

Let us hope ... that by the best cultivation of the physical world, beneath and around us, and the intellectual and moral world within us, we shall secure an individual, social, and political prosperity and happiness.

- President Abraham Lincoln to the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society, 1859; Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Wisconsin's Farmlands

To many people around the country, Wisconsin is known only as America's Dairyland, and who can blame them? We have dairy farms pictured on every license plate and sitting just around every corner. Yet the fabric of Wisconsin's countryside is woven from threads of all manner of family farms producing milk, of course, but also a whole basket of other commodities, from cranberries to beets, pork to potatoes, beef to blueberries. According to research done by the University of Wisconsin-Cooperative Extension, Wisconsin's farms and agricultural businesses generate more than \$59.6 billion in economic activity and provide jobs for more than 350,000 people throughout the state.

In 1994, Kohl reflected on his rural constituents: "In the years ahead, Wisconsin farmers will face new and unpredictable challenges. I have no doubt our farmers will meet them with ingenuity, initiative, and intensity. They always have. They always will. But when Mother Nature wreaks havoc on them...or their government does something dumb... I hope Wisconsin farmers will never hesitate to send off that S.O.S. signal. And I will do my best to help. It's the part of my job that I love the best."

Senator Herb Kohl showed it's possible to exercise fiscal restraint while advancing a positive agenda, voting in the interests of Wisconsin's agriculture... He voted for beginning farmers, sound research, conservation, responsible limits to farm payments, and rural economic development.

**Margaret Krome, Michael Fields Agricultural Institute
"Johnson Dismays, Kohl Delights on Farm Bill", The Cap Times,
July 4, 2012**

Family Farm

When Kohl took office in 1989, he rightly understood that Wisconsin's most vital business was the family farm. Shortly after arriving in Washington, he was appointed to the Senate Rural Development Task Force. Kohl wasted no time in using this visible position to serve Wisconsin's farms and the families who operate them. In the Agriculture Appropriations Act of 1990, Kohl was able to secure an increase of \$300 million in rural development programs from the previous fiscal year.

From early on, Kohl understood that access to affordable and quality healthcare is essential to the wellbeing of rural communities. "Finding answers in the laboratory is critical to our nation's health. But it's even more important that the results of that research reach the public," Kohl said in 1994.

Shortly after entering office in 1989, Kohl introduced S. 921, the Rural Health Improvement Act, designed to up reimbursement rates for rural hospitals so they could more easily provide Medicare services. Although Kohl's legislation was never passed as a standalone bill, he worked tirelessly to include significant portions in the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1989. As a result, seven rural hospitals throughout Wisconsin increased the number of Medicare recipients they served.

Crops

"Healthy farmers are clearly vital to our rural communities," says Kohl, "but equally so are healthy crops." As a member of the Senate

An effective American farm policy demands "reasonable" federal economic assistance for farmers, U.S. Sen. Herb Kohl told board members at an annual meeting of Farm Credit Services at Hotel Mead Tuesday. The farm cooperative offers financial services to its members.

Kohl said that without federal assistance, as many as one-third to one-half of America's farmers may go out of business in the next decade. "I'd hate to see a policy where that would happen," he said. "I can't see where that would be good. I'm troubled with that Darwinian philosophy."

As part of the U.S. government's "Freedom to Farm" program, lawmakers gradually have tried over the last few years to "eliminate almost all federal assistance to farmers, but that just hasn't worked," Kohl said. To compete in a world marketplace where other governments offer financial help to domestic agricultural industries, America must do the same, he said.

Kohl's message was well received by Robert Prah, a Marathon County town of Wausau dairy farmer raising 70 cows on about 250 acres.

"He's attentive to the needs of Wisconsin agriculture," Prah said.

"It's not just what he gets for us but what he prevents from happening to us that's important," he said. "... It says something that he would come to Wisconsin Rapids to talk to less than 100 people about the problems and challenges of agriculture."

**"Kohl Fights for Farm Help"
The Daily Journal, Wisconsin Rapids
January 9, 2002**

During his 23 years in the United States Senate, Herb's invaluable perspective as the long-time head of a family-owned business made him an unwavering voice for working families [and] small business owners... Herb's dedication to American families and businesses remains evident today in the robust farming ... sector he helped foster in his home state of Wisconsin.

**President Barack Obama
May 14, 2011**

Committee on Appropriations since 1992, and later as the Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies, Kohl has been in an excellent position to make sure Wisconsin remains a leader in the production of a wide array of agricultural outputs.

“It is often easy to take for granted the food that we find on the store shelves, without understanding the effort, skill, and risk necessary to produce that food. Since I’ve been in the Senate, I have sought to address the needs of Wisconsin’s farmers from a

businessman’s perspective,” said Kohl in 1994.

In 1989, Wisconsin cranberry growers produced slightly more than 1.5 million barrels of cranberries. Today, Wisconsin harvests 4.5 million barrels of cranberries, more than 50% of the U.S. cranberry crop. During a tour of an Ocean Spray facility in Wisconsin Rapids in August 2011, Kohl remarked, “Wisconsin cranberry growers are second to none, not only for their productivity but also for their innovation and investment.”

Kohl has been an integral part of this crops growth and success in Wisconsin. He has championed the UW Extension’s cranberry-related activities, which operate to improve water quality and conservation practices among Wisconsin’s cranberry growers. He also secured support for the University of Wisconsin Conservation Technology Transfer program, which reaches out to farmers to ensure they have access to the most efficient conservation strategies.

As a result of these efforts and the natural skill of the Wisconsin cranberry farmers, production skyrocketed – so much so, in fact, that overproduction has recently become an issue. In March 2011, after two record cranberry seasons, prices began to fall putting producers at risk. Kohl and other members of Congress took action, sending a letter to the USDA urging them to purchase the surplus crop. Wrote Kohl in April of

The Senator has been a long time supporter of agriculture and cranberry growing in particular. He has been a great friend of the industry, a true leader and gentleman. The State growers and the US Senate will miss him and his leadership.

Tom Lochner
Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association
December 18, 2012

2010: "Wisconsin is the leading producer of cranberries in the nation and cranberry farmers are struggling to cope with low prices due to surplus inventories. This purchase will help eliminate cranberry inventories while supplying healthy foods for federal food and nutrition assistance programs." USDA agreed to intervene to stabilize the price.

While Wisconsin is no Idaho, it has always offered its fertile soils to the production of quality potatoes. Kohl has taken an interest in the potato farms of Wisconsin, securing continued funding for several key programs that have contributed

to the long term sustainability of the industry. The University of Wisconsin-Extension Potato Pest Management Program combines university research with information from the Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association to understand how to reduce the use of high-risk pesticides and improve niche marketing opportunities. Kohl has also supported the Potato Storage Research Program. Conducted at a USDA lab in Madison, WI, research done by this program helps determine plant physiology, fumigation, and other practices that help growers reduce pesticide inputs.

In 2011, the potato industry was in jeopardy of losing one of its major markets: the federal school meal programs. As part of a new initiative, USDA proposed to eliminate the potato from school meals altogether. In response, Kohl supported Senator Susan Collins' (R-ME) amendment to the FY2012 Agriculture appropriations bill in order to ensure that USDA continued serving potatoes in school lunches and breakfast. In response to Kohl's support, Collins said: "I am particularly appreciative of the efforts of the chairman of the Agriculture Subcommittee, Senator Kohl and [his] staff for their diligent work to move this legislation forward. Our efforts will go a long way in ensuring that schools can serve healthy meals that meet the nutritional needs of students in a way that fits their budgets."

State Meat Inspection

“Small organic and sustainable, multi-product family farms account for much of the renaissance Wisconsin is experiencing in agriculture these days,” says Kohl. And many of these small farms are selling meat and rely on smaller, state-inspected butchering facilities. Not only are these facilities closer to the farms, but I have heard from many producers that they trust these places much more than the often massive, USDA-inspected slaughterhouses.”

At a May 2006 Agriculture Appropriations hearing, Kohl questioned Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns regarding a USDA plan to reduce funding for state meat inspection programs. Wisconsin has more state-inspected meat processing plants than any other state in the nation. “The Administration’s priorities are misplaced in this case,” Kohl said. “On the one hand, they have broadened regulations to allow some big corporations to import processed meat from China. On the other hand, they are cutting back on support for Main Street meat processing plants subject to state inspection. It’s both illogical and unfair.”

Kohl correctly interpreted that the reduction in funding and longstanding ban of the interstate shipment of state inspected meats could spell disaster for small farmers and ranchers who live in Wisconsin and throughout the country. In June 2006, he took action, sponsoring the Agriculture Small Business Opportunity Enhancement Act of 2006 to overturn the ban on interstate shipments of meat. “State inspection programs have proven to be as thorough and safety-conscious as federal programs, so there is no reason to maintain this barrier to some of the outstanding Main Street businesses and entrepreneurs in Wisconsin whose markets are limited by current law,” Kohl said. Later that same year during debate of FY2007 Agriculture Appropriations, Kohl supported full funding for state meat inspection programs nationwide.

As the 2008 Farm Bill approached, Kohl had emerged as a major proponent of state meat inspection. When the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 became law on May 22, 2008, Kohl’s efforts on the issue were evident. The bill contained a permanent change that would allow for state-inspected meat processors to expand their markets across state lines. Speaking of the inclusion in the Farm Bill, Kohl said, “I have traveled across the state and know firsthand that our people produce some incredible products. Our livestock producers and processors deserve more marketing options – and this bill achieves that in a way that actually strengthens food safety.”

Disaster Assistance

In June 2008 after months of heavy precipitation, severe storms led to equally severe flooding in the Midwest. Later that same month, Kohl spoke on a pending supplemental disaster assistance bill: "Congress has a responsibility to provide the resources needed to begin the long process of recovery for our states devastated by severe storms and floods. These funds will enable communities to repair the damage and farmers recover land."

Kohl's vocal support for that bill continued a career-long dedication to helping farmers whose livelihood was threatened by Mother Nature. During his first year in office, Kohl organized a Wisconsin delegation letter to Secretary of Agriculture Clayton K. Yeutter urging USDA to allow haying on conservation acres during a period of little rain. In response he received assurances that USDA would adopt such a policy - and they did.

During the summer of 1993, the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers experienced flooding of historic proportions. As the waters began to recede that autumn, Kohl joined a coalition of Midwestern Senators fighting for flood disaster assistance for farmers. On December 3, 1993, the Hazard Mitigation and Relocation Assistance Act became public law and eventually provided more than \$12 billion in supplemental appropriations for victims of the floods.

In July 2010, southeastern Wisconsin was hit with severe weather. According to some reports, 7.5 inches of rain fell in two hours. Kohl, along with Senator Feingold (D-WI) and Representatives Ron Kind (D-WI), Gwen Moore (D-WI), and Jim Sensenbrenner (R-WI), repeatedly urged the president to declare Grant, Milwaukee, and Waukesha counties disaster areas. On October 21, their efforts paid off: the president agreed a major disaster had occurred in those counties, and all would receive public assistance. Months later another storm struck Wisconsin, this one bringing unprecedented cold weather. Kohl, along with other members of the Wisconsin delegation, wrote again to President Obama in support of the governor's request for federal assistance. On April 5 of that same year, a FEMA Federal Disaster Declaration was made for all Wisconsin counties in need.

After the '89 drought, I didn't have enough feed for my cattle. The USDA came through with emergency payments that enabled many farmers like myself to pull through. Herb Kohl was instrumental in making those payments possible. I know that Herb Kohl has fought hard for Wisconsin farmers. He's helping to keep our way of life alive.

**Roy Thieding
Dairy Farmer
Loganville, WI
1994**