



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FoodSourceUSA tool creates a new supply chain channel between Wisconsin dairy manufacturers and food banks nationwide

MADISON, WI – As the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the fragility of U.S. food production and distribution systems affecting farmers, supply chains and consumers, several trade groups, organizations tackling hunger and a UW Madison professor are working together to create new outlets for Wisconsin dairy farmer products in the state's food bank and pantry networks. The groups are connecting via an online exchange called FoodSourceUSA.

FoodSourceUSA is powered by ReposiTrak technology platform, the industry leader for stock replenishment, compliance, sourcing, food safety and risk management in the grocery industry with thousands of supplier, wholesaler and retailer users. The exchange is available to approved food producers/distributors, food banks, pantries and other distributors of food assistance to provide and source products that have been displaced by COVID-19.

When the crisis hit, the U.S. Government provided funding to address supply chain dislocations, resulting in the re-purposing of this technology to support connections between distressed producers and Americans in need of food assistance. Thanks to this funding, "the solution is free for both buyers and sellers nationwide," says Professor Molly Jahn, former Dean of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. "FoodSourceUSA quickly reconnects broken links in the supply chain between qualified sellers of stranded food products and qualified recipients delivering assistance to those experiencing food insecurity."

The first transaction in Wisconsin on this platform was on May 6th between Emmi Roth and Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin, which moved 14,000 pounds of Wisconsin cheese to families facing hunger. Since then, additional sales of produce and meat products have been sold through FoodSourceUSA. In three weeks, this tool has helped facilitate numerous sales between manufacturers and food banks and pantries.

According to Jahn, the curated marketplace allows both buyer and seller full transparency for each transaction, automatically keeping a single auditable record of each transaction that remains available to all interested parties.

"For every dollar organizations providing food assistance spend directed through FoodSourceUSA to purchase surplus product, a threatened link in our food chain is shored up," she says. "For each link that is secured during this crisis, we see jobs, farms and Wisconsin's small towns saved and our families fed."

"Moving products to food banks and pantries efficiently in the time of COVID-19 is critical for the food insecure, the food banks, processors and for farmers," says Patrick Geoghegan, Executive Vice President, Industry Relations at Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin.

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Using FoodSourceUSA, Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association (WCMA) member Emmi Roth in Monroe, Wisconsin was able to sell cheese that had been bound for foodservice markets until the collapse of that segment caused by the advent of COVID-19. “Perishable food suppliers have been greatly impacted by the pandemic from the enormous reduction of the foodservice industry. FoodSourceUSA gives us and many others a viable outlet for our products and supports a growing need to provide food for families, which is core to our mission at Emmi Roth.” states Abby Despins, Director of Communications.

“The FoodSourceUSA solution provides an exciting opportunity to meet the needs of those facing hunger in our community, while helping local farms at the same time,” said Michelle Orge, president & CEO of Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin. “We are looking forward to the new relationships with local agricultural suppliers this platform will help us form and adding it to our toolbox of strategies to connect nutritious food to people who need it now, and through the long-term recovery process.”

Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers and the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection have announced a \$15 million investment of federal funds to address food insecurity in the state and boost agricultural producers and processors.

“WCMA members are pleased to see that Governor Tony Evers has targeted Wisconsin dairy products for purchase by food banks and pantries across the state,” says WCMA Executive Director John Umhoefer. “Together with U.S. Department of Agriculture buying programs, and including generous dairy donations by our members, Wisconsin cheese is reaching families around the country and becoming a part of delicious and nutritious meals every day.”

Qualified suppliers with food-bank ready surplus produce, protein and dairy and organizations involved in delivering food assistance with COVID-19 Relief funds can request registration on the FoodSourceUSA through www.foodsourceusa.com. Share the news at #fuelourfoodbanks.

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About Jahn Research Group: The Jahn Research Group is an independent research institute focused on the intersections of agriculture, food security, food systems, national and global security operating under a Cooperative Research and Development Agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture with funding from the NASA Applied Sciences Program and DARPA. Founded by Molly Jahn, the 12th Dean of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, UW-Madison, Director of the Wisconsin Experiment Station and former Deputy and Acting Under Secretary of Research, Education and Economics at the U.S.D.A., the Institute hosts a distinguished group of senior fellows and staff who work on diverse aspects of these topics for governments, business, international multi-lateral and non-profit organizations around the world.