

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 23, 2020

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Gov. Evers Calls Special Session, Signs Executive Orders Supporting and Investing in Farmers and Rural Communities

Governor's Special Session legislation includes investments in mental health, farm-to-school and farm-to-fork programs, and increasing dairy exports.

DODGEVILLE — On the heels of his 2020 State of the State Address, Gov. Tony Evers today unveiled his three-pronged plan to support farmers, agricultural industries, and rural communities across Wisconsin. Gov. Evers today signed Executive Order #65 creating a Blue Ribbon Commission on Rural Prosperity and Executive Order #64 calling the Legislature to meet in a special session on Tues., Jan. 28, 2020, to take up a package of bills aimed at addressing rural economic challenges facing Wisconsin.

“We're known as America's Dairyland, but unfortunately, as too many families across our state know firsthand, our state continues to face challenges that we must work quickly to address,” said Gov. Evers. “Our state has relied on the resilience and dedication of our farmers for generations, and in this state, nobody carries the burden alone. We need to be better partners for our farmers, agricultural industries, and rural communities. So, today I am proud to be unveiling my three-pronged plan to start addressing these challenges, starting with a special session of the Legislature to get to work on this issue right away.”

Legislation highlighted in the Executive Order includes creating the Wisconsin Initiative for Dairy Exports, creating a regional mental health program to coordinate and provide mental health support in rural communities, bolstering Wisconsin's farm-to-school program and establishing a farm-to-fork program that will help connect farmers and the food they produce to universities, technical colleges, hospitals, and local businesses.

[Executive Order #64](#) calls the Legislature to act on the following bills:

- [LRB-5420/LRB-5439](#) relating to: grants to dairy processing plants and making an appropriation.
- [LRB-5413/LRB-5433](#) relating to: providing planning assistance to farmers and making an appropriation.
- [LRB-5416/LRB-5436](#) relating to: farm to school grants and making an appropriation.
- [LRB-5419/LRB-5438](#) relating to: regional farmer support for stress and mental illness and making an appropriation.
- [LRB-5424/LRB-5440](#) relating to: creating a Small Farm Diversity grant program, providing an exemption from emergency rule procedures, granting rule-making authority, and making an appropriation.
- [LRB-5449/LRB-5450](#) relating to: county-based agriculture positions in the Division of Extension of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and making an appropriation.
- [LRB-5412/LRB-5432](#) relating to: promoting production of value-added agricultural products; creating an organic farming education grant program, a grazing education grant program, and a

farm to fork grant program; providing resource conservation technical assistance; granting rule-making authority; and making an appropriation.

- [LRB-5414/LRB-5434](#) relating to: the Wisconsin Initiative for Dairy Exports and making an appropriation.

In addition to calling for legislative action, Gov. Evers kept his promise to the people of Wisconsin by signing [Executive Order #65](#) creating a Blue Ribbon Commission on Rural Prosperity to help promote agriculture and economic prosperity.

Gov. Evers also announced that he will be working with the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation to establish the Office of Rural Prosperity to provide assistance to Wisconsinites in navigating state programs and resources tailored to rural communities, businesses, and workers.

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