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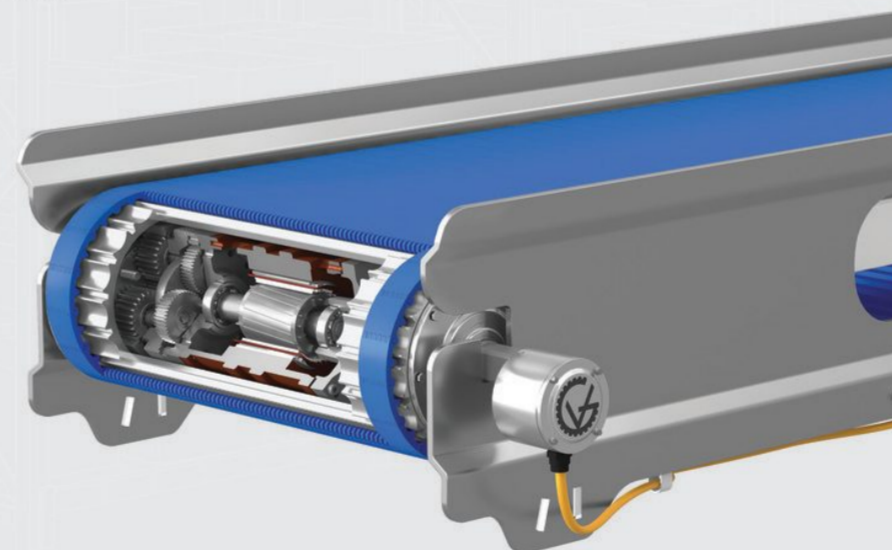
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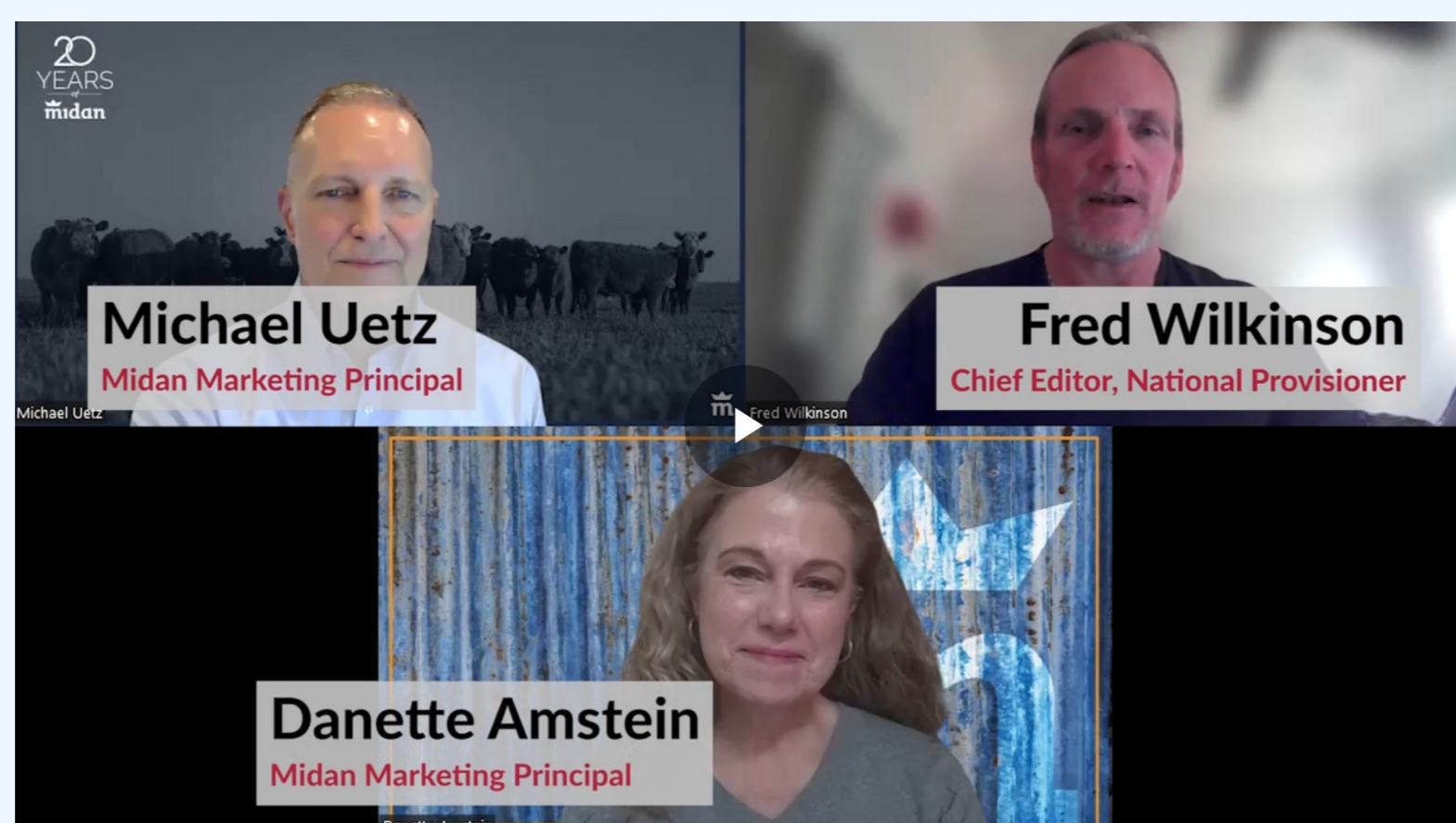


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MIDAN MARKETING MARKS 20 YEARS OF MEAT INDUSTRY SERVICE

Midan Marketing Principals Michael Uetz and Danette Amstein share thoughts on the changes and challenges they have experienced as the agency they founded marks 20 years in service to the meat and poultry industry.

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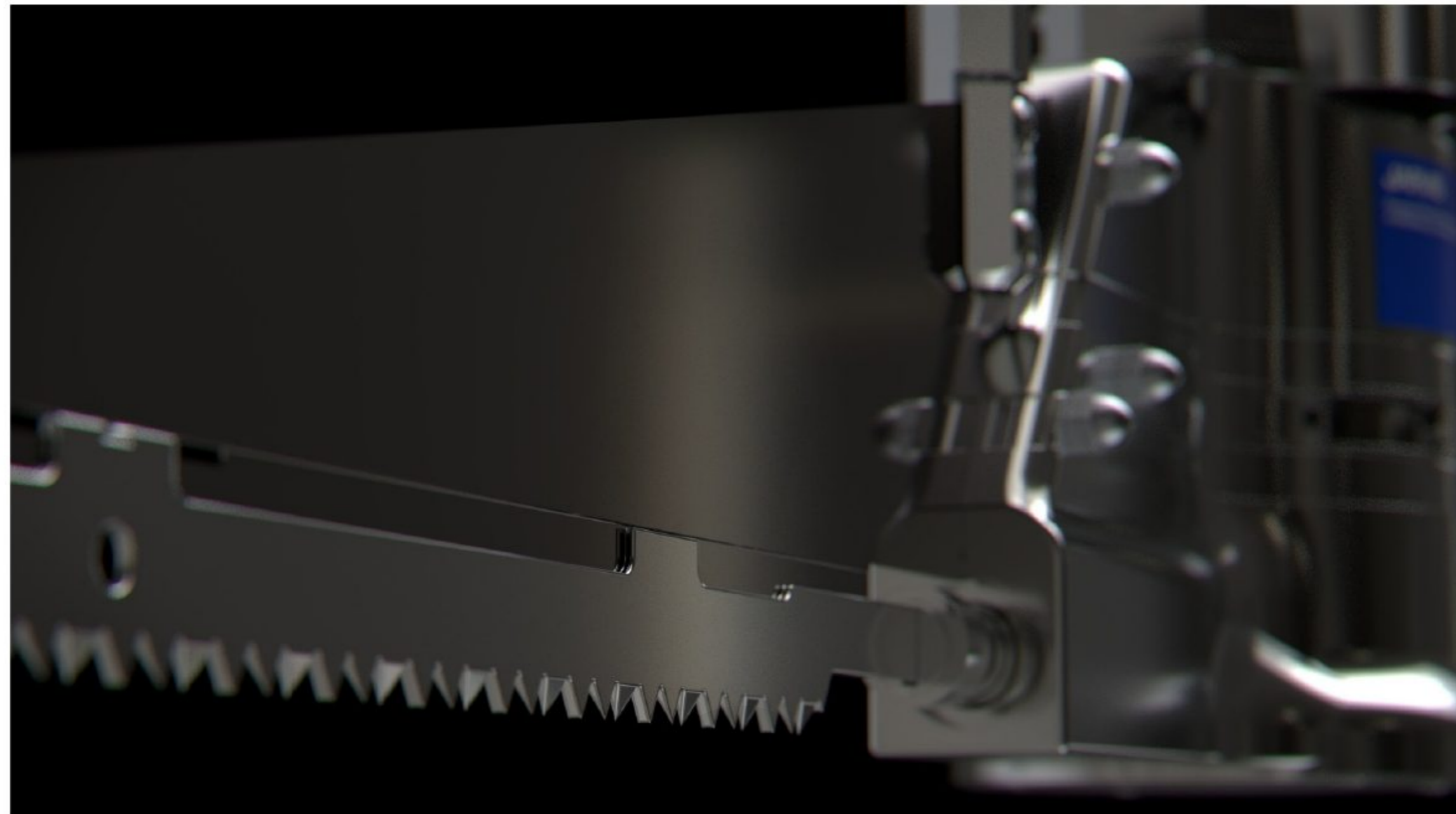
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3. Taco Bell launches chicken nuggets
4. Zatarain's reformulates Andouille Smoked Sausage
5. Perdue unveils the Chiclucken



MOST-POPULAR FEATURES:

1. Tyson shuts two more plants
2. Tyson closing Kansas beef, pork plant
3. Albertsons terminates merger and sues Kroger
4. Butterball closing further processing plant
5. Checking back in with Wahoo Locker



MOST-RECENT PODCAST EPISODES:

1. Episode 186: Audience exposure drives growth for pork rinds
2. Episode 185: Demand increases for protein-rich foods
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4. Episode 183: Julie Anna Potts wins 2024 WMIN Most Impactful Woman of the Year Award
5. Episode 182: James Davidson discusses green packaging materials

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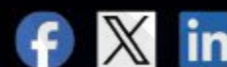
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POULTRY POISED FOR POSITIVE 2025

The poultry category is entering 2025 with a little momentum.

According to Circana retail sales data, for November 2024 fresh chicken prices averaged \$3.13 per pound, up 3% from a year ago.

Fresh chicken sales totaled \$1.4 billion for the month, increasing 6.4% from a year ago. Pounds sold rose 3.3%. From November 2023 to November 2024, fresh chicken sales were \$19.4 billion, up 3.7% compared with the prior 12-month period, with pounds sold improving 3.2% as well.

For turkey, USDA projects 2025 production will be down, reflecting losses due to HPAI. USDA projects turkey prices up slightly in 2025 based on recent price data.

Check out our Poultry Report 2025 for insights and analysis for the coming year's marketplace.

Also, don't miss this month's Processor Profile of Seaboard Triumph Foods, whose operational upgrades at its Sioux City, Iowa, plant are allowing expanded production capabilities.



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CONVENIENCE PROPELS POULTRY AT RETAIL

INCREASING CONSUMER FOCUS ON HEALTH AND WELLNESS OPENS DOORS FOR THE POULTRY INDUSTRY.

BY SAMMY BREDAR
ASSOCIATE GROUP EDITOR, THE NATIONAL PROVISIONER

As we head into 2025, consumers are still feeling the pressure of tightened wallets. With high gasoline prices, increasing rental rates and mounting credit card debt across the United States, the economic outlook can certainly feel bleak for shoppers in the grocery store. Despite continued economic pressures, the poultry category is positioned for a strong 2025 at retail.

Anne-Marie Roerink, principal of **210 Analytics**, noted that shoppers continue to scrutinize price points and prioritize promotions and deals. "While inflation has slowed to about 2% most months, it is the cumulative impact of several years of high inflation that is having consumers concerned," Roerink said.

With **continued perceived economic strain**, consumers are staying home and prioritizing grocery shopping over eating out. "More than 88% of all meal occasions throughout the month are sourced from home and you can see that in the meat, deli and frozen food numbers," Roerink said.

As many fast food restaurants struggle to stay afloat, retail is thriving. Consumer demand for poultry is evidently strong despite economic pressures. Consumers have made it clear: Poultry is a must in the shopping cart. "Butterball's holiday outlook survey showed that 98% of consumers expected inflation to impact their holiday plans," said Rebecca Welch, **Butterball** director of retail and international brand management. "However, consumers also told us that turkey is still the protein of choice at the Thanksgiving table and consumers would find other ways to save on their holiday meals."

Welch noted that, over the last six months alone, multiple turkey categories have shown volume growth due to the protein's value, convenience appeal and health attributes. Convenience is the biggest growth driver right now for the turkey category, she said.



JJS Adult Pekin ducks. Photo credit: Joe Jurgielewicz & Son Ltd.

As much as consumers have made it clear that they want poultry products, they're making it just as clear that they do not really care about plant-based protein. With persistent category declines, hurdles like taste and texture and rising consumer sentiment over ultra-processed and processed foods, plant-based protein is on the decline. "That means health-conscious consumers are looking for other, cleaner sources of protein and with it poultry is often a winner," Roerink said.

As **wellness and health take center stage** for consumers, they are increasingly prioritizing protein in their meals. Roerink noted that, aside from affordability, a focus on better-for-you products is greatly influencing the protein industry. This gives chicken and turkey a natural advantage in the store, as they are perceived to be leaner, "healthier" proteins. Poultry producers can capitalize on this consumer trend by **calling out nutrition and wellness benefits** on the package.

Shoppers are willing to spend their dollars on product attributes they truly demand. At retail, shoppers want convenient meals and snacks, often heading to the grab-and-go and deli section for their cravings. "While value-added sales are down a bit, I believe this is due to substitution to the deli department where there are an ever growing range of chicken items available," Roerink said.

Within fully cooked meat, rotisserie chicken sales have climbed 10% in units, Roerink said. The fully cooked chicken category, in general, is growing. "It reflects the hybrid nature of today's meal in which most consumers prepare some items from scratch and lean on semi and fully prepared items (including frozen) for other parts of the meal," Roerink said. "Deli-prepared foods have truly stepped in as restaurant alternatives this year as consumers are looking to save money on eating out from restaurants."

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Roerink predicts value-added poultry will continue its growth trajectory, driven by younger-consumer purchasing preferences.

Younger consumers are driving another poultry category trend: duck products. **Maple Leaf Farms** Vice President of Sales & Marketing Carmen Darland said that Millennial consumers are increasingly buying duck in multiple formats. As Millennial consumers opt for easier cooking applications, such as grills, smokers and air fryers, they are increasingly utilizing fully cooked duck products.

"We also have millennials that are using grills and smokers more often to make traditional whole duck and duck breast items throughout the year," Darland said. "They also love ground duck, which is a familiar format that can easily be used for sliders or tacos."

Duck's versatility is helping it become more of an everyday protein option, rather than a meal for a special occasion, **Joe Jurgielewicz III**, director of business development at **Joe Jurgielewicz & Son Ltd.**



Hearty Turkey Sausage. Photo credit: Butterball

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Poultry Report: Chicken

Product	Dollars	Dollars vs. YA	Units	Units vs. YA	Volume	Lbs vs. YA
DEPT-MEAT	\$103,704,985,266	4.3%	14,523,818,552	0.6%	22,712,699,005	2.0%
AISLE-FRESH MEAT	\$72,161,518,747	6.4%	7,967,167,647	2.2%	16,328,575,421	2.9%
AISLE-PROCESSED MEAT	\$31,543,466,519	-0.3%	6,556,650,904	-1.3%	6,384,123,584	-0.1%
BEEF	\$39,454,064,001	9.2%	3,301,546,358	2.4%	5,934,093,400	3.5%
CHICKEN	\$19,291,264,585	3.3%	2,843,148,435	2.5%	6,285,884,607	3.1%
PORK	\$8,418,150,334	3.4%	1,201,400,468	0.3%	2,641,855,478	0.7%
PACKAGED LUNCHEAT	\$7,037,486,816	-2.5%	1,499,045,965	-0.9%	1,193,080,651	-0.6%
BACON	\$6,826,843,157	3.1%	1,085,038,887	1.6%	1,118,249,585	1.1%
DINNER SAUSAGE	\$5,600,159,182	2.6%	1,146,478,680	3.3%	1,256,234,430	3.2%
TURKEY	\$3,299,115,535	4.1%	421,499,654	5.1%	1,232,684,679	3.7%
FRANKFURTERS	\$3,186,168,550	1.2%	773,502,684	-2.2%	881,955,050	-1.5%
BREAKFAST SAUSAGE	\$2,368,895,325	2.2%	527,632,276	1.5%	499,750,579	1.6%
PROCESSED CHICKEN	\$744,962,742	-2.2%	117,575,467	-0.5%	111,807,557	1.2%

Source: Circana, Integrated Fresh, MULO+, 52 weeks ending 11/3/2024

Jurgielewicz is seeing growth in the duck category across both retail and foodservice. He noted that Asian cuisine and adventurous eaters are driving category growth. "Duck has secured its place on the American menu, from home-cooked meals to Michelin-starred restaurants," Jurgielewicz said. "As duck becomes more accessible, sales projections only grow stronger."

As restaurants face mounting pressures, including a strained labor force, rising food costs and a transition to at-home eating, operators are searching for solutions to alleviate any strain. Darland noted that the biggest purchasing trend she's noticed throughout the year has been increased interest in the company's Labor Savor line.

Since foodservice operators are dealing with so many hurdles, they are utilizing every aspect of the duck to minimize food waste. "Breaking down a duck is straightforward, and resourceful chefs can boost revenue by utilizing every part," Jurgielewicz said.

General retail poultry purchasing trends extend into the duck category, as consumers seek out convenience duck fat is ... gaining popularity as a delicious and trendy alternative to seed oils," Jurgielewicz said. As shoppers increasingly seek out high-protein products, duck has potential for major retail growth.

Opening image: Cook from Frozen whole turkey. Photo credit: Butterball



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PROCESSOR PROFILE



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SEABOARD TRIUMPH FOODS AND THE PRAIRIE FRESH WAY

CONNECTED FOOD SYSTEM PRODUCES PREMIUM PORK PRODUCTS FOR EXPORT, PROCESSOR,
RETAIL AND FOODSERVICE MARKETS.

BY FRED WILKINSON
CHIEF EDITOR

SIoux CITY, Iowa – The Prairie Fresh Way means delivering a wide spectrum of premium pork products for export, processor, retail and foodservice markets.

“The Prairie Fresh Way really is all about the entire connected food system, and that connected system includes Seaboard Foods, Triumph Foods, Seaboard Triumph Foods and the owners of Triumph Foods,” said Frank Koekkoek, Seaboard Triumph Foods vice president and general manager. “We all have one common goal, and that’s doing pork the right way.”

That connected food system starts at Seaboard Triumph Foods’ hog production sites near its Sioux City plant. All aspects of production – from raising the animals through processing, packaging and shipping – are monitored and measured, with an eye toward continuous improvement of processes, and ultimately the product. About 2 million hogs are supplied by Seaboard and another 2 million from Triumph Foods, with the balance coming from the open market.



The Prairie Fresh Way means producing a wide spectrum of premium pork products.



Seaboard Triumph Foods processes about 20 million pounds of pork area year at the facility.

Seaboard markets pork products it produces in Sioux City under its Prairie Fresh brand. Products made at its Sioux City facility go to export markets in 26 countries, said Deanna Wiedner, vice president of human resources for Seaboard Triumph Foods. Export demand is seasonal, accounting for 20% to 30% of the facility’s production, with hams being a top item for Latin American customers, boneless pork loins and bellies for the Japanese market and butts in South Korea. The facility also supplies raw bacon for Seaboard’s sister company Daily’s brand bacon, as well as products such as hams that are sold to further processors.

“About 20 million pounds of pork are processed a year,” she said.

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The 7-year-old Sioux City facility processes 22,000 hogs a day, shipping out 120 truckloads of pork products daily, Wiedner said. Since the operation’s launch in 2017, it has grown to encompass 1 million square feet with around 2,800 employees.

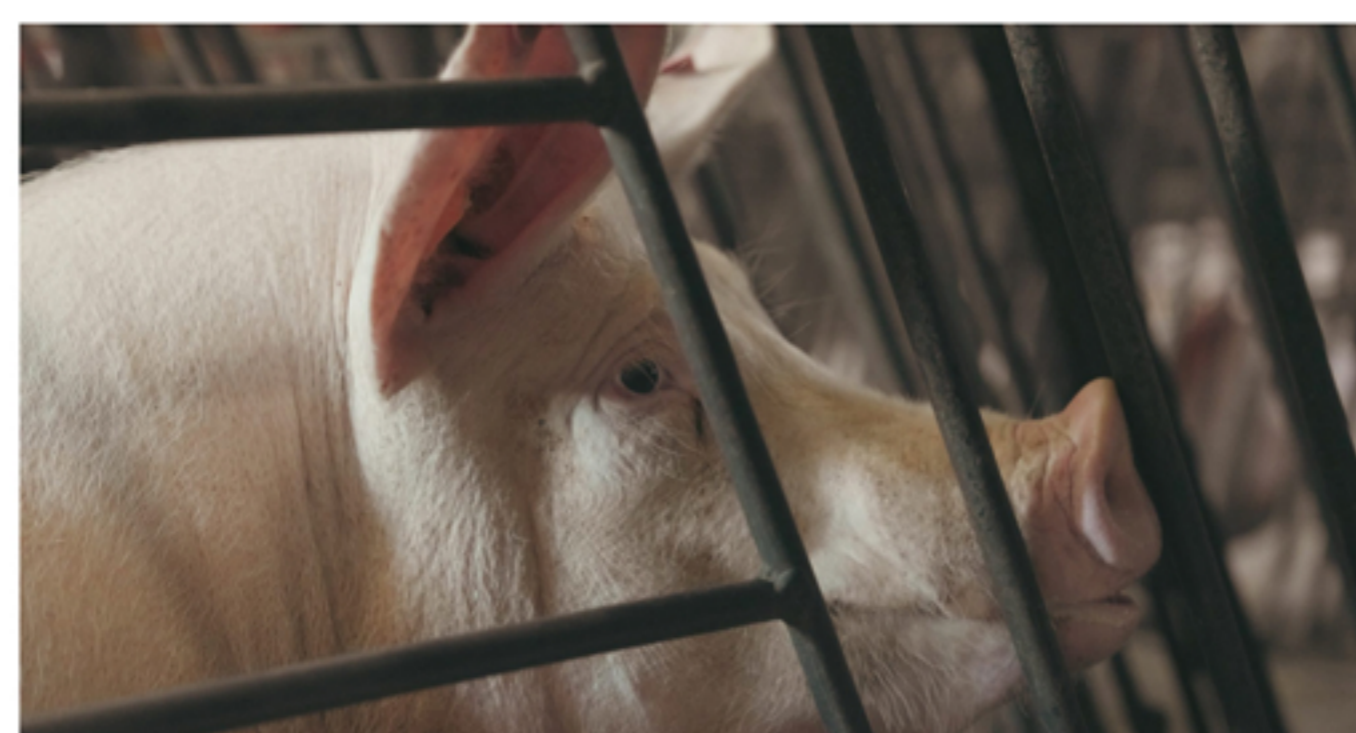
The staff is diverse, with about half of them speaking English and the other half speaking some 30 different languages (with Spanish being the most common language spoken by the staff’s non-English speakers), Wiedner said.

“From a diversity perspective, we have a lot of initiatives,” she said, adding that 88% of the facility’s leadership are minorities and 41% are female.

Augmenting the emphasis on high-touch workforce solutions, Seaboard Triumph Foods’ Sioux City operation also employs high-tech solutions to maximize processing efficiency.

An example of the efficiencies automation has made possible at Seaboard Triumph Foods’ Sioux City plant is a waterjet system used to slice pork bellies to an exact spec rather than using metal blades. The process employs six different water jets moving in different directions to ensure a consistent trim, Koekkoek said. Automating the process freed up 13 positions. Automation plans include exploring opportunities to maximize efficiencies through automating palletizing and stacking.

“The objective for automation and robotics is you’re not necessarily displacing labor. You’re taking key members and transitioning them into a new location to perform higher value tasks,” he said.



Seaboard Triumph Foods’ connected food system starts at its hog production sites near its Sioux City plant.



Responding to market trends favoring innovative and convenient solutions, adding value – for both consumers and retailers – is a key aspect of The Prairie Fresh Way.

ADDING VALUE

Responding to market trends favoring innovative and convenient solutions, adding value – for both consumers and retailers – is a key aspect of The Prairie Fresh Way.

For retail, that includes incorporating labor-saving case-ready retail packaging, said Ozlem Worpel, vice president of marketing, innovation, communications and sustainability for Seaboard Foods. “We’re adding value to the retailer by them not having to use any of their staff for that.”

For consumers, adding value means not just the convenience of ready-to-cook or ready-to-eat products but also high quality and innovative flavors – more so than price for many consumers, Worpel said.

“We’re always looking for what is that next flavor, and if you look at the flavors it usually starts with the restaurants – what are they doing, what are they including on their menus,” she said. “What we try to do is keep a balance on our portfolio: some things that people know and are familiar with and they are going to come back and buy over and over, and then you bring in a more acceptable new flavor. Because they know your brand and trust your product, they are more willing to try that new flavor.”

Seaboard Triumph Foods’ Sioux City facility helps meet consumers’ desire for flavor and convenience with products such as whole pork roast with seasonings that consumers can simply remove from the bag, put in the crockpot with some vegetables in the morning, and by the time they get home from work its ready to enjoy for carnitas or tacos.

Prairie Fresh USDA Prime-branded products from the facility are another value-added offering, with the premium, highly marbled cuts targeted at a more upscale market.

“We’re targeting high-end retailers with that product, foodservice, and there’s a pretty big international demand for some of that product too,” said David Eaheart, Sr. director of communications and brand marketing for Seaboard Triumph Foods.

Product testing of Prairie Fresh USDA Prime-branded products conducted with Kansas City-area barbecue restaurants Slap’s and Joe’s Kansas City BBQ suggests the premium line offers advantages for operators in addition to a premium eating experience for patrons.

“We know that the yields are higher. We know that the cook times are actually less,” Eaheart said.

For Prairie Fresh USDA Prime at retail, it’s all about targeting the right grocery channel, Worpel said.

“It’s really targeting the right customers who have a consumer base that understand the value of the product and the price that is attached to it,” she said.

Seaboard Triumph Foods collaborates with “Netflix Barbecue Showdown” star and seven-time World Barbecue champion Melissa Cookston, owner of Memphis BBQ Co., on menu development innovations, including appetizers such as Cured Peppered Pork Tenderloin with Cheeses, Asian-Influenced Pork Belly Bites, and skinless pork belly with togarashi and ponzu-hoisin glaze.

Main course concepts include Mosaic Pork – pork tenderloin strips seasoned with Melissa’s Coal Play rub and then wrapped in bacon, served with orange chipotle glaze – and Memphis-style Babyback Ribs marinated overnight in seasonings then slow smoked and served “Muddy” style.

All image credits: Seaboard Triumph Foods



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LABOR POOLS’ LACK OF SKILLS AND INTEREST POSE CHALLENGES

REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS LACK EXTENSIVE, IN-DEPTH, IN-PERSON TRAINING AND APPRENTICESHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR ASPIRING BUTCHERS.

BY FRED WILKINSON
CHIEF EDITOR

The national nonprofit Good Meat Project’s primary focus is connecting people with meat products raised and produced in a manner in line with their values, but another key goal for the group is developing a new generation of skilled workers who can meet the job-skills needs of smaller meat processors.

Good Meat Project Executive Director Michele Thorne shares some insights on the challenges and opportunities of educating and training workers for fulfilling careers in meat processing.

For the processors and butchers that the Good Meat Project works with, what are the leading concerns they express regarding finding and retaining skilled employees?

Michele Thorne: The leading concerns that butchers and processors express regarding finding and retaining skilled employees are lack of interest in the trade itself from young people and lack of high quality training. Some also express the ability to compete with higher wage, lower physical demand jobs is also a concern. We also know that being an expert in your craft isn’t the same as being a teacher of your craft, and butchers and processors have expressed a need for additional training to effectively recruit, onboard and mentor new staff.

Since our founding in 2014, the GMP has developed experiential meat education programs for everyone along the supply chain, in regions all over the United States. Through this work with butchers, chefs, farmers, ranchers and even consumers, it’s become clear that many regional food systems lack extensive, in-depth, in-person training and apprenticeship opportunities for aspiring butchers who share our Good Meat values. This causes a cascade effect, because we know that butcher shop owners and meat processing facility managers face a lack of skilled labor, which makes it difficult to adequately staff their businesses and facilities. Consequently, the farmers and ranchers who rely on their services in order to get their meat to market are unable to meet increased demand from consumers. Which means consumers, in turn, see higher prices and fewer options for sourcing meat that matches their values.

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What are some approaches for attracting a new generation to consider careers in butchery and meat processing?

Michele Thorne: According to a series of interviews we conducted in 2021 with people around the country who tried to break into the industry but were not successful, we found that individuals who are interested in receiving training often have trouble finding a well-paid, dedicated opportunity to do so. Many end up working for free in exchange for more informal butchery education that lacks a thoughtful curriculum or a clear, reliable schedule.

Good Meat Project has extensive experience developing meat education for diverse constituents and bringing diverse stakeholders together. That experience, combined with our broad network of skilled Good Meat practitioners and other Good Meat businesses, puts us in a unique position to experiment and innovate in the context of a regional, decentralized, collaborative butchery training program that could feed into the existing handful of longer-term journeyman apprenticeship programs that do still exist in the United States. Many of our collaborating organizational and university extension partners are working together to incentivize this new generation of future butchers and meat processors. We are also sharing materials that we created directly with processors and butchers.

What are some resources that smaller processors can tap into to find skilled workers or further develop skills of their current staff members?

Michele Thorne: One of our core programs is called BACON (Butcher and Chefs Opportunity Network), where we connect butchers and processors with the resources they need to help educate young people and prospects seeking to switch careers about what it takes to be a butcher or processor. In 2023, with the help of a grant from the Roundhouse Foundation, we created the New Butchers Training Handbook and Core Curriculum materials, which serve as a customizable introductory training curriculum for on-the-job-training that one helps butchers and processors mentor and successfully teach and prepare the next generation of butchers to effectively process and sell Good Meat products, and two provides a thoughtful, intentional training structure that will ensure diverse new and aspiring butchers get the dedicated training and support they need to successfully develop a solid foundation of confidence and skill in whole animal butchery and utilization. If any processors are interested in receiving these training materials for free, they can email programs@goodmeatproject.org.

We also share butchery learning opportunities on our website. We update these opportunities regularly and we share them with our national network of stakeholders. In addition to those resources, we also have a platform called the Good Meat Switchboard, which allows members to engage directly with one another, to ask for help or share a resource with the community. The platform is free and anyone can share an opportunity there by signing up at <https://goodmeatproject.switchboardhq.com>.

We also know that butchers and processors have a messaging problem--their craft is under-valued. We want to generate excitement about these professions and are doing so through a couple exciting initiatives. Every April, we launch the Real Burger of Earth Day celebrating the benefits of grassfed meats. This is a great opportunity for butchers to highlight their work sourcing from local farms, and the delicious ground meats in their butcher case. Each fall, we honor the craft of butchery and processing in our quarterly Good Meat Journal with an entire issue dedicated to “The Season of the Butcher.” The journal profiles butchers across the country, offers opportunities for butchers and prospective butchers, and offers a behind the scenes look at the incredible craft of butchery.

What types of grant opportunities for employee training are available for small- to mid-size processors?

Michele Thorne: As a collaborative partner with the Northwest Rocky Mountain Food Business Center, the business center is offering scholarships up to \$1,000 per applicant to cover eligible costs for travel, course fees, and other expenses related to butcher and processing apprenticeship programs or education. See website here: <https://nwrockymountainregionalfoodbusiness.com/meat-scholarships/>

These scholarships are available to anyone in any of these states (WA, OR, ID, WY, CO, MT) with a relevant training need. Scholarships can be applied to various meat-related courses, both in-person and online, and can include travel costs and any other indirect costs. Participants should determine the total cost of their program and indicate what percentage the scholarship would cover. Some costs may be offered at a reduced rate as a de facto scholarship from certain training providers, and we’ll let applicants know where those options exist. This offering is ongoing, and applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis.

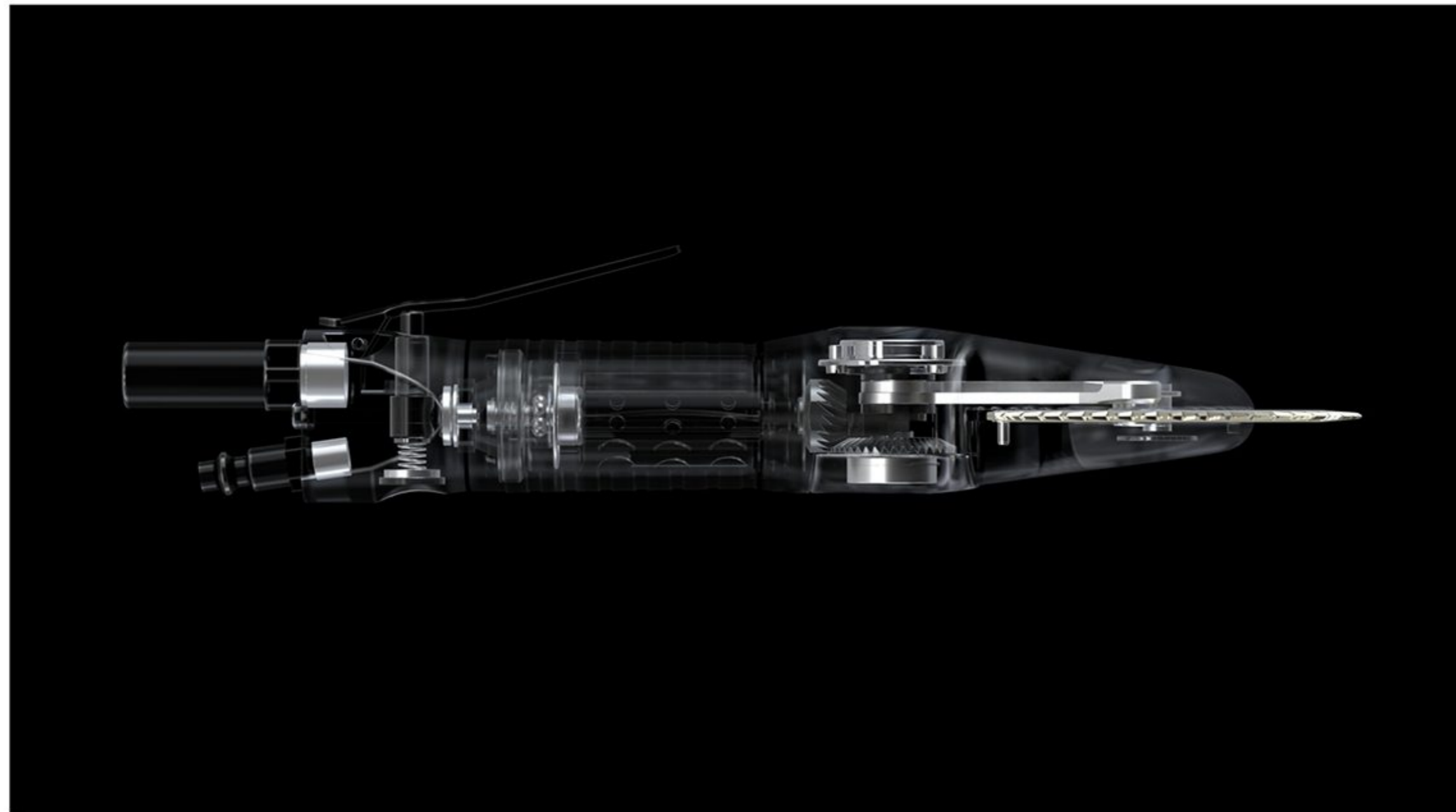
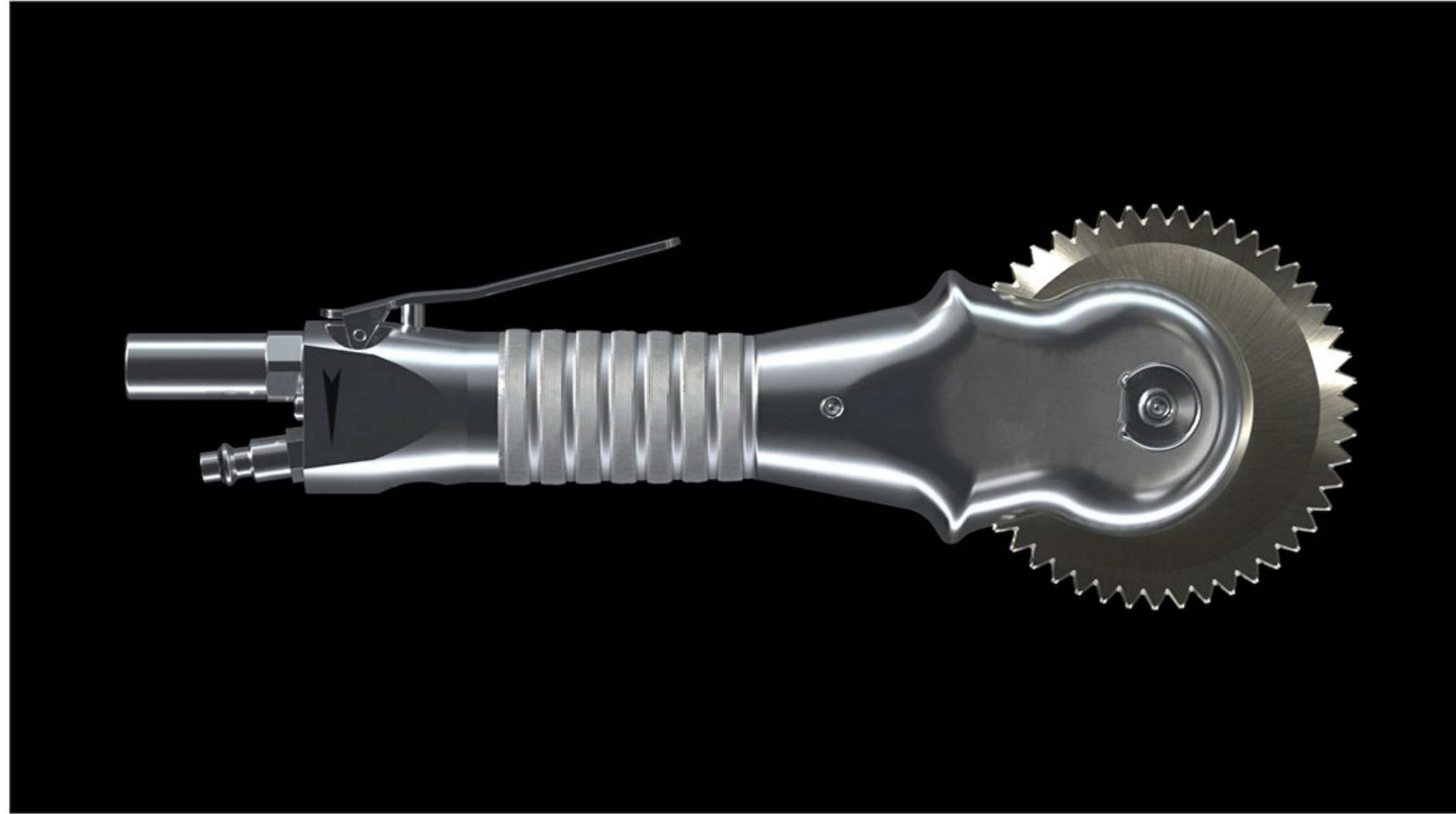
This scholarship program is a great way to lower the cost of high-quality training, connect with top providers in the field, and build skills in the meat industry. We encourage all interested parties to apply and join us in strengthening our region’s meat supply chain.

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USDA STEPS UP THE FIGHT AGAINST LISTERIA IN READY-TO-EAT FOODS

FOR FOOD PRODUCERS, THIS IS THE TIME TO START PREPARING, REFINING SAFETY PLANS, AND ENSURING COMPLIANCE WITH THESE TIGHTER STANDARDS

BY SHAWN K. STEVENS
FOOD INDUSTRY COUNSEL LLC

On the coattails of USDA declaring *Salmonella* to be an adulterant in frozen not-ready-to- NRTE breaded chicken products, the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service is raising the bar in its continued attempts to keep our food safer—specifically when it comes to *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat (RTE) meat and poultry products. Starting in January 2025, the agency will roll out stronger measures aimed at reducing contamination, strengthening oversight, and ultimately protecting consumers.

Hot dogs, deli meats, and pre-cooked poultry straight from the deli or fridge, are the types of products the FSIS is targeting. *Listeria* has long been a concern in RTE foods because it thrives in cold environments and can cause severe illness, particularly for pregnant women, the elderly, and people with weakened immune systems. Even small amounts of contamination can pose serious risks for these individuals, which is why FSIS is now pushing for action.

FSIS plans to ramp up testing and monitoring at meat and poultry plants to catch potential issues before products reach store shelves, focusing, according to the agency, on prevention first. Reportedly, establishments that do not meet the requirements—whether through repeated lapses or significant one-time problems—won't get a pass. The FSIS says enforcement will include increased sampling, regulatory controls, and even product recalls, when necessary.

FSIS recognizes the importance of supporting businesses, especially smaller operations, as they adapt to stricter protocols. Expect updated guidance to help establishments improve their food safety plans and meet these new standards.

Depending upon the population being affected, *Listeria* infections can have severe consequences, often leading to hospitalization and, tragically, fatalities. Food safety technologies and new interventions have come a long way, and FSIS is doubling down on working to protect the public. The new measures reflect a growing commitment to stop *Listeria* before it causes harm. I would counsel the agency, however, on ensuring that any initiatives to help industry better control *Listeria* remain achievable.

By January 2025, these stronger protections will be in place nationwide, making cold cuts, deli meats, and pre-cooked poultry much safer. For food producers, this is the time to start preparing, refining safety plans, and ensuring compliance with these tighter standards.

At the end of the day, food safety should never be something we have to think twice about. The FSIS's new rules bring us closer to that reality—one sandwich at a time.

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CONSUMER EVALUATION OF PLANT-BASED GROUND BEEF ALTERNATIVES IN REAL-WORLD EATING SCENARIOS

REPORTED EATING SATISFACTION OFFERED BY BEEF PRODUCTS IS UNIQUE AND HAS NOT BEEN MATCHED WITH GBA CURRENTLY AVAILABLE ON THE MARKET.

Plant-based ground beef alternatives (GBA) have been in the retail market for several decades and have evolved through time from initial products comprised of soy-based proteins to recent GBA that are commonly comprised of bean, mushroom, pea, or other plant-sourced proteins. These products have served as both a direct competitor and attempted replacement for traditional beef products, as well as complementary protein products for consumers wanting to vary their diets. Over the past several years, there has been a renewed interest in research related to these products. Research efforts have looked at the overall eating quality, flavor profile, color characteristics, economic traits, environmental impacts, and nutritional value of these products. However, it is noteworthy that the studies that have evaluated the eating quality of the products have typically evaluated the products directly head-to-head with ground beef, and only as a single protein product. However, when consumers typically consume these products, they are part of a larger meal, including the GBA as the protein in a burger, taco, or other larger food items. To date, it is unclear how including other ingredients and seasoning may impact the eating quality of plant-based GBA. It was therefore the objective of the current study to evaluate the eating quality of GBA in comparison to ground beef under real-world eating scenarios as both a patty (hamburger) and ground/crumbled (taco) product.

For this study, 3 plant-based GBA alternatives were used and represented a modern GBA sold at retail (RGA), a modern GBA sold in foodservice (FGA), and a traditional soy-based GBA (TGA). Additionally, 80% lean ground beef was evaluated in comparison. Consumers ($N = 240$; $n = 120$ per panel type) evaluated samples for juiciness, tenderness, texture, beef flavor, overall flavor, and overall liking, purchase intent, and purchase price and rated traits as either acceptable or unacceptable. For hamburger panels, consumers were served samples on buns and were given the option to add cheese, lettuce, pickles, ketchup, and/or mustard. For taco panels, samples were seasoned with a taco seasoning blend and served on flour tortillas, with consumers given the option to add cheese, lettuce, and/or tomatoes. In both scenarios, consumers rated ground beef higher ($P < 0.05$) for juiciness, texture liking, overall flavor liking, beef flavor liking, overall liking, purchase intent, and price willing to be paid than all three GBA. But, ground beef was rated similar ($P > 0.05$) for tenderness to FGA and RGA. Additionally, a higher ($P < 0.05$) percentage of ground beef samples were rated acceptable overall and for flavor characteristics than all three GBA. Few differences were found between FGA and RGA for any palatability characteristics evaluated. TGA was rated lower ($P < 0.05$) than all other treatments for all palatability traits for taco panels and was similar ($P > 0.05$) to only RGA for beef flavor and overall flavor liking within hamburger panels.

Plant-based beef alternatives are a current and ever evolving segment of the protein sector, with the number of product offerings changing how consumers view protein foods. Unlike in the past, these products are not solely being marketed to vegetarian consumers, but instead are being offered as a direct substitute for beef products. Results from the current study provide evidence of the consumer preferred eating quality offered by beef products in comparison to these plant-based alternatives, even if other commonly used taco and hamburger ingredients are included. As the growing body of work highlights how these products differ from beef, the current study underscores that the use of these products as an ingredient does not compensate for their overall reduced palatability characteristics. Thus, additional industry efforts are needed related to plant protein structures and functionalities in order to improve palatability, as our work would indicate the use of seasonings and ingredients alone does not reduce the palatability gap with beef. Current work combined with previous studies provide clear evidence that these plant-based GBA are different products from ground beef and should be marketed as such by purveyors and considered as such by consumers. Ultimately, the level of eating satisfaction offered by beef products is unique and has not been matched with GBA currently available on the market, even when these GBA have included ingredients commonly found in hamburgers and tacos.

O'Quinn, T. G., Egger, L. A., Farmer, K. J., Beyers, E. S., Lybarger, K. R., Vipham, J. L., Zumbaugh, M. D. & Chao, M. D., (2024) "Consumer Evaluation of Plant-Based Ground Beef Alternatives in Real-World Eating Scenarios", *Meat and Muscle Biology* 8(1): 16904, 1-14. doi: <https://doi.org/10.22175/mmb.16904>

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WEIGH PRICE LABELERS HELP IOWA PORK PRODUCER MEET CURRENT AND FUTURE GROWTH

PERDUE PREMIUM MEAT CO. UPGRADES ITS PACKAGING LINE WITH OSSID WEIGH PRICE LABELERS AT ITS SIOUX CENTER, IOWA, FACILITY.

Packaging a premium product requires a weigh price labeling system that's complementary in speed, accuracy, and appearance. These are just a few of the reasons why Perdue Premium Meat Co. selected the NextGen 2115 Weigh Price Labelers from Ossid for its pork packaging lines at its Sioux Center, Iowa, facility.

A subsidiary of [Perdue Farms](#), Perdue Premium Meat Co. (PPMC) is a full-service facility that produces a variety of pork products in Iowa. The company is an industry leader offering all-natural, no antibiotics, pasture-raised pork raised by independent family farmers across the US. In 2020, the company completed a \$29 million expansion of its Sioux Center facility that added more than 50,000 square feet of space to accommodate upgraded equipment, revamped processing and packaging lines for case-ready production, and other enhanced employee safety and wellness programs.

PPMC operates on 100% wind power and uses a closed-loop wastewater system that filters and recycles the water to provide nutrients to surrounding farmland. The plant is certified humane and incorporates several practices that exceed industry standards, including live video feed monitored by a third party.

To meet increased demand for its pork products, PPMC upgraded its packaging equipment, a change that necessitated faster weigh price labelers. The company gave its current labeling vendor the first opportunity to supply equipment, but its performance could not keep pace with the high rate of speed it was looking for.

"We were adding larger packaging machines, and we needed our labelers to hit those higher speeds to match the output we were looking to obtain," said Jon Schelling, director of case ready operations & purchasing, PPMC. "So, the question became how do we reach those speeds and do so in a confined footprint? We needed a weigh price labeler system to not only keep up with today's production rate, but to grow with us in the future.

"The look of the package is top three as far as importance for what we do. We are a niche market, pasture-raised, no-antibiotic pork. With that comes a premium on the price. So, when you're asking a customer as these higher end retailers to pay more for a product and if you have something in the shelf that doesn't look good, labels crooked, you can't read the print, the customer is going to look at that and say that isn't a premium product, I'm not going to pay a premium price."

Ossid is well known throughout Perdue Farms, as other divisions rely on the brand for weigh price labeling. Ossid is a North Carolina-based food packaging OEM of weigh price labeling systems, as well as tray overwrapping, thermoforming, vacuum skin, and other packaging solutions. Ossid is part of ProMach, a company of 47 product brands that operate across the entire packaging spectrum.

After reviewing the application with PPMC, Ossid recommended two NextGen 2115 Weigh Price Labelers, which can handle up to 150 packages per minute each. Utilizing WYSIWYG label design, the weigh price labeler has an interface that allows the end user to view a projected model of the label while it is being created. Furthermore, the machine is modular in design, allowing for short lead and delivery time, and is National Type Evaluation Program (NTEP) approved.

"We approach our projects from a point of honesty and open communication. So, we sit down, listen to the current struggles and where you want to go and we work together to partner to get to that point, said Jared Rangel, sales representative, Ossid. "When you run a variety of different products, automation can be difficult. So, you need a partner in the industry that's willing to work together with you to create a solution that will work across the whole gambit of products that you might run."



Types of products PPMC is packaging include an assortment of pork offerings, such as ground pork.

Ossid's Weigh Price Labelers can handle trayed, shrink, and thermoform packages. Perdue Premium Meats also uses thermoformed saddle pack style for some products that require two labels to be applied to both sides of the package – a challenging application easily performed by Ossid's weigh price labeling machines. Furthermore, the stainless steel construction is perfect for harsh production environments of the protein industry, and the open frame design provides great access for cleaning.

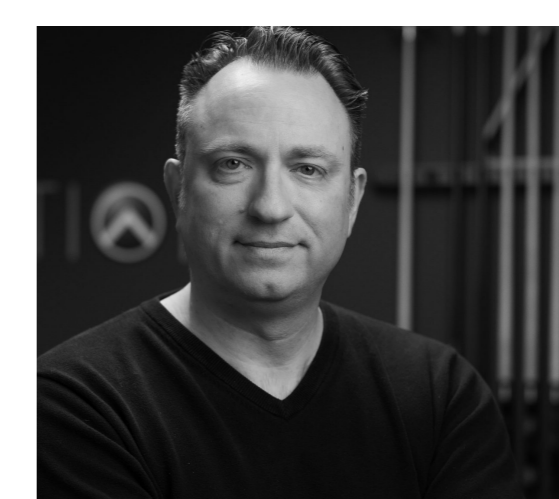
The two weigh price labelers were installed in February and August of 2023, respectively. PPMC operates one shift a day; the two packaging lines run on between two and three days a week. The thermoformer line packages just under 3,000 pounds per hour. Types of products PPMC is packaging include an assortment of pork offerings, such as three-pack boneless chops, two-pack bone-in chops, 1-pound brick of ground pork, and direct-to-consumer selections.

"If we're asking a premium price for our cuts, we need to produce a premium package, and our Ossid weigh price labelers help us do that," Schelling said. "Our equipment has done everything we were sold on, and the technical support that Ossid offers has been fantastic.

"From a production standpoint, our new Ossid machines are giving us higher output; we're not missing a beat. We can package more pounds per day without having to add more hours in the week, which is saving us money through efficient operation."

Steve Staedler is an account supervisor at LePoidevin Marketing, a Brookfield, Wisconsin-based business-to-business marketing firm that specializes in the packaging industry. Steve has been covering packaging for more than 20 years; is a former newspaper reporter and retired master sergeant from the U.S. Air Force Reserve, where he worked maintenance and public affairs. He can be reached at steve@lepoidevinmarketing.com; 262-754-9550

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BY STEVE STAEDLER

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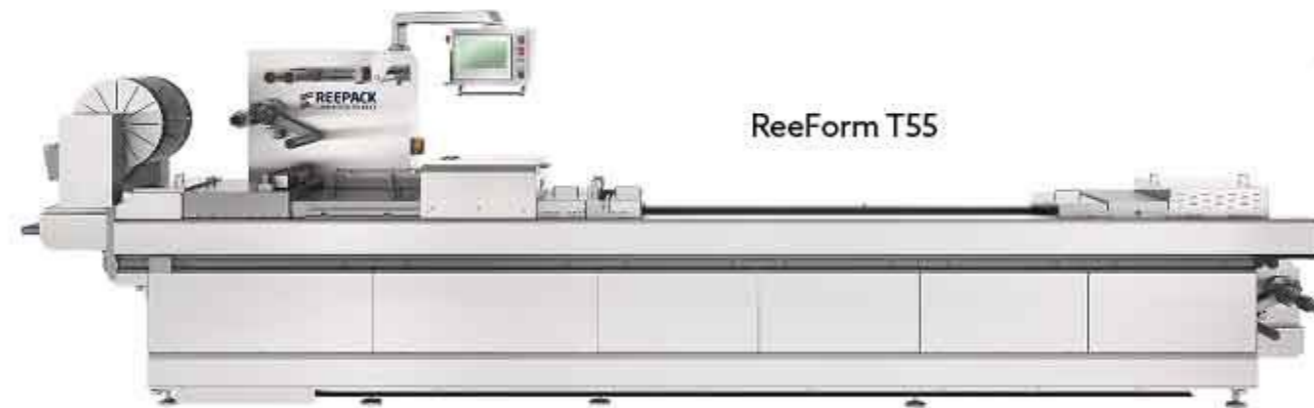
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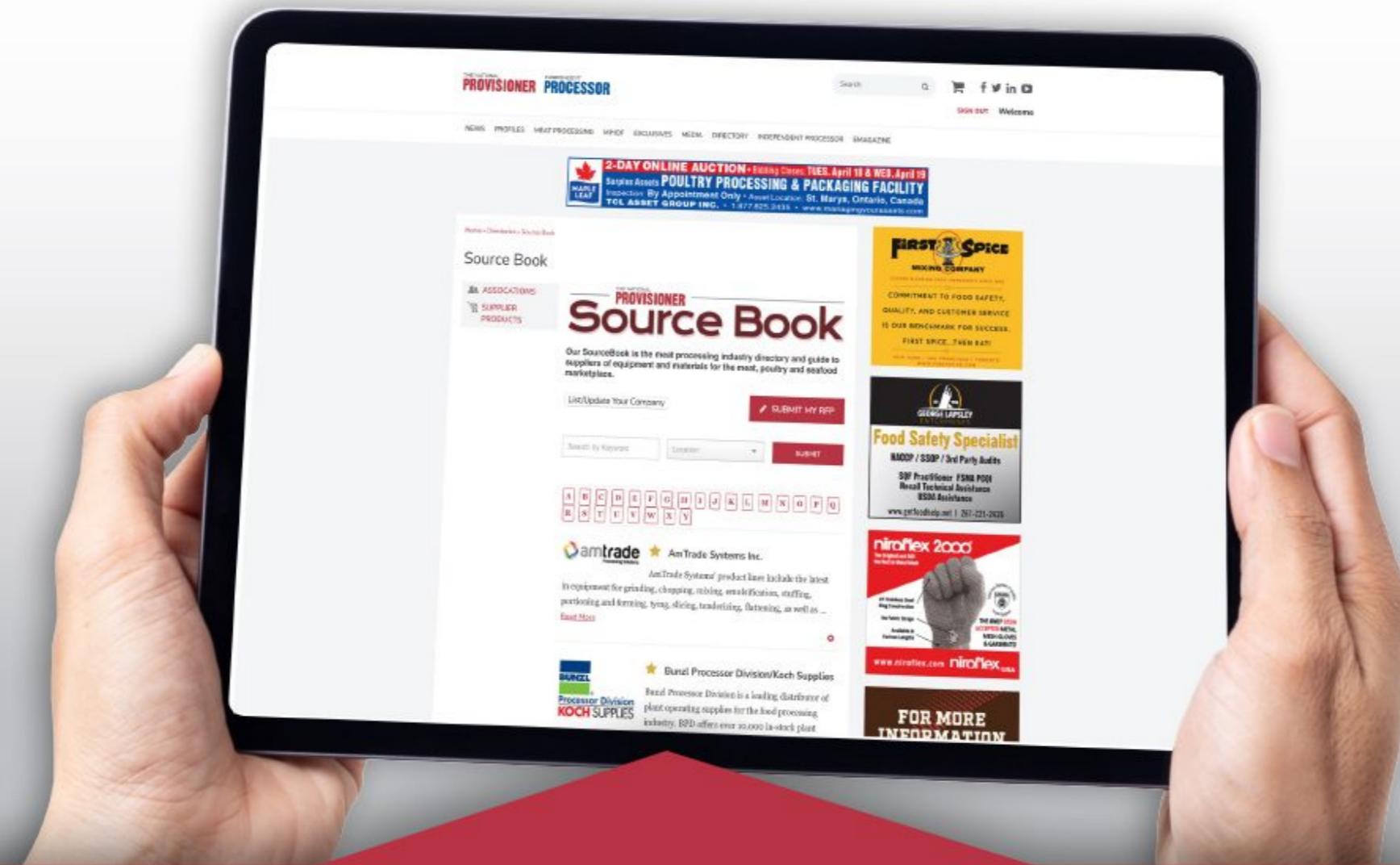
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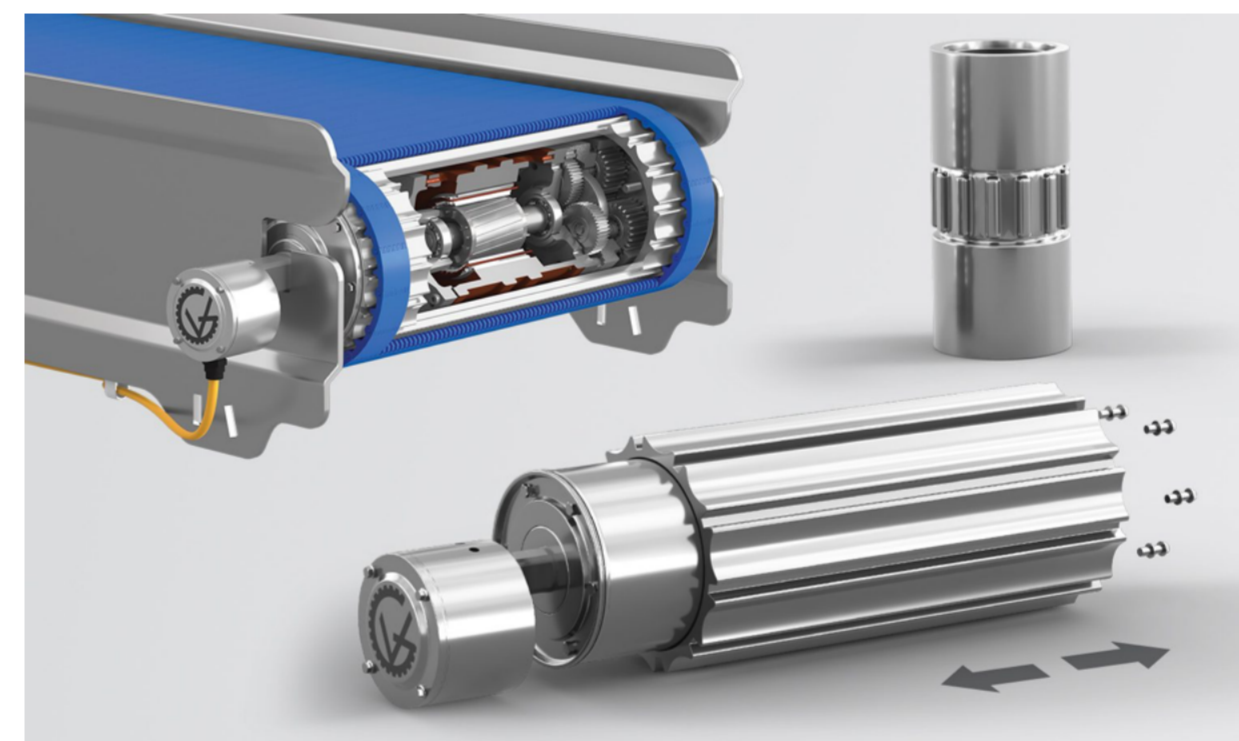
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