



## ***Wisconsin's Rural Economy***

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### ***Make Wisconsin Great Again!***

## **Removing the Barriers to Growing our Agricultural Economy**

*Mark Green's Plan to Protect Wisconsin's Farm Families and Grow our Rural Economy*

*"Agriculture is more than just one of our state's leading economic drivers...it's a big part of who we are. Wisconsin will always be America's Dairyland, but our farmers and rural communities are increasingly being short changed by the politicians in Madison. High taxes, high health care costs, frivolous lawsuits and mountains of red tape are holding our farm families back. As governor, I'll work to break down the barriers that are impeding rural Wisconsin's path to prosperity." -- Mark Green*

### **Growing Wisconsin's Agricultural Economy**

Wisconsin has a long-standing tradition of agricultural excellence. Our farm heritage is second to none and Wisconsin's agricultural economy plays an important role in driving our statewide economy.

In fact, Wisconsin's agriculture generates more than \$51.5 billion in economic activity, while providing almost 420,000 jobs – 12 percent of the state's workforce. Every new dollar of sales of agricultural products generates an additional \$.80 of economic activity in other parts of the state's economy and every new job in agriculture generates an additional 1.3 jobs in Wisconsin – agriculture contributes \$16.8 billion, or about 10 percent of the state's total income (*UW Extension*).

Mark Green understands the impact of Wisconsin's agricultural economy. His wife Sue grew up on a farm, and he understands the long hours and hard work it takes to make a farm run. Mark Green has worked closely with Wisconsin's farmers and has dedicated himself to ensuring that they have the tools they need to prosper.

During his time in the state Legislature and in Congress, Mark Green has led the fight to implement the use-value assessment to ensure that Wisconsin's farmers are taxed fairly, ended the Northeast Dairy Compact, created the Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) program, served as an outspoken critic of the antiquated Milk Marketing Order Reform, and worked to protect Wisconsin's ginseng and cranberry farmers.

Unlike Governor Jim Doyle, who vetoed the word "Rural" out of the Rural Jobs Act and fought as attorney general to stop the acceleration of use-value assessment, Mark Green understands the challenges facing Wisconsin's farm families and our agricultural economy. As Governor, Mark Green will provide the following solutions to sustain and grow our agricultural economy.

- ✓ **Grow Wisconsin's agricultural economy through farm-based research.**
- ✓ **Make health care affordable and accessible for Wisconsin's farmers.**
- ✓ **Protect Wisconsin's farm families from the barriers to growth.**
- ✓ **Provide greater protection for Wisconsin's farmers from nuisance lawsuits.**

## Grow Wisconsin's agricultural economy through farm-based research

Wisconsin's farmers, our economy and our environment all benefit from innovative farm-based research. From hands-on farm-based research into runoff to research into sustainable, alternative and renewable fuel sources, Wisconsin is poised to provide Wisconsin-based solutions to some of the biggest challenges facing our nation.

Through state support of farm-based agricultural research, Wisconsin will lead the way in establishing "Best Management Practices" for dealing with the environmental challenges facing farmers across the country. With the help of well-targeted tax credits, we can begin to turn every farm in Wisconsin into an energy farm, which will strengthen Wisconsin's rural economy, while addressing the future energy needs of our state.

As governor, Mark Green will make investments in farm-based agricultural research to provide a model of energy independence and a healthy rural economy for the nation to follow.

### **Mark Green's Plan**

**Enact a 10 percent research and development tax credit for farm-based research into renewable and alternative energy sources.** Mark Green will make research into renewable and alternative energy sources a top priority by supporting farm-based research focused on solving the country's energy shortfalls with Wisconsin farm-based solutions. Specifically, this research tax credit will be available to farms and/or companies conducting farm-based research into renewable energy sources including ethanol, methane, bio-mass, wind and solar. This 10 percent credit will be applicable for qualified research based on Wisconsin's farms.

**Increase funding by \$1 million for Wisconsin's Discovery Farms.** Mark Green will increase funding by \$1 million for the farm-based research being done through Wisconsin's Discovery Farms project with a goal of expanding from seven Discovery Farms to 20. Through partnerships with privately-owned farms, government and the university, this project works to find the most economical and effective ways of complying with environmental regulations through the use and implementation of Best Management Practices. The Discovery Farms are currently funded at approximately \$800,000 a year, with about 53 percent of the funds coming from the state. The remainder comes from both private and federal sources.

## Make health care affordable and accessible for Wisconsin's farm families

Nearly one in three Wisconsin farmers has no health insurance coverage or is underinsured (*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, 8/25/06). Mark Green partnered with Senator Herb Kohl to secure federal funding for Wisconsin's "Co-op Care" program, which allows farmers and other businesses to join together to increase health care purchasing power. Mark Green is a champion for consumer-driven solutions to provide Wisconsin's farm families with affordable options to provide quality health care for their families and employees.

### **Mark Green's Plan**

**Make Health Saving Accounts tax deductible.** A key component of consumer-driven health care – which is also a popular option with farm families – is expanded use of Health Savings Accounts (HSAs). HSAs allow people to set aside money to pay for medical care, and the funds can be carried over from year to year. Mark Green helped make contributions to HSAs tax deductible on the federal level, but Jim Doyle has repeatedly vetoed legislation that would make HSAs tax free in Wisconsin.

## Protect Wisconsin's farm families from barriers to growth

Wisconsin's farmers spend far too much time deciphering conflicting state regulations, dealing with bureaucratic red tape and fighting off natural environmental threats that cost valuable time and money while threatening their livelihood and the safety of their family.

Mark Green will reform and streamline state government to ensure that Wisconsin's farmers spend less of their time dealing with bureaucrats who can't get their stories straight and more time on growing our agricultural economy. In addition, Mark Green will stop any efforts to increase property taxes on Wisconsin's farmers, while working to remove the environmental threats facing Wisconsin's farm families.

### **Mark Green's Plan**

**Oppose any efforts to repeal the use-value assessment of farmland.** During his time in the State Legislature, Mark Green voted to make sure farmland is taxed for how it's being used – not how it could be used. As Attorney General, Jim Doyle argued against then-Governor Tommy Thompson's effort to speed up the implementation of use-value assessment (*Legislative Reference Bureau, 03-WB-3*). As governor, Mark Green will oppose any effort to weaken this assessment standard.

**Work to remove the gray wolf from the federal list of the endangered and threatened species in the Eastern Gray Wolf Distinct Population Segment that includes Wisconsin.** In recent years, Wisconsin has been successful in bringing back the gray wolf to prescribed levels to warrant removing the wolves from the endangered species list in a number of states including Wisconsin.

However, given the slow increase in the wolf population in the more Eastern states of the recovery zone, a federal judge ruled in January of 2005 that the wolf population has not increased to appropriate levels across the entire recovery zone and therefore may not be removed from the list of endangered species in any of the states contained in the Eastern recovery zone. The result has been a wolf population in Northern Wisconsin that wreaks havoc on farm livestock and threatens Wisconsin's farm families with no recourse for farmers to remove problem wolves.

During his time in Congress, Mark Green has been a leader in the efforts to pull the Great Lakes Region out of the larger Eastern recovery zone – which would result in the removal of the gray wolf from the endangered species list in Wisconsin. As governor, Mark Green will continue to work with Wisconsin's congressional delegation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to do everything possible to remove Wisconsin from the Eastern District Recovery zone.

**Reform the Department of Natural Resources into two separate agencies.** The DNR's current scope of responsibilities is too broad for one agency and has led to a lack of focus and poor decisions. From trying to ban fireworks at Milwaukee's lakefront to threatening family piers and providing contradictory guidelines to Wisconsin's farmers on farm runoff rules, the DNR has shown that it is in need of reform. Mark Green will restructure and modernize the DNR into two new agencies that will provide better and more consistent guidelines to Wisconsin's farm families.

## Provide greater protection for Wisconsin's farmers from nuisance lawsuits

Wisconsin's "Right to Farm Law" (*Wisconsin State Statute, 823.08*) was enacted in 1981 to protect farmers from lawsuits, or the threat of lawsuits, where a plaintiff alleges that a normal farming practice poses a nuisance. The law was designed to protect farm operations from being subjected to nuisance lawsuits, even though they are employing good management practices.

In 1995, Mark Green worked to strengthen the "Right to Farm Law" to provide recourse for farmers to collect on expenses they incurred from frivolous nuisance lawsuits brought against their farm operations.

Unfortunately, in June 2004, Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager, and out-of-state landowners filed a nuisance suit against Sawyer County cranberry grower William Zawistowski. The suit claims that the legal operation of the cranberry farm, which has been in operation since the 1930's, was causing water quality to deteriorate in a nearby lake. On April 5, 2006, Bayfield County Judge John Anderson rightfully dismissed this lawsuit filed by the attorney general, ruling that the Zawistowski's farming practices were not unreasonable and did not substantially impact water quality.

While the attorney general was unsuccessful, her actions sent shock waves through Wisconsin's agricultural community by demonstrating the fact that anyone could sue Wisconsin's farm families regardless of the size or type of farming operation, and regardless of the farm operation's diligence in following current state and federal regulations. Even if the lawsuit proves to be unsuccessful, as it did in the Zawistowski case, family farmers would have to waste both time and money simply to defend their legal farming practices.

Instead of accepting the dismissal, Attorney General Lautenschlager has appealed the decision. Additionally, the Department of Justice announced that they would not support nor protect Wisconsin's "Right to Farm Law" – literally exposing every Wisconsin farm family to frivolous nuisance lawsuits in the future.

### **Mark Green's Plan**

**Enact legislation to limit the attorney general's authority to pursue nuisance lawsuits against Wisconsin's farm families.** Mark Green will protect and strengthen Wisconsin's "Right to Farm Law" by working to enact legislation that prohibits the Department of Justice from bringing or joining a nuisance lawsuit, if the alleged activity is not in violation of a statute, rule, permit or ordinance.

As governor, Mark Green will be an outspoken advocate for the "Right to Farm." Unlike Jim Doyle, he would not have sat idly by as the attorney general attacked Wisconsin's agriculture heritage with this frivolous lawsuit.