

# A Report Card on Wisconsin's Value Added Dairy Industry



During the last 10 years, public and private sector partnerships have created a nationally renowned value added dairy program in Wisconsin. Today, “America’s Dairyland” boasts hundreds of award winning specialty and artisan cheeses and an array of signature dairy items. These products are recognized across the nation and around the world for their innovation and quality, making “Made in Wisconsin” a sought-after symbol.

The term “Value Added Dairy” encompasses all production, processing, and supporting economic drivers involved in the state’s dairy sector, including 12,500 dairy farms and 401 dairy plants. It includes the supporting infrastructure, such as milk haulers, veterinarians and equipment makers, as well as supporting research and organizations that help keep the industry viable. It further includes distributors and retailers committed to selling Wisconsin dairy products. Finally, the Value Added Dairy chain includes the consumer, who ultimately provides the feedback to which the industry responds.

## Wisconsin Dairy Producers: Leading the Way

Dairy farms are the backbone of the value added dairy sector. Milk production on Wisconsin dairy farms totaled 26 billion pounds in 2010, a new record. This increase can be attributed, in part, to a growing number of progressive dairy farmers, such as:

- **Truttman Dairy, New Glarus, WI:** this fifth-generation, 175-cow dairy transitioned to full-time rotational grazing, resulting in lower costs of production and improved quality of life.
- **LaClare Farm, Chilton, WI:** as members of the Quality Dairy Goat Cooperative of Wisconsin, this family uses the milk of its 250-goat herd to produce award-winning cheeses. Wisconsin has more goat dairies than any other state in the nation.
- **River Ridge Stock Farm, Bruce, WI:** this farm produces more than 100,000 pounds of sheep milk a year, helping make Wisconsin the national leader in sheep dairying.
- **Vrieze Farms, Baldwin, WI.:** this 3,200-cow family-owned dairy implemented a new nutrient management system, reusing and recycling farm waste into energy and fertilizer.

## Wisconsin Dairy Processors: Making the Difference

Since 2004, Wisconsin dairy plants of all shapes and sizes have flourished, with 43 new plants opening and another 92 expanding. Today, 90 of the state’s 129 cheese plants craft at least one type of specialty cheese, up from 77 plants five years ago. In addition, employment at dairy plants rose 20 percent from 2004 to 2010. A few examples:

- **Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese, Waterloo, WI:** this family-owned, farmstead cheese plant crafts award-winning cheeses such as Farmstead Mascarpone and Les Freres, an award-winning American Original. The farm’s anaerobic manure digester generates enough electricity to power the farm, cheese factory and 300 area homes.
- **Burnett Dairy Cooperative, Grantsburg, WI:** a 220-dairy farmer-owned business established in 1896 has since grown into an impressive operation that includes a cheese plant, bustling retail cheese store, feed mill, and agronomy services catering to its rural neighborhood.
- **Sargento Foods, Plymouth, WI:** this family-owned company founded in 1949 has grown to employ 1,300 people in four facilities. As the first to market shredded cheese, it continues to dominate innovation in this category, putting Wisconsin on the map in dairy innovation.



## Innovation Starts with the Exchange of Ideas

Wisconsin realizes that innovation in value added dairy must be supported through the exchange of ideas. That's why the Dairy Business Innovation Center works with a host of organizations to offer training courses and workshops. A few examples of opportunities facilitated by the DBIC include:

- **Farmstead HACCP Training:** partnering with the Center for Dairy Research and UW-River Falls, the DBIC offered extensive training and hands-on implementation of sanitation techniques in advance of increased FDA inspections.
- **Profitable Pricing Seminars:** the DBIC brought in two nationally-renowned business consultants to teach pricing methods and best-business practices to more than 40 dairy companies.
- **ZingTrain Marketing:** partnering with Zingerman's Family of Businesses in Ann Arbor, Michigan, the DBIC provided training on effective product marketing, branding and company visioning.
- **Discovery Sessions:** the DBIC gathered dozens of national experts to discuss topics such as raw milk cheeses, development of a World Cheese Discovery Center, grass-based dairy products and the concept of "terroir".
- **Workshops with French Cheesemaker Ivan Larcher:** the DBIC brought internationally renowned cheesemaker Ivan Larcher to Wisconsin to teach cheesemakers European techniques and cheesemaking procedures, and to encourage innovation in the development of new specialty cheese varieties in the United States.
- **Hispanic Cheese Project:** To meet the needs of a growing Hispanic population, an educational seminar hosted by the DBIC at the UW Center for Dairy Research allowed industry representatives to learn from experts about the growth of Hispanic Cheese in Wisconsin. Information from the meeting was then disseminated to clients and the industry.
- **Wisconsin Dairy Goat Initiative:** designed to strengthen the state's goat dairy industry and expand goat milk supply for a growing number of fluid milk, cheese and value-added processors, the DBIC, in collaboration with several industry organizations, implemented an extensive economic development plan that included educational materials and resources, field days, a regional support network and training and assistance for professionals.

## Innovation Results in Unique Product Development

Wisconsin is on the leading edge of new product development, evidenced by a growing list of cheeses classified as "American Originals" – signature cheeses capable of competing with their finest European counterparts. Wisconsin cheeses routinely win the majority of awards at national competitions. A few examples of unique Wisconsin cheeses:

Company	Product
Bleu Mont Dairy	Alpine Renegade
Carr Valley Cheese	Cocoa Cardona
Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese	Les Freres
Emmi Roth Kase USA	Gran Queso
Hidden Springs Creamery	Meadow Melody
Hook's Cheese Company	Little Boy Blue
LaClare Farm	Evalon
Nordic Creamery	Capriko
Roelli Cheese	Dumbarton Blue
Sartori Food Corporation	Bellavitano
Saxon Homestead Creamery	Green Fields
Seymour Dairy Products	Weinlese
Union Star	St. Jeanne
Uplands Cheese Company	Pleasant Ridge Reserve



## Award-Winning Cheese Equals National Recognition

Wisconsin value added dairy companies capture more awards than any other state. Since 2007, Wisconsin has won at least 25 percent of all medals awarded at the American Cheese Society Annual Competition. In 2009 and 2011, a Wisconsin cheese won Best in Show at the U.S. Cheese Championship Contest. And, at the 2011 U.S. Championship Cheese Contest, the top 3 cheeses were all Wisconsin signature cheeses created in the past 10 years. Through the collaboration of the DBIC and its industry partners, Wisconsin's dairy industry is poised for excellence in years to come.

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### Dairy Business Innovation Center

P.O. Box 14; Delavan, WI 53115 ♦ Phone: 262-740-0705 ♦ Web: [www.dbicusa.org](http://www.dbicusa.org) ♦ Email: [info@dbicusa.org](mailto:info@dbicusa.org)