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Oct. 30, 2019

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Dairy farmers: Ag workforce bill provides critical opportunity

Edge urges Congress to move proposal forward amid farm labor crisis

GREEN BAY, Wis. — Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative, one of the largest dairy co-ops in the country, issued a statement about a new congressional proposal introduced today aimed at providing a stable agricultural workforce.

The Farm Workforce Modernization Act, released in the House of Representatives by Reps. Zoe Lofgren, D-Calif., and Dan Newhouse, R-Wash., comes at a time when dairy farmers continue to struggle to find and keep skilled employees. The bill would among other things provide a path to legalization for current farm workers and expand the H-2A foreign guestworker program.

[Click here](#) for highlights of the bill. [Click here](#) for a full breakdown.

Statement from Brody Stapel, president of Edge and a dairy farmer in eastern Wisconsin:



“Our dairy farmers face incredible challenges in finding workers. Changes in demographics, labor patterns and the nature of the jobs have made it impossible for farmers to fill all available positions with American citizens. So, dairy farming has come to increasingly depend on foreign-born employees, who have proven to be invaluable.

“Unfortunately, the existing immigrant ag labor rules, which focus on seasonal work, are unworkable for year-round dairy farming. Farmers have been living in limbo for years while this issue has grown to crisis levels. We need a solution that provides a path for qualified employees to come to this country and a system for keeping those already here.

“We are still studying the details of this new bill to determine its full impact on our farmers, but we want to see it advance. This may be the best opportunity in the foreseeable future for a labor solution for our farmers. While certain items are not ideal, this compromise proposal does make an effort to move needed ag workforce reform forward. Edge will remain actively engaged with the Ag Workforce Coalition and the overall legislative process, which will provide the opportunity to address concerns.

“Strong bipartisan support will be needed. We urge lawmakers in both the House and Senate to ensure that the bill is practical and helpful to our farmers, and then to move it forward to the president.”

What's next: The bill must go through the House Judiciary Committee before it could be considered by the entire House. If approved by the House, the bill would move to the Senate. Approval there would move it to the president.

Photo: [Click here](#) for a photo of Brody Stapel

Tweet about this: #Dairy farm group @voiceofmilk says new ag labor bill provides critical opportunity for solution to workforce crisis

About Edge:

Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative provides dairy farmers throughout the Midwest with a powerful voice — the voice of milk — in Congress, with customers and within their communities. Edge, based in Green Bay, Wis., is one of the top cooperatives in the country based on milk volume. More information: www.voiceofmilk.com.

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