- Promoting quality curriculum and instructional facilities for an agriculture education program to meet the STEM needs.

## Wisconsin Technical College System Review

WTCS is comprised of 16 individual colleges across the state making up the system enrolling more than 260,000 people each year. The colleges provide 50 campuses and facilities to meet students where they are demographically, serving every community in Wisconsin, large or small, urban or rural. The technical colleges have a long history of offering high quality programs in agriculture and natural resources, offering 500 programs awarding two-year associate degrees, one- and two-year technical diplomas, as well as short-term technical diplomas and certificates. In addition, 93% of 2021 graduate were employed within six months of graduation with 92% of alumni staying and working in Wisconsin.

The mission of the WTCS is to deliver skills training that recognizes the rapidly changing educational needs of residents to keep current with the demands of the workplace. This is accomplished through the creation of guided career pathways, dual credit opportunities for students in high school to receive college credit, workforce development, and the use of disaggregated student success data through WTCS Tableau Data Dashboards to allow leadership and faculty to create opportunities for business and industry.

Students of the WTCS may be right out of high school, or adults who never attended college or are looking for second careers or a fresh start from the justice system. They differ in (age, gender, race, and socio-economic status), and may have goals to work while attending classes such as in an apprenticeship, improve their skills for their current job, graduate from a program of study and go right out into the workforce or transfer to a 4-year college for additional education.

Programs in the Agriculture and Natural Resources Career Cluster teach the production, processing, marketing, distribution, financing, management, and development of agricultural commodities and resources including food, fiber, wood products, natural resources, renewable energy, and other plant and animal products/resources.

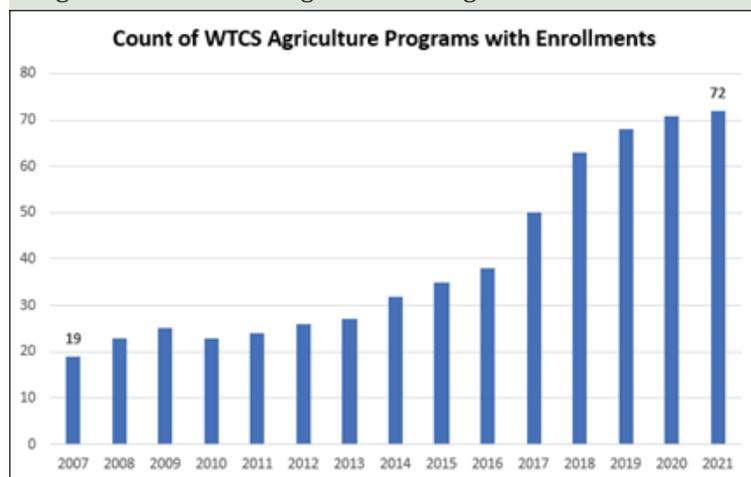
Pathways in the cluster include:

- Agribusiness Systems
- Environmental Science Systems
- Food Products and Processing Systems
- Power, Structural, and Technical Systems
- Plant Systems

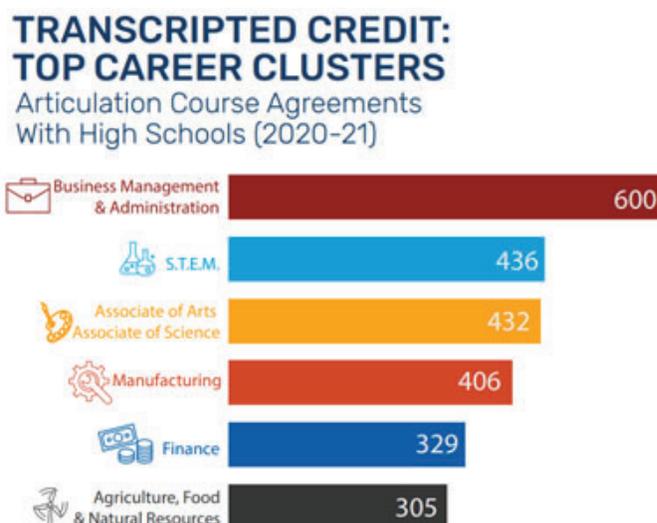
In the 2020-2021 school year, approximately 2000 students were enrolled in 72 agriculture and natural resources programs. **(Figure 1.)**

In high schools throughout the state, students in vocational agriculture courses are able to earn technical college credits while still in high school. Students get a jump-start on their post-secondary education by taking classes such as Animal Science, Greenhouse Management and Plant Science. In the 2020-2021 school year, WTCS had 305 articulation agreements in the Agriculture, Food, Natural Resources cluster. **(Figure 2.)**

\*Figure 1. 2021 WTCS Agriculture Programs with Enrollments



\*Figure 2. WTCS Transcribed Credit Career Cluster



WTCS conducts graduate follow-up surveys six months after graduation on graduate’s success rate finding employment as well as median starting salary. Graduates from agriculture programs in the technical college system report great success at being employed in their chosen field.

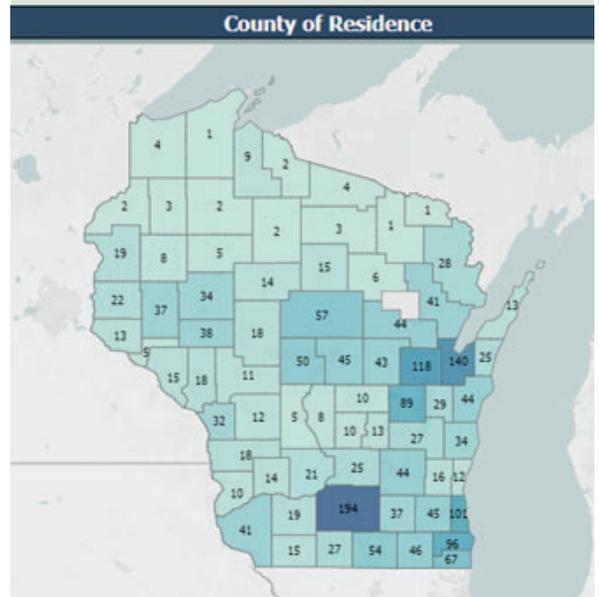
For agriculture programs, the 2021 survey indicates that 93% of WTCS graduates who filled out the survey were employed and 86% were employed in an agriculture-related field. The median starting salary for these graduates was \$47, 836. These numbers show the excellent employment opportunities for technical college graduates. **(Figure 3.)**

In Wisconsin, every county was represented by a student(s) enrolled in agricultural programming through one of Wisconsin’s technical colleges. **(Figure 4.)**

\*Figure 3. WTCS Graduate Outcomes for 2020 Agriculture Program Graduates

Agriculture Program Graduates	
% Employed	96%
%Employed Related	86%
Employed Related Median Annual Salary	\$47,836
% Employed in Wisconsin	90%
% Satisfied with Training Received	96%

\*Figure 4. WTCS Student County of Residence



## University of Wisconsin System Review

### AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION IN WISCONSIN'S PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Wisconsin agriculture and associated industries provide 435,700 jobs, or 11.8%, of the state's employment and contributes \$104.8 billion annually to the state's economy. Career pathways associated with these economic engines include Agribusiness, Animal Systems, Environmental Services, Food Products and Processing, Natural Resources, Plant Systems, and Power, Structural and Technical Systems.<sup>1</sup> Recruiting and educating students for these professions is vital to growth of the Wisconsin economy. Baccalaureate programs that prepare students for professional careers in agriculture and natural resources are offered by UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS); UW-Platteville School of Agriculture (SOA); UW-River Falls College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (CAFES); and UW-Stevens Point College of Natural Resources (CNR).

### PROGRAM STATUS

Academic areas and programs across the system experienced decreased enrollments in 2021 compared to 2020, similar to enrollment trends across the UW System overall. Decreases in academic enrollment were seen in Power, Structures, & Technical Systems (-23%), Food Products and Processing (-21%), Agribusiness Systems (-18%), and Agricultural Education and Agricultural Studies (-12%). See chart below for more enrollment data.

Career Cluster and Academic Program	UW Institution	Upper class Undergraduate Fall Enrollment			Graduates		
		2020	2021	% Change	2019	2020	% Change
<b><i>Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources</i></b>							
<u><i>Agribusiness Systems</i></u>							
Agribusiness Management	UW-Madison	53	31	-42%	19	31	63%
Agribusiness	UW-Platteville	106	98	-8%	53	42	-21%
Agribusiness	UW-River Falls	113	87	-23%	44	55	25%
Agriculture & Applied Economics	UW-Madison	29	31	7%	19	14	-26%
<b><i>Agribusiness Systems Totals</i></b>		301	247	-18%	135	142	5%
<u><i>Agricultural Education &amp; Agricultural Studies</i></u>							
Agriculture Education	UW-Platteville	29	33	14%	15	15	0%
Agriculture Education	UW-River Falls	52	45	-13%	22	22	0%
Agricultural Studies	UW-River Falls	19	10	-47%	9	7	-22%
<b><i>Agricultural Education &amp; Agricultural Studies Totals</i></b>		100	88	-12%	46	44	-4%
<u><i>Animal Systems</i></u>							
Animal Science	UW-Madison	76	76	0%	26	27	4%
Animal Science	UW-Platteville	76	62	-18%	43	39	-9%
Animal Science	UW-River Falls	357	365	2%	118	144	22%
Dairy Science	UW-Madison	40	27	-33%	19	17	-11%
Dairy Science	UW-River Falls	60	47	-22%	29	29	0%
Poultry Science	UW-Madison	0	0	N/A	1	0	N/A
<b><i>Animal Systems Totals</i></b>		609	577	-5%	236	256	8%

<sup>1</sup>According to the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics provided by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection.

Career Cluster and Academic Program	UW Institution	Upper class Undergraduate Fall Enrollment			Graduates		
		2020	2021	% Change	2019	2020	% Change
<b><i>Environmental Service Systems</i></b>							
Community & Environmental Sociology	UW-Madison	38	42	11%	15	19	27%
Conservation/Land Use Planning	UW-River Falls	59	66	12%	24	24	0%
Environmental Science	UW-Madison	128	139	9%	54	50	-7%
Environmental Science	UW-River Falls	33	23	-30%	10	10	0%
Geology	UW-River Falls	21	15	-29%	9	8	-11%
Reclamation, Environment, & Conservation	UW-Platteville	26	18	-31%	12	8	-33%
Resource Management	UW-Stevens Point	178	162	-9%	81	60	-26%
Sustainable Management	UW-River Falls	19	24	26%	5	5	0%
<b><i>Environmental Service Systems Totals</i></b>		502	489	-3%	210	184	-12%
<b><i>Food Products &amp; Processing Systems</i></b>							
Food Science	UW-Madison	65	53	-18%	29	23	-21%
Food Science & Technology	UW-River Falls	24	17	-29%	2	12	500%
<b><i>Food Products &amp; Processing Systems Totals</i></b>		89	70	-21%	31	35	13%
<b><i>Natural Resource Systems</i></b>							
Fisheries & Water Resources	UW-Stevens Point	118	107	-9%	61	54	-11%
Forestry	UW-Stevens Point	153	140	-8%	67	67	0%
Forest Science	UW-Madison	14	15	7%	8	7	-13%
Paper Science	UW-Stevens Point	38	40	5%	5	4	-20%
Wildlife	UW-Stevens Point	169	187	11%	55	61	11%
Wildlife Ecology	UW-Madison	55	59	7%	16	20	25%
<b><i>Natural Resource Systems Totals</i></b>		547	548	0%	212	213	0%
<b><i>Plant Systems</i></b>							
Agronomy	UW-Madison	9	10	11%	5	6	20%
Crop & Soil Science	UW-River Falls	35	29	-17%	18	17	-6%
Entomology	UW-Madison	16	13	-19%	4	7	75%
Environmental Horticulture	UW-Platteville	23	22	-4%	9	7	-22%
Horticulture	UW-Madison	28	30	7%	14	9	-36%
Horticulture	UW-River Falls	27	27	0%	8	15	88%
Landscape Architecture	UW-Madison	34	34	0%	16	14	-13%
Plant Pathology	UW-Madison	13	7	-46%	3	8	167%
Soils	UW-Madison	4	3	-25%	4	2	-50%
Soil & Crop Science	UW-Platteville	47	40	-15%	17	16	-6%
Soil Science	UW-Stevens Point	43	40	-7%	25	20	-20%
<b><i>Plant Systems Totals</i></b>		279	255	-9%	123	121	-2%

Career Cluster and Academic Program	UW Institution	Upper class Undergraduate Fall Enrollment			Graduates		
		2020	2021	% Change	2019	2020	% Change
<u>Power, Structures &amp; Technical Systems</u>							
Agricultural Engineering Technology	UW-River Falls	18	14	-22%	20	7	-65%
Biological Systems Engineering	UW-Madison	176	136	-23%	60	60	0%
<b>Power, Structures, &amp; Technical Systems Totals</b>		194	150	-23%	80	67	-16%
<b>Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources Totals</b>							
		2621	2424	-8%	1073	1062	-1%
<b>Biology &amp; Life Sciences</b>							
Biochemistry	UW-Madison	461	433	-6%	164	172	5%
Biology	UW-Madison	877	913	4%	334	340	2%
Genetics	UW-Madison	282	227	-20%	79	107	35%
Life Sciences Communication	UW-Madison	137	129	-6%	49	59	20%
Microbiology	UW-Madison	191	162	-15%	71	72	1%
Nutritional Sciences	UW-Madison	160	154	-4%	63	65	3%
<b>Biology &amp; Life Sciences Totals</b>		2108	2018	-4%	760	815	7%
<b>Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources plus Biology &amp; Life Sciences Totals</b>							
		4729	4442	-6%	1833	1877	2%
<b>Veterinary Medicine (Professional Practice)</b>							
<b>UW-Madison Veterinary Medicine Totals</b>		384	381	-1%	84	100	19%

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR UNIVERSITY GRADUATES

The career outlook remains strong for new college graduates possessing baccalaureate and graduate degrees in agriculture. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), U.S. college graduates can expect approximately 59,400 job opportunities annually between 2020 and 2025, which is a 2.6% growth from the previous five years. The NIFA report provided the following statistics of jobs, types of jobs and expected graduates.<sup>2</sup>

	Number of Jobs, 2020-2025	Percent of Total Agriculture Jobs	Number of Expected Graduates
Management and Business	24,700	42%	25,700
Science and Engineering	18,400	31%	17,100
Food and Biomaterials	7,900	13%	7,900
Education, Communication and Government Service	8,400	14%	8,700
<b>Total</b>	<b>59,400</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>59,400</b>

<sup>2</sup>Employment Opportunities for College Graduates in Food, Agriculture, Renewable Natural Resources and the Environment, United States, 2020-2025

## University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension Review

The following are impacts and outcomes from the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension's Agriculture Institute.

### IMPROVING FARM PROFITABILITY

Supply chains strained by the COVID-19 pandemic have made agricultural markets increasingly volatile. Farmers are trying to manage these disruptions by exploring new directions and opportunities. One strategy farmers are pursuing is diversification of farming enterprises. Diversifying a farm's enterprises reduces large year-to-year variations in income and ensures adequate cash flow. But diversifying a rural business is complicated and acquiring knowledge about a new enterprise requires building expertise and strong farm business management skills. Expanding into new areas or experimenting with new enterprises may increase capital investment requirements or require new or additional financing (for land, facilities, and/or equipment), which can be challenging to obtain. These ongoing economic conditions take a toll on farm families and their rural communities.

In response, the Division of Extension (Extension) provides research-based farm business management information, resources, and decision-making tools to agriculture professionals such as farmers and farm managers. This includes information on alternative business strategies to ensure the continuation of the current business or a new business enterprise. These resources and education can help them explore new ideas in support of new farm businesses or assist farms that struggle with revenue in a changing agricultural economy. Across Extension programs, farmers and other agriculture professionals learned how to make sound business decisions based on current and future economic challenges and leverage competitive advantages during the pandemic and beyond.

Through webinars, videos, individual consultation, and educational materials and tools, agriculture professionals made informed decisions when diversifying their operations. Over 2,500 farmers, agriculture professionals, and educators participated in Extension Farm Management webinar programs from December 2020 through June of 2021, with more than 167,000 page views of supporting materials for additional learning. Extension resources that help farms conduct a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) have been accessed by 2,900 users. The Extension farmland values report has been accessed by over 8,500 users; over 1,900 accessed information on agricultural contracts and leases.

The ongoing economic conditions and business pivots in agriculture are also taking a continued toll on farm families and their rural communities. The associated chronic stress impacts mental and physical well-being, relationships, and decision-making. Extension provided farmers with education related to mental health and well-being through programs like the Farm Management series on Farming for Health and Healthy Minds Healthy Farms, which reached over 100 farmers, educators, and ag professionals in 2021. Further, the effort reached 167,000 web views and more than 2,500 individual farmers, agriculture professionals, and educators were served.

### ADAPTING FORAGE CROPS AGAINST CHANGING WEATHER

Changing weather patterns have led to colder and wetter springs and falls, complicating the procedures to plant and harvest traditional crops such as corn silage and alfalfa that are fed to cattle. This has led to a 50-year low in inventory of these forages. In response, Wisconsin farmers have begun growing alternative forages, such as short season forage crops, to compensate for damaged hay fields or perennial forage crops in fields that are no longer productive due to weather. While more acres are planted with alternative forages, the agronomic needs, feeding guidelines, and economic implications are not well understood for this region. Without sound research to guide their decisions, farmers face several issues in choosing forage type, varieties, and management strategies.

In response, Extension conducted five research projects including field trials, analyzing forage samples, and evaluating new seed lines. These studies generated science-backed information on planting and using alternative forages. A key component of the studies was to evaluate the best feed quality for different animals, including analyzing samples from seven dairy farms and two beef farms to determine feed quality.

Extension research helped farmers and other agriculture professionals adopt new farming practices and achieve economic viability. Specifically, Extension collaborated with an agriculture industry company to conduct a study that gathered forage yield and nutritional quality data among seed lines from three plots representing a variety of growing conditions in Wisconsin. The findings, along with corresponding weather data, provided valuable information on how spring annual forage crops react to stress situations such as dry, near-drought conditions. The company will use these results to further develop their seed lines and markets, and Extension will use this information in outreach and provide recommendations to Wisconsin producers.

Best practices and research findings were shared through webinars, field days, and consulting. As a result of attending a webinar focused on implementing nitrogen use for winter cereal crops, 84% of participants confirmed they had more confidence in several practices such as implementing intensive winter wheat management and evaluating springtime winter wheat stands. In another session on grass alternatives, 93% of participants reported they were more confident in their abilities to implement grass forage alternatives for summer heat. After attending a field day, 78% of participants from nine counties indicated increased knowledge related to use of “cocktail mixes” following winter cereals and 75% said that the information was relevant to them and that they planned to use what they learned.

Extension is building from this work, using farmer data on input costs to determine the economic impact of growing, harvesting, and feeding these crops. There is a total of five research projects underway, 180 producers and agriculture professionals attended field days at alternative forage research plots, and 634 producers and agriculture professionals attended webinars.

### **ECONOMIC VIABILITY FOR BEEF PRODUCERS**

To remain viable, beef producers must use strategies to set their animals apart from the rest. To do so, they need to better understand how purebred and “beef × dairy” crossbred cattle grow. However, there is a gap in research-based information surrounding the growth and performance of beef × dairy crossbred cattle.

- Cow-calf producers need to understand and adopt strategies to ensure the health of their calves through calf care and preconditioning;
- Finishing beef producers need to understand growth and development to more effectively direct market beef products; and
- All producers need to understand growth and development to better manage their feed inventory and make alternative feed or culling decisions.

Aside from issues that intensified during the pandemic, there was already a need for beef producers to better understand how to use budget spreadsheets to manage their business. Producers also needed decision-support tools to appropriately price their products for profit.

In response, Extension researchers and educators are conducting several on-farm studies to measure growth and performance of beef × dairy crossbred calves. Extension helps beef producers use budgeting tools and best management practices to improve their bottom line.

Preliminary data is used to help producers make the best feeding strategy decisions. Extension educators used a blended outreach approach (including webinars, factsheets, popular press articles, and budget spreadsheets) to help beef producers ensure economic stability. These outreach activities helped producers address concerns unique to COVID-19 pandemic by learning about feeding strategies that limit beef animal growth and reduce per-pound carcass deductions and increase feed costs from retaining animals for longer periods of time. Additional outreach activities encouraged culling strategies due to feed inventory concerns. For example, over 850 Wisconsin beef producers attended series and/or reviewed the recorded content to learn more about weaned calf management, nutrition strategies, and health strategies. Of attendees, 67% of respondents indicated they increased their understanding due to attending the webinar. Additionally, respondents predicted management changes made due to attending the webinar would result in increased profits: 66% anticipated profits of \$1–5 per head, while 14% predicted a \$6–10 per head profit, 12% predicted a \$11–20 per head profit, and 8% predicted a \$20+ per head profit.

Further outreach efforts focused on developing and promoting the use of budget spreadsheets to increase producer understanding of costs of production, pricing products, estimate future costs based on known past performance, and to lower risk. After attending a program demonstrating the use of new budget spreadsheets, over 50% of respondents indicated they intended to use the spreadsheets to calculate costs and make informed decisions. After attending a program focused on helping producers learn about pricing their products to capture a positive financial return, 85% indicated they are likely to adjust their current pricing base.

For more on UW-Madison Extension's impact see [fyi.extension.wisc.edu/impacts](https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/impacts)



## COUNCIL STRUCTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

The activities and results of the WAEWDC continue to strengthen the commitment to fulfill the purpose and the goals of the Council. All of the functions, as originally identified, remain and are still necessary for Wisconsin's agriculture, food, and natural resource sectors to succeed. On Wednesday, August 24, 2022, the Council voted and approved a motion recommending the Council remain in place to carry out the following functions as defined by Wis. Stats. s. 106.40(2):

1. Increase the hiring and retention of well-qualified employees by industries related to agriculture, food and natural resources.
2. Promote the coordination of educational systems to develop, train and retain employees for current and future careers related to agriculture food and natural resources.
3. Develop support for career pathways and employment in fields related to agriculture, food, and natural resources.
4. Recommend policies and other changes to improve the efficiency of the development and provision of agricultural education across all educational systems.
5. The Council shall seek to accomplish these purposes by advising state agencies on matters related to integrating agricultural education and workforce development systems.

As required by law, the WAEWDC will re-visit this motion in September 2023.

Also, at its August 24, 2022 meeting, the Council voted and approved a recommendation to seek minor technical legislative changes related to the Council's structure, specifically regarding references to the University of Wisconsin-Extension. Currently,

- Wis. Stats. s. 15.227(15)(a)7., identifies that the Council must have as a member "the chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Extension or his or her designee."
- Wis. Stats. s. 106.40(4s)(c), names the chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Extension as one of the individuals responsible for preparing "a review of agricultural education programs in the University of Wisconsin System."
- Under Wis. Stats. s. 106.40(5), the Council's annual reporting requirements includes the " the chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Extension" as one of the entities to whom the Council submits its report.

With the change to the structure of the University of Wisconsin-Extension, it should now be referred to as the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension that is administered by a dean and director rather than a chancellor.

Therefore, the Council approved the recommendation to pursue statutory changes at Wis. Stats. s. 15.227(15)(a)7., s. 106.40(4s)(c), and s. 106.40(5) to:

1. Change "University of Wisconsin-Extension" references to "University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension"; and
2. Change references to the "chancellor of" to the "dean and director of".

## COUNCIL MEMBER APPROVAL OF ACTIVITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Wisconsin Agricultural Education and Workforce Development Council SFY2022 Annual Report was distributed electronically to all Council members. Each Council member was asked to review the Annual Report, provide input, and to provide their approval or dissent of the Annual Report at the Council's August 24, 2022 meeting. No dissent or minority opinions were received. The Annual Report was approved unanimously.

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