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*"Connecting Cows, Cooperatives, Capitol Hill, and Consumers"*

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### **NMPF President Thanks Wisconsin Congressional Leaders for Focusing on Expanded Dairy Exports**

LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN – The President of the National Milk Producers Federation, in remarks delivered today at a dairy cooperative convention here in western Wisconsin, singled out three of the state's members of Congress for their leadership efforts to improve trade opportunities for dairy farmers.

NMPF President and CEO Jim Mulhern, in a speech here to the annual meeting of the FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative, thanked U.S. Representatives Paul Ryan, Ron Kind and Reid Ribble for their efforts in Congress to ensure that pending international trade agreements provide positive benefits for the state's dairy industry, the nation's second largest.

Both Ryan (R), who represents southeast Wisconsin, and Kind (D), whose western Wisconsin district includes La Crosse, serve on the powerful Ways and Means Committee, which has jurisdiction over trade policy. Ryan is Chair of the Committee, while Kind serves on the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Trade. Ribble (R), who represents northeastern Wisconsin, serves on the Foreign Affairs Committee and is co-chair of the House Dairy Farmer Caucus.

"As international trade becomes a larger and more important part of the U.S. dairy economy, we are fortunate to have three major champions for the state's dairy sector heavily involved in influencing the outcome of the Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade talks. They are fighting hard to ensure that dairy farmers here, and in other states, have more open access to world markets," Mulhern said. "Dairy farmers and processors here in Wisconsin and surrounding Midwest states have a great deal riding on the outcome of the TPP trade negotiations, and this leadership from the state's Congressional delegation is key to helping ensure our farmers get a fair deal."

Mulhern noted that Ryan was clear, in [his recent condemnation](#) of the high, restrictive dairy tariffs employed by Japan and Canada, that the TPP talks must tackle those barriers to U.S. exports.

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“We have made good progress on dairy issues in the negotiations with Japan, but we are still not yet at an acceptable final agreement. While we recognize Japan will not eliminate all tariffs, they must provide more market access for our dairy products than they have been willing to do so far,” Mulhern told the FarmFirst members.

“Canada, on the other hand, should not be allowed to be part of this free trade agreement without providing significant new market access for U.S. dairy products. Representatives Ryan and Kind’s involvement in these issues in particular will be critical,” Mulhern said.

Mulhern also told the audience that Ryan, Kind and Ribble have been outspoken on the matter of Geographic Indications, which the European Union is seeking to expand as part of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, also currently being negotiated.

“We share Chairman Ryan’s hope that US-EU trade talks will address this problem, as well as the proliferation of other barriers hindering U.S. agricultural exports to Europe,” he said.

Mulhern thanked Rep. Kind for his efforts, on behalf of dairy farmers, to explain the importance of the trade talks to those U.S. officials currently engaged in the negotiations. He noted that Kind [hosted U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman](#) on a dairy farm in nearby Melrose last August to drive home how important international sales are to Wisconsin’s dairy industry.

“Whether the challenge is high tariffs, unfounded quality assurance barriers, or the attempt to stop cheesemakers in Wisconsin from using common names such as parmesan, feta or havarti, we have to draw a clear line that free trade talks must expand international commerce, not erect new roadblocks,” Mulhern said.

“We will continue to collaborate with Congressmen Ryan, Kind, Ribble and others in the state delegation, to ensure that the U.S. government remains resolute in its effort to use trade to grow the size of the state’s dairy sector,” Mulhern said.

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The National Milk Producers Federation, based in Arlington, VA, develops and carries out policies that advance the well-being of dairy producers and the cooperatives they own. The members of NMPF’s cooperatives produce the majority of the U.S. milk supply, making NMPF the voice of more than 32,000 dairy producers on Capitol Hill and with government agencies. Visit [www.nmpf.org](http://www.nmpf.org) for more information.