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[00:00:00] **Speaker 1** Pretty cost the same, except for one of the four warms up a little bit more natural will keep its shape better than homemade snow.

[00:00:11] **Speaker 2** Well. Wisconsin farmers are likely on edge, watching the slashing and freezing of federal funding, billions of dollars of which goes toward farm programs. President of the Wisconsin Farmers Union, Darren Van Rudin, joins us. And thanks for being here.

[00:00:42] **Speaker 1** Thanks for having.

[00:00:43] **Speaker 2** Me. So in the midst of moves to eliminate things like world food aid, freeze federal grants and loans, and the latest congressional resolution to cut the USDA budget, how on edge are Wisconsin farmers?

[00:00:58] **Speaker 1** Well, I think really on edge. And I'm especially looking at folks that have applied for grants in the past, mainly in the renewable energy side. We have a next door neighbor that installed the system this summer, just put it online here a few weeks ago and got a notice on Tuesday morning that the $70,000 grant that it was supposed to be receiving from the federal government fell on hold. So, you know, that's that pocket change is not something that you can just go out and make up in a couple of days. So, you know, we're really hoping that the freeze gets taken back and that those funds get distributed. But then also looking at what's happening with the U.S.. Aid aid program, we haven't heard directly from any farmers here in the state of Wisconsin, but certainly from some of the other states around the upper Midwest and corn and soybean programs that are involved in that are really on edge because they've become accustomed to providing those corn and soybeans for that program.

[00:02:04] **Speaker 2** Yeah, indeed. So the first program you talked about with the $70,000 investment, this is the kind of grant program where the farmers are supposed to be reimbursed for work they've already done.

[00:02:19] **Speaker 1** Yeah, it's the Renewable Energy for America program. And, you know, it's a long standing program. It's not like it's new. It's been around for a dozen rounds, probably 15 years already. And it's really to help put solar and wind on your either on your buildings or on your property and and get some help with it. It isn't like it's paying for the whole system. It just provides a little bit more of an incentive to get it installed.

[00:02:46] **Speaker 2** How likely is it that anything to do with climate mitigation or alternative energy will in fact be on the chopping block?

[00:02:55] **Speaker 1** You know, with the words coming out of the president's mouth? I think it's a real good chance that that's going to happen.

[00:03:01] **Speaker 2** So as farmers also look ahead to spring planting, what is the uncertainty like?

[00:03:08] **Speaker 1** Well, that's pretty high right now because of really two factors. If the USAID program does get stalled, that's just going to back up a supply chain. There's a lot of corn and soybeans that go into that market. And so that just means lower prices anytime that there is excess food. It's going to mean lower prices and fertilizer. And all our input costs certainly are not going down with some of the tariff trade war talks. Those prices are probably just going to go up. So we're going to continue to see that difference of not being able to pay our bills at the end of the month.

[00:03:46] **Speaker 2** Just taking a little bit of a turn here. We keep reading that that bird flu is on the increase. What are dairy farmers thinking about that?

[00:03:58] **Speaker 1** But, you know, very concerned. And, you know, on two fronts, there are two. I think, number one, not knowing when it's going to stop or if it's going to affect your herd. But number two, being able to get the accurate information that we need, because another one of the things that President Biden or President Trump has done and taking that information away from the public health service.

[00:04:23] **Speaker 2** Are you getting any of that kind of information from state egg officials?

[00:04:29] **Speaker 1** Yes, They've been good about trying to continue to keep that information in front of us. And I know that camp has a weekly information meeting for anybody in agriculture that wants to participate. So we've been able to get that there. But when you're looking at that disease that really is affecting all of the country. So trying to figure out where the spread is going to next is vital and that takes national help to get that done.

[00:04:56] **Speaker 2** So we've been talking about all manner of kind of uncertainties. What are your members telling you in the midst of this?

[00:05:05] **Speaker 1** Well, you know, certainly understand that there are some things that do need to happen, but certainly the amount or the variability that is happening, you know, we we can adjust to certain amounts of things. But with what we're seeing right now, that uncertainty. You know, five, six, seven, maybe even eight fronts is totally different than what we have seen in the past. You know, we certainly can handle that to 1 or 2 different things that might affect your bottom line. But when you have so many different things all at once, it gets really scary.

[00:05:41] **Speaker 2** All right. Well, we will be watching it. Daryn Von Ruden, thanks very much.

[00:05:47] **Speaker 1** Thank you, Fredricka.

[00:05:49] **Speaker 2** For more on this and other issues facing Wisconsin, visit our Web site at PBS's wisconsin.org and then click on the news tab. Join us Tuesday for Governor Tony Evers 2025 State budget address. It's live at 7 p.m. on PBS's Wisconsin. That's our program for tonight. I'm Fredericka Freiberg. Have a good weekend.