



LEGISLATIVE update

March 2024

Information provided by Jordan Lamb, The Welch Group

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Ag Road Grant Program Now Open! Apply Before April 5

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT) is now accepting applications for the first round of grant funding from the new Agricultural Road Improvement Program (ARIP). This new state grant program will provide \$150 million to local governments for qualifying agricultural road improvement projects across rural Wisconsin. The first round of grant applications will award \$50 million in grants and is open until April 5, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. The second round will award \$100 million in grants and will open for applications sometime in mid- to late-2024.

Background: The ARIP program was created in legislation passed in 2023 and was funded in the 2023-25 biennial state budget bill. Senators Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green), Cory Tomczyk (R-Mosinee) and Joan Ballweg (R-Markesan), and Representatives Travis Tranel (R-Cuba City) and Nancy VanderMeer (R-Tomah) authored the legislation. The legislation creates a grant program for local governments to apply for funding to upgrade posted roads that create problems for farmers and agribusiness.

Eligible Projects: To be eligible for an ARIP grant, the route or structure must have been posted for weight for at least one month in the previous year, must be maintained by a local government, be classified as a local road or minor collector, and must provide access to agricultural lands or facilities. Stand-alone bridge and culvert projects are limited to structures under 20 feet in length. Local governments applying for ARIP grants can expect to have 90 percent of the costs for these projects funded by the state grant dollars.

Grant Criteria: Priority for awarding ARIP grants will be given to applications for projects that provide the greatest benefit to agricultural producers using the following criteria:

- Provides the greatest positive economic impact.
- Provides access to the largest number of farmers or volume of agricultural goods.
- Improves the only practicable access to a farm field or facility.
- Results in the reduction of cost for farmers due to repeated trips at reduced weight, labor, fuel, mileage, or wear on agricultural equipment.

Contact Your Local Government – Ask to Assist with an Application. Farmers should work with their local governments to identify eligible roads and to assemble the required information needed to complete and submit the grant application. Local governments will need assistance from affected farmers and agribusiness to complete the required economic information that is part of the grant application. The Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation has created a fillable form that is designed to assist farmers and other agribusiness with collecting and providing required economic data to local officials. The questions on the form correspond directly to the questions on the ARIP grant application. (Note: This form is NOT part of the ARIP application. This form is an optional tool designed to assist in the collection of information required to complete an application.)

ARIP GRANT APPLICATION RESOURCES:

- Link to DOT ARIP Program Webpage: <https://wisconsin.gov/Pages/doing-bus/local-gov/astnce-pgms/highway/arip.aspx>
- Link to Map of Potentially Eligible Roads (DOT): <https://wisdot.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=c497d01b032d43e589bff13a9599fc33>
- Link to Form to Collect Ag Economic Data (WI Farm Bureau): <https://wfbf.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/ARIP-Farmer-Support-Form-FILLABLE.pdf>

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WCA Supports Assembly Bill 555 –Labeling of Lab Grown Meat

In January, Wisconsin Cattlemen’s Association Legislative Chair Rachel Harmann testified in the Assembly Agriculture Committee Hearing on behalf of the Wisconsin Cattlemen’s Association. Below is a copy of her prepared testimony.

Assembly Agriculture Committee Hearing – January 9, 2024

Support for 2023 Assembly Bill 555 –Labeling of Lab Grown Meat

Rachel Harmann, Wisconsin Cattlemen’s Association

My husband, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, and I own Lakeshore Land & Livestock in Algoma where we run cow/calf pairs and raise steers. When our children take over our farm, they will be the 7th generation to farm in our family. I am also the Legislative Chair of the Wisconsin Cattlemen’s Association. **The Wisconsin Cattlemen’s Association SUPPORTS AB 555, legislation which would require any food product that contains cultured animal cells or cultured animal tissue to be labeled as containing lab-grown animal cells.**

The Wisconsin Cattlemen’s Association is the state association representing Wisconsin’s beef producers. Our mission statement is, “To promote the Wisconsin beef business through advocacy, leadership, and education.” Our support for AB 555 is two-fold: protecting the integrity of our beef products and alleviating consumer confusion regarding the actual labeling of products.

Clear meat labeling standards are important to Wisconsin beef producers. We believe that the establishment of clear labeling standards will protect the integrity of our beef products. A significant amount of time, effort, and money has been spent by our industry to establish and maintain a healthy, wholesome, and nutritious product. The proper labeling of products that do not contain our naturally grown meat will help protect the integrity of our products that have been established over time.

We are concerned that unclear product labels create consumer confusion. The National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA) conducted a survey in September 2019 of almost 2,000 consumers to test confusion between alternative meat products and actual meat. The survey asked consumers questions using specific brand labels. More than half of the consumers surveyed noted confusion due to the use of the words “beef” or “meat” on the label of an entirely plant-based or cultured cell product. Use of the terms “beef,” “meat” or “meatier” on the label of a plant-based or cell cultured products can cause consumer confusion.

We do not believe that labeling standards will interfere with technology or the development of alternative products. Proper labels will simply ensure that no alternative meat products mislead consumers into thinking that they are purchasing our Wisconsin-grown beef.

Clear definitions under Wisconsin law and federal law will also help both state and federal governments know how to best regulate these products. Regulation of food and food products is managed by multiple state and federal agencies. Although this legislation addresses labeling for consumer sales, clear definitions will likely become increasingly important as regulations evolve to address regulation of new food products, such as cultured meat or plant-based meat substitutes.

Representative Tranel and Members of the Committee, thank you for holding a hearing on this legislation.



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