



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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For Immediate Release

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Rep Danou Critical of DATCP's "Interrogatories" of Pepin County Family Farm

Says Department goes over the top in enforcing ambiguous raw milk policy; Danou joined by Pepin County Sheriff Andrews in expressing concern for family farmers.

Durand, WI – State Representative Chris Danou (D-Trempealeau) expressed concerns over demands by the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) and their effort to elicit evidence regarding raw milk sales in the form of a "request for interrogatories and demand for production of documents." The request was made of Midvalleyvu Farm Inc. owned and operated by Wayne and Janet Brunner of Waterville Township in rural Pepin County. Below are several of the thirty-eight "requests for interrogatories" included in the DATCP's request for submission of documentation:

- "Full detail of the ownership and management structure of Midvalleyvu Family Farm, articles or incorporation, bylaws, and full names, addresses and telephone numbers of all directors."

- "Copies of all invoices for the purchases of glass dairy containers used by the owners or by Midvalleyvu farm."

- "The location by full name, address and phone number where yours or Midvalleyvu Family Farms Inc.'s glass dairy containers are washed, stored, and filled."

- "Identify by full name, address and phone number where you or Midvalleyvu Farm Inc. purchases food packaging materials."

- "Provide a copy of all documents related to the bank accounts used by you and Midvalleyvu Family Farm Inc. This information shall include: Signature Cards, Month End Account Statements, Cancelled Checks (or microfiche copies), and Deposit Tickets (or microfiche copies)."

-“Identify by name, address, and telephone number, the dairy plant to whom Midvalleyvu Family Farm Inc. ships milk for processing.”

-“Identify each cow brought onto the farm and the name of the buyer or keeper of each identified cow.”

-“Identify each cow sold by you and/or Midvalleyvu Family Farm Inc. and the name of the seller of each identified cow.”

-“Identify by full name, address and telephone number any and all veterinarians whose services are used by you or Midvalleyvu Family Farm Inc. for the care of any cows on the premises.”

-“Identify by full name, address and telephone number any and all person who supply feed, supplements, medications, cleaning supplies, and equipment utilized by you or Midvalleyvu Family Farm Inc. for the production of milk on the premises.

In response to the interrogatories issued by DATCP, Rep. Danou had the following comments, “This extremely detailed request for information from DATCP seems over the top and overly burdensome. As a former police officer, I understand the need to enforce existing laws on the books, but this request seems more like harassment than an effort to enforce existing law.”

State Rep. Chris Danou was not the only local official with a background in law enforcement to express concern with DATCP’s burdensome information request. The county Sheriff also has concerns with DATCP’s treatment of the Brunner Family. “An arm of the state should not be trying to intimidate small businesses and family farms by demonizing their product and threatening their livelihood,” Said Pepin County Sheriff John Andrews. State Rep. Chris Danou’s proposed solution to the current raw milk issue has recently culminated with his introduction of AB 628, legislation drafted to properly regulate farm site sale of raw milk.

Danou’s bill in support of raw milk sales does several things. First, it requires a Grade A permit, which provides current state guidelines to oversee the sanitary handling and storage of raw milk. The bill will also provide for a raw milk permit that can be used to keep the government regulations designed for large national corporate food processors and handlers from being applied to and becoming excessively burdensome to the local farmers who operate on a much smaller scale and stay local. Finally, AB 628 will also provide some level of protection for the farmer from opportunists who might try to take advantage of misconceptions regarding the safety of raw milk.

Rep. Danou remains convinced that a new policy is necessary. “I want to encourage support for AB 628 so that family farmers across our state know that if they are able to produce a product which the free market dictates a demand for; informed consumers will be able to make their own choices without an intrusive government agency deciding for them. I am pleased to be working with local officials such as Sheriff Andrews to support family farmers like the Brunner’s and protect their right to stay in business,” said State Representative Chris Danou

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