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# 2025 BACON REPORT

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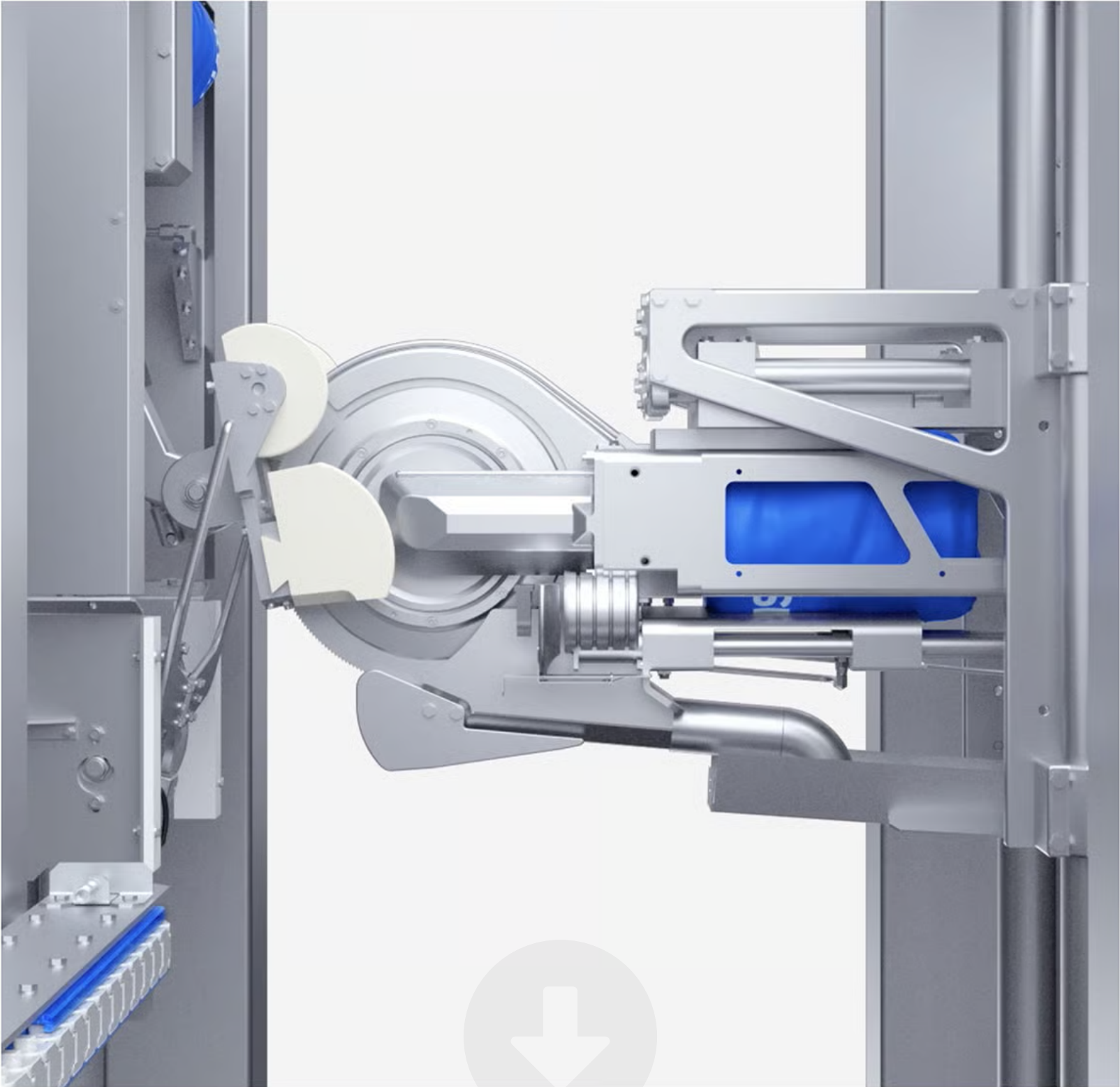


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SEPTEMBER 2025 / VOLUME 237 / ISSUE 9



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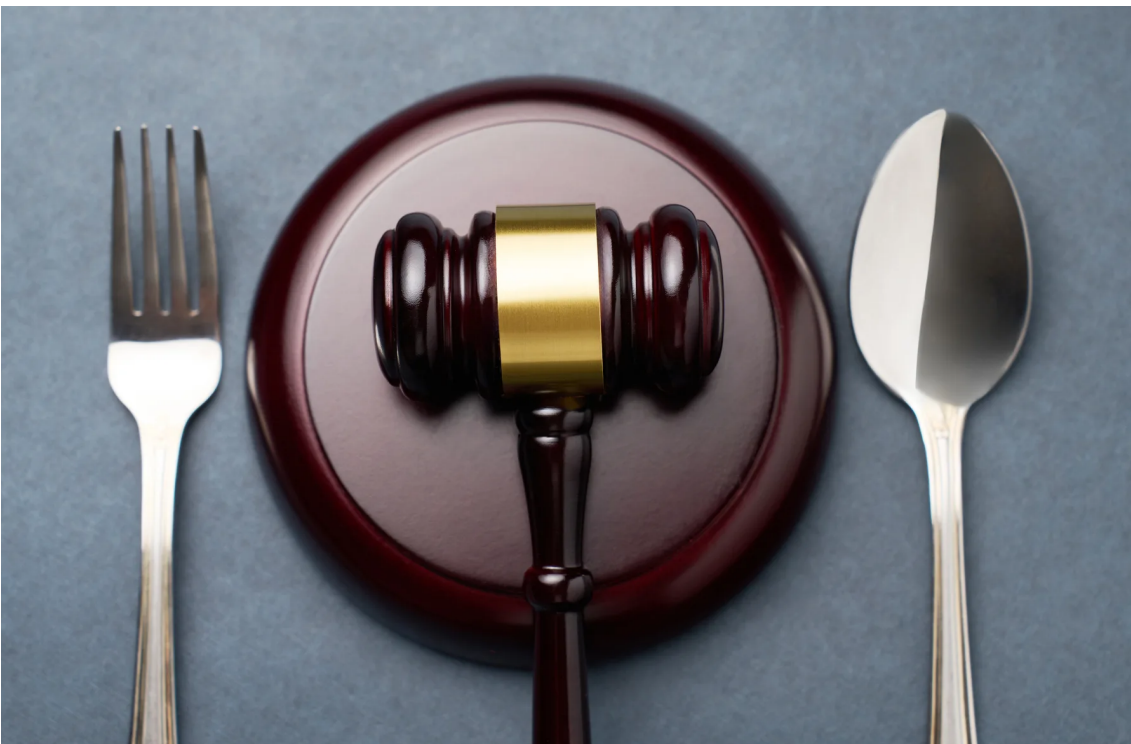
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**Lillie Berman**

Director of Nutrition Influencer Education & Evaluation, NCBA

## NCBA'S LILLIE BERMAN DISCUSSES WHAT THE GLP-1 EFFECT MEANS FOR BEEF

Lillie Berman, director of nutrition influencer education and evaluation for National Cattlemen's Beef Association, discusses what the GLP-1 Effect means for beef. In this interview, she shares details about how beef fits in with the dietary needs of consumers using GLP-1 weight loss drugs.

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TOP-VIEWED NEW CONSUMER PRODUCTS:

- 1. Blue Apron relaunches with subscription-free shopping and expanded lineup
- 2. Hormel introduces pepperoni in jalapeno, dill pickle flavors
- 3. Butterball revamps rope smoked turkey sausage
- 4. Hatfield debuts Pumpkin Spice Thick Cut Bacon
- 5. Real Good Foods offers frozen breaded chicken cooked with beef tallow



MOST-POPULAR FEATURES:

- 1. 2025 Top 100 Meat and Poultry Processors: Record meat sales fuel growth
- 2. Federal court upholds Kerry plant-based curing agent patent
- 3. Chomps celebrates Missouri manufacturing facility opening
- 4. Standard Meat Co. reflects on 90-year history
- 5. Perdue Premium Meat opens case-ready pork plant



- 1. Episode 207: Philly's Best Steak Co. President details business growth strategy
- 2. Episode 206: Teton Waters Ranch examines evolution of clean-label meat category
- 3. Episode 205: Del Real Foods responds to strong demand for authentic meat flavors
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# STAYS HOT!

Bacon and product innovation go hand in hand. Here’s a sample of some recent new products featuring bacon in late summer 2025:

- [Freddy's introduces Smoky Bacon Cheddar Stack](#)
- [White Castle debuts frozen Cheddar Bacon Cheese Slider](#)
- [JBS to build largest US prepared bacon and sausage plant](#)
- [Hatfield debuts Pumpkin Spice Thick Cut Bacon](#)

Circana retail sales analysis confirms bacon’s enduring popularity with US consumers, finding that both dollar and unit sales for bacon are climbing. In fact, bacon is the top-selling processed meat in the US.

Check out The National Provisioner’s Bacon Report 2025 and learn about the trends influencing growth in the bacon category.

Also, don’t miss our Processor Profile of East Coast-based supplier Baldor Specialty Foods and learn how proteins are taking a starring role in the company’s growth.

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EMAIL FRED WILKINSON

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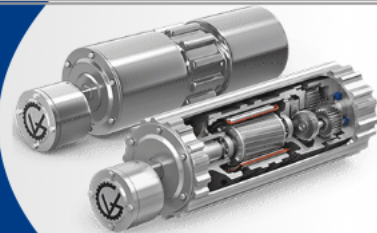


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# ALL EYES ON THICK-CUT BACON

THE BACON CATEGORY EMBRACES PREMIUMIZATION WITH THICK-CUT OFFERINGS AND FLAVOR VARIETIES

BY SAMMY BREDAR  
ASSOCIATE GROUP EDITOR

Dollar and unit sales for bacon are climbing, according to Circana data. In fact, bacon is the top-selling processed meat in the United States. The 2025 Power of Meat study found that processed meat reached \$32 billion in annual sales. Bacon made up most of those sales, reaching \$6.9 billion. This represents a 4.4% increase in dollars sold over the previous year, combined with 1.6% growth in volume.

Anne-Marie Roerink, principal at 210 Analytics, noted that, across bacon items at retail, average price per pound sits at \$6.18, up 2.2% from 2024. The average price per unit is similar, sitting at \$6.42, up 3.4%.

Despite price increases, demand for bacon remains strong. Roerink said that retailers are leveraging consumers' love for bacon through promotions; in fact, an average of 37% of bacon is sold on promotion, whether a BOGO or TPR.



Emma Pierce, Prairie Fresh senior brand manager, sees that consumers continue to view bacon as a household must-have. “While breakfast remains a core occasion, we’re seeing increased interest in using bacon across dayparts, especially in dinner recipes, appetizers, and even desserts; reflecting its versatility,” Pierce said. Prairie Fresh entered the bacon category for the first time in 2025, recognizing the strong growth and potential for the category.

Roerink said that positive sales growth for the bacon category is closely linked to strong levels of product innovation. “Producers have invested in new flavors, including limited-time offers that are driving incremental purchases among consumers,” she said. “For instance, I found a habanero pineapple bacon at an independent grocer in the Northeast, which is a great example of playing into the swicy trend that can be seen across categories.



Hormel Black Label Bacon, oven ready. Photo courtesy of Hormel Foods Corp.



Hormel Black Label Bacon, microwave ready. Photo courtesy of Hormel Foods Corp.

Clemens Food Group Vice President of Marketing and Category Management, Matt Ryan, noted that away-from-home eating occasions are also driving bacon demand, especially as more foodservice locations introduce breakfast offerings.

At home, consumers are seeking to recreate high-quality meals from restaurants; this is leading the bacon category to pursue more premiumization, thick-cut offerings and flavor varieties, Ryan said.

Many home cooks are looks for protein-forward food products, which is contributing to strong interest in the bacon category. Baker noted that consumers are particularly seeking out thick-cut and ready-to-eat formats, driven by demand for premium mouthfeel and convenience. “Thick-cut bacon and fully-cooked or microwave-ready formats are growing faster than traditional slices,” Baker said.



16-ounce Thick Cut Hickory Bacon, Prairie Fresh. Courtesy of Prairie Fresh.



Hatfield Pumpkin Spice Bacon. Courtesy of Clemens Food Group

All eyes are on thick-cut bacon, as it takes over at retail and foodservice. Roerink noted, “Retailers with full-service counters are now often including a variety of flavors as well as thick-cut bacon in their cases.”

Circana data reinforces this trend, showing that extra-thick and steak-cut bacon sales are up 13% compared with the prior year. Coleman All Natural Meats is responding to strong interest in thick-cut bacon with two new innovations: Hickory Smoked Uncured Bacon and Applewood Smoked Uncured Bacon. “Crafted from Heritage Duroc pork which is known for its superior marbling and rich flavor, this bacon is juicy, tender, and full of flavor,” said Patricia W. Bridges, sr. director of marketing and communications for Coleman All Natural Meats.

Convenience continues to influence bacon purchases. Aly Sill, brand manager for Hormel Foods, noted that today’s shoppers want fuss-free, no-mess solutions designed for busy lifestyles. Convenience is likely to influence both retail and foodservice bacon product innovation.

“Solutions that can help both restaurant operators and consumers at home to minimize mess and cook time will continue to grow,” Ryan said.

Claims priorities are shifting for the bacon category; Alicia Baker, senior director of marketing for North Country Smokehouse, said that within the last year, animal-welfare claims entered the top three most important claims for consumers. Baker noted that this is the first time that animal welfare has achieved this level of ranking in package priority. “This reflects heightened consumer concern around ethics and transparency, especially in meat products,” she said.

The clean-label protein movement is influencing bacon innovation, leading many producers to explore sodium reduction methods. “Clean-label demand is shaping both retail products and bacon flavors - natural extraction methods, fewer additives, and transparency in sourcing are now baseline consumer expectations in many premium segments,” Baker said.

Interest in clean-label meat products is especially driving growth for the uncured bacon category. “Uncured bacon is something that consumers view as less processed. It remains small – about 2% of the retail bacon category, but is growing,” Ryan said.

While some consumers are interested in clean-label bacon purchases, flavor and overall product experience make the purchase, Pierce said. “In fact, this year to date, we haven’t received any inquiries about the ingredients used to make bacon, and only a few asking about sodium, sugar or carbs.”



North Country Smokehouse tray of bacon. Courtesy of North Country Smokehouse.

Circana data shows flavored or seasoned bacon stands out at retail—growth is outpacing the overall category at about 10% year-over-year. Baker is seeing strong growth for flavor varieties including pepper bacon, hot honey, spicy-maple, brown sugar and similar flavors. “Such sweet savory pairings are driving product differentiation,” she said.

Bridges is seeing continued interest in classic smoky flavors--especially hickory, applewood, cherrywood and mesquite—as well as maple, bourbon and smoke-rubbed profiles. She is seeing rising demand for sweet and spicy flavor combinations, as well as global and international flavors. Bridges noted that premium and heritage-breed artisanal bacon is also on the rise.

Sill sees strong consumer interest in marinades and dry rubs, as well as co-branded partnerships that bring excitement to the bacon category.

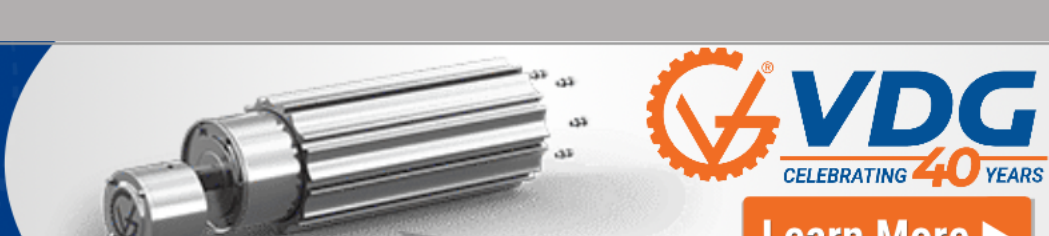
Erinn Aulfinger, brand manager for Hormel Foods, noted that the bacon aisle is changing—through unique formats, bold flavors and a honed industry focus on versatility, convenience, premiumization and purpose. She sees the greatest opportunity for the bacon category in convenient, ready-to-use formats.

Ryan sees a strong future for the bacon category. Consumers and restaurants alike are getting creative with bacon applications, bringing it into new occasions and mealtimes. “From center of plate to artisanal sandwiches to cocktail garnish, the usage for bacon is expanding and consumers are ready for more new news,” Ryan said.

Pierce sees immense potential for bacon companies to connect with their customers via digital platforms, recipe content and social media engagement, showcasing product versatility and craveability.

Opening image credit: Prairie Fresh

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# BALDOR SPECIALTY FOODS

## MAKES MOVES TO BECOME A FULL-LINE SUPPLIER

At Golden Meat Co., Baldor's dedicated meat division, every piece is cut with precision and pride, from the first cut to the last.

### BALDOR SPECIALTY FOODS VERTICALLY INTEGRATES ITS MEAT PROCESSING OPERATIONS WITH THE ACQUISITION OF GOLDEN PACKING CO.

BY SAMMY BREDAR  
ASSOCIATE GROUP EDITOR

Distributor Baldor Specialty Foods has created a strong name for itself in the specialty food industry, and now the company is going further by vertically integrating its meat processing operations. By acquiring meat company Golden Packing in April 2025, Baldor Specialty Foods is making moves to strengthen its supply chain and set itself up for future success.

To further explore Baldor's rapid growth efforts and overall business strategy, *The National Provisioner* sat down with Mark Pastore, Baldor Specialty Foods vice president of business development.

Baldor was founded as a produce company, but it is quickly becoming much more. Although produce is still the main market for Baldor Specialty Foods, meat and specialty goods, as well as dairy, are gaining strong traction in the company.

The Golden Packing acquisition was a very intentional move by Baldor, as it allows the company to add on further processing capabilities. "We just needed the ability to further process," Pastore said. "We needed the ability to really be able to bring it one step further for the customer and the end user."



One of the largest distributors of premium food in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic, Baldor Specialty Foods delivers from Maine to Virginia, with four state-of-the-art warehouses in Boston, D.C., Philadelphia, and NYC.

The acquisition positions Baldor to be a full-line supplier with high-quality, specialized offerings that meet customer needs, especially as the company aims to offer more comprehensive meat options, including portioned steaks, custom burgers and sausages.

Pastore noted that the company is focusing on consolidation, convenience and service excellence to meet evolving industry demands and customer needs.

End users are especially focused on consolidation, which means fewer suppliers. Baldor is jumping on this trend early, dividing its operations into specialist categories. He emphasized that the current market and consumer focus on value is contributing to supplier consolidation. Part of this value equation is convenience; being able to get multiple products, ingredients and materials from a single source is vital in today's value proposition.

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"They want fewer trucks. They want less deliveries, less invoices. It's better for the environment. It's less of a carbon footprint," Pastore said.

With continued labor costs and concerns, Baldor is working to meet customers where they're at; labor-saving solutions are in high demand, and that is exactly what Baldor is catering to.

Despite being a large company, Baldor is still privately owned. Pastore said that, despite the company's large size, Baldor works to "think small" every day, prioritizing each segment of its operations. As part of its company culture, Baldor hones a sharp focus on daily improvement and customer engagement.

Pastore said that daily morning meetings offer a home base for the company to ask: What could we do better tomorrow? Baldor Specialty Foods Owner and CEO TJ Murphy is greatly involved in day-to-day operations, ensuring customers are thoroughly satisfied with their relationship with Baldor.



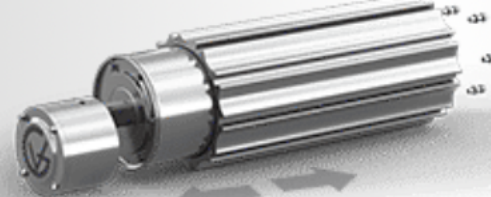
At Golden Meat Co., Baldor's dedicated meat division, every piece is cut with precision and pride, from the first cut to the last.

Customer satisfaction is such a priority to Baldor that the company utilizes a customer score level each day, evaluating each delivery. In these self-evaluations, Baldor asks: "Was the customer shorted? Did the customer get what they want? Was the pricing right?"

Though the company is growing, they are keenly focused on providing consistency and quality. As they move forward, they continue to prioritize added convenience for their customers, differentiating Baldor Specialty Foods from other suppliers. Baldor delivers to most restaurants six or seven days a week, a key differentiator in the marketplace.

All photos courtesy of Baldor Specialty Foods

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## ROASTS' FLEXIBILITY FOR FLAVOR PARINGS AND PORTIONING APPEAL FOR COST-CONSCIOUS SHOPPERS.

BY FRED WILKINSON

Roasts and their traditional sides such as mashed potatoes and gravy are defining comfort foods for millions of Americans. Finding new ways to add value to this seasonal favorite is bringing new life to the category.

"Roast season is built on tradition, and that's exactly where the opportunity is," said Ray Rastelli Jr., president of Rastelli Foods Group. "We're leaning into the classic profiles — garlic herb, rosemary, onion, black pepper — because that's what consumers crave this time of year. These flavors bring people back to the table. What's changed is how we're delivering them: pre-seasoned, ready-to-cook roasts that take the guesswork out for shoppers. It's all about making it easy to recreate those familiar holiday meals without sacrificing flavor or consistency."

Ryan Barnett, market insights manager at Prairie Fresh, said consumers are increasingly drawn to global flavors, exploring new cuisines and dishes they learn about through social media and trending recipes.'

"We expect this to carry into roast season, as families put their own spin on classic preparations or try something entirely new based on the flavors they're seeing online," Barnett said.

He said that while many consumers still associate roasts with traditional flavors, the growing interest in global cuisine presents an opportunity to re-imagine the seasonal staple.

"Pork roasts are well suited for this shift, as they are known for their versatility and ability to absorb and sustain flavor," he said. "This makes them a natural fit for a wide range of dishes and cultural flavor profiles."



Carnitas. Photos courtesy of XX.

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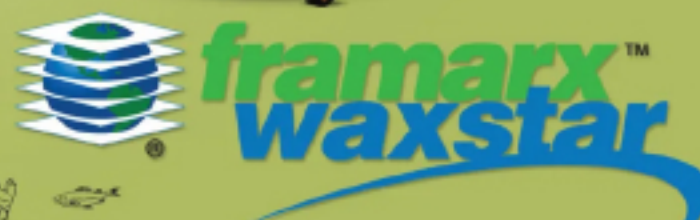
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## ROASTS' VALUE PROPOSITION

For price conscious consumers, roasts offer the possibility of enjoying the product for dining occasions beyond the initial meal.

"Roasts stretch — plain and simple," Rastelli said. "One cut can feed a family, cover multiple meals, or anchor a special occasion. They're portion-flexible too — slice it thin for small plates or carve it thick for hearty appetites. And when you talk slow cookers or braising methods, you can turn a value cut like a chuck roast into something that eats like prime rib. That's where we can win: delivering comfort, flavor, and cost-efficiency in one package."

Barnett said larger cuts also mean more servings, making them ideal for leftovers that can be repurposed into a variety of meals throughout the week.

"For those cooking solo or looking for smaller portions, Prairie Fresh also offers smaller sized roasts – perfect for minimizing waste," he said.



Photo credit: Prairie Fresh



Photo credit: Prairie Fresh

## CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

The rise of smartphone usage, social media recipes and QR codes offering tips and meal ideas is helping guide shoppers through the entire mealtime process, and consumers are actively looking for inspiration and direction.

"Placing complementary products together removes much of the guesswork and makes meal planning easier, Barnett said, adding that market research reveals common basket pairings when shoppers purchase a roast include also buy packaged bread (24.2%), and fresh produce items such as potatoes (17.9%), onions (16.4%) and tomatoes (15.3%). Circana market research shows that 10.8% of households that purchase a roast also buy additional seasonings during the same grocery trip.

"Creating meal kits or dedicated display areas during peak roast-purchasing times that group these items together could unlock strong cross-merchandising opportunities and drive additional sales within the category," Barnett said.

Rastelli Foods Group is bundling seasoned roasts with flavored butters, rubs\ and even sous-vide-ready packaging, Rastelli said. "One area we're seeing traction is 'cook-in-a-bag' kits. You pair the roast with a sous-vide pouch, a spice blend, maybe even a sauce, and suddenly you've got a full meal solution."

Opening video credit: Getty Images / simonkr / Getty Images Plus

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# PACK EXPO LAS VEGAS 2025

## WORKSHOPS TARGET FOOD INDUSTRY

FROM DRAINS TO AI, EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS PROVIDE MEAT AND POULTRY PROFESSIONALS  
A WIDE-RANGING VIEW OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND BEST PRACTICES.

BY FRED WILKINSON  
CHIEF EDITOR

Proper packaging plays a crucial role in determining whether consumers buy a product. According to Euromonitor International, these trends are shaping packaging for protein products:

- The US packaging industry continues to see developments focused on sustainable materials, waste reduction and convenience.
- In processed meat and seafood, flexible plastic continues to account for the greatest packaging unit volumes. This is because flexible plastic packaging provides a barrier against oxygen, moisture, and light, which helps to preserve the quality and freshness of products. It helps prevent spoilage, maintain flavor, and extend the shelf life of these products. In addition, it is lightweight, portable, and easy to handle, which allows it to fit in storage spaces such as refrigerators or freezers and makes it easy to transport. Flexible packaging is also usually transparent, and is thus preferred by consumers, as they get to see the contents of the package.
- For frozen meat, plastic pouches continue to gain packaging unit volume share from the dominant pack types in the category – flexible plastic and folding cartons. Plastic pouches offer flexibility, which makes for more convenient storage and space efficiency, leading to their increased use for larger pack sizes.
- Plastic pouches are also gaining share in shelf-stable meat, in place of metal food cans.
- Aluminum/plastic pouches, the second most widely used pack type in chilled processed seafood, continues gaining share from flexible plastic.
- The number of smaller pack sizes is expected to increase their share in processed meat and seafood packaging, especially for individuals or smaller households.

### PACK EXPO Las Vegas 2025

For meat and poultry industry professionals attending Pack Expo Las Vegas Sept. 29 to Oct. 1, 2025, there are a number of protein-packaging relevant educational workshops to consider:

#### Minimize Your Risk with NSF-Certified Safe Food Packaging

Monday, Sept. 29

9:30 a.m. to 10 a.m.

Industry Speaks Stage (W-4324)

This session reveals consumer insights and shows how NSF certification to new protocol NSF P525 can help reduce risk, ensure regulatory compliance and validate safety claims by addressing specific chemicals and heavy metals.

#### Food Safe Facility Drainage Design

Monday, Sept. 29

10 a.m. to 10 a.m.

Processing Innovation Stage (N-9100)

This session will focus on:

- the history and fundamentals of food-safe drainage layouts and design
- different types of floor drains and their essential specification criteria
- how to choose the right drainage features for the food and beverage facility
- implementing effective cleaning protocols for maintaining a hygienic environment

#### Advancing Sustainability Through Innovative Food & Beverage Factory Solutions

Monday, Sept. 29

11 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Processing Innovation Stage (N-9100)

This session will explore industry-leading technologies that significantly reduce energy consumption, waste and water usage. Attendees will gain insight into how these solutions not only meet stringent regulatory requirements but also drive operational efficiencies and cost savings.

#### Before You Buy: What Equipment Specs Really Matter?

Monday, Sept. 29

2:30 p.m.. to 3 p.m.

Industry Speaks Stage (W-4324)

This session reveals what to prioritize in your specifications before you commit to major capital investments. See live demonstrations of why certain specification details deliver measurable ROI while others are just marketing fluff. Learn the critical questions that separate equipment that actually performs from equipment that just looks good in brochures.

#### AI Decoded: What You Really Need to Know to Find the Right Solution for Your Business

Monday, Sept. 29

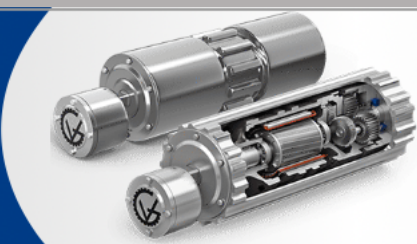
3 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Processing Innovation Stage (N-9100)

This session will explore how AI capabilities — including machine learning and deep learning — are being embedded into sorting technologies to meet today’s toughest challenges. Attendees will gain insights into how AI-powered platforms are enabling processors to make smarter, data-driven decisions.

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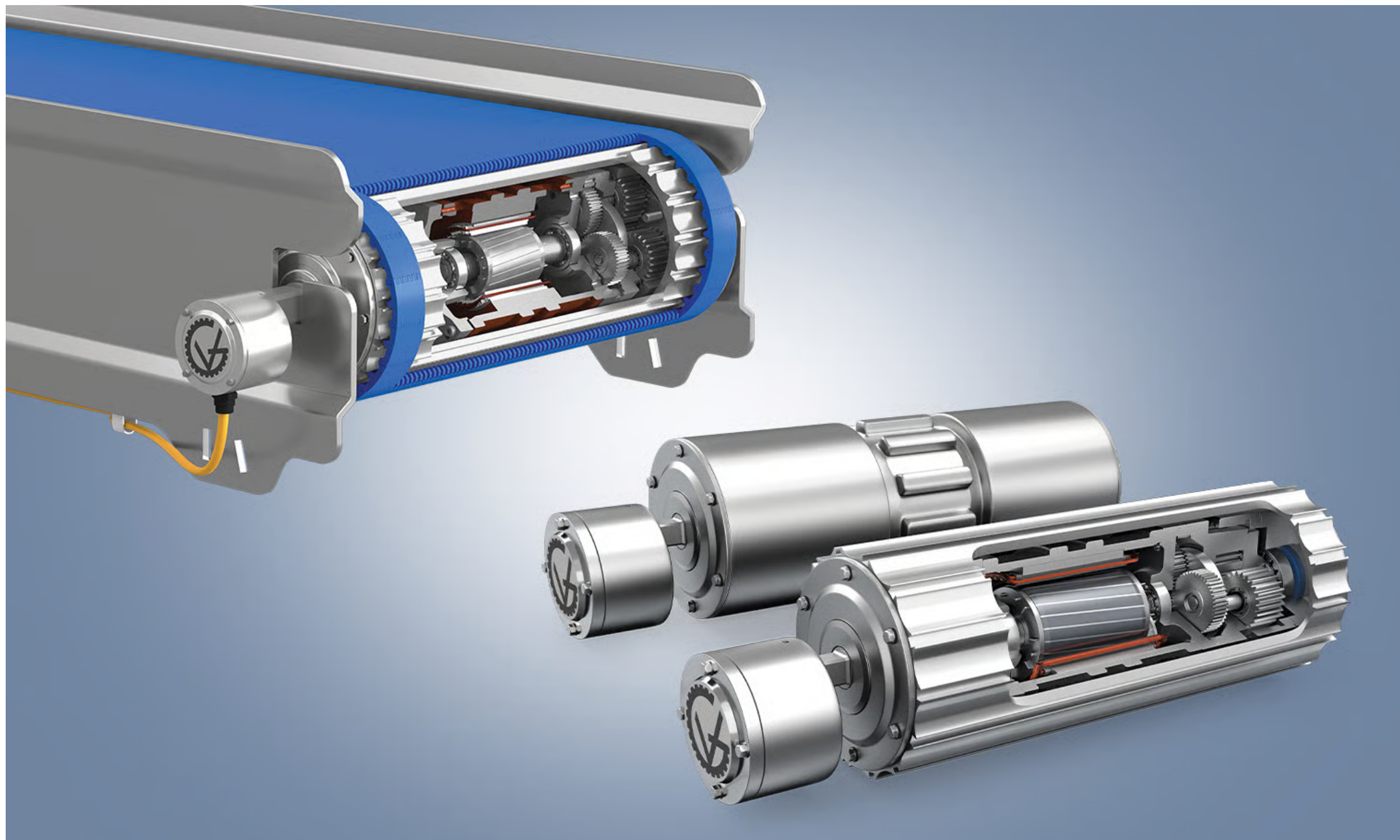
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# WHEN A RECALL BECOMES A CLASS ACTION – *The New Litigation Risk For Processors*



WIDESPREAD MEDIA COVERAGE AND VIRAL SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS CAN AMPLIFY THE VISIBILITY OF A RECALL, PUTTING IT ON THE RADAR OF CLASS ACTION LITIGATORS.

BY SHAWN K. STEVENS  
FOOD INDUSTRY COUNSEL LLC

In the meat and poultry sector, recalls have always been part of doing business. Whether triggered by pathogen contamination, misbranding or undeclared allergens, companies are well-practiced at notifying regulators, pulling affected product, and reassuring customers. In recent years, however, another layer of risk has emerged: the class action lawsuit that follows the recall announcement.

A year ago, we wrote about the specter of class action food safety lawsuits on the horizon. In the year that followed, there have been numerous additional class action lawsuits asserted against food companies recalling products. While, historically, most post-recall litigation involved personal injury claims tied to confirmed illnesses, plaintiffs’ firms are now increasingly filing *no injury* class actions, in which the named plaintiffs allege economic harm – such as overpayment for an “unsafe” product – without ever becoming ill. These cases often hinge on the argument that, by purchasing a recalled product, consumers were deprived of the full value they expected. The most common legal theories are breach of express and implied warranties, violations of state consumer protection statutes and misrepresentation.

Federal courts have taken varying approaches to these lawsuits. Some judges dismiss them early, finding that plaintiffs lack standing when they cannot show actual injury or that the product was unusable. Others allow claims to proceed past the motion-to-dismiss stage, especially when plaintiffs allege that they discarded a purchased product due to safety concerns. While our firm has had success seeing a number of class actions dismissed, even when there is a dismissal, the legal fees, management distraction, and reputational harm can be substantial.

Certain factors make a class action more likely. Recalls involving high-profile pathogens like *Listeria monocytogenes*, *E. coli* O157:H7, or *Salmonella* tend to draw greater scrutiny, particularly when they involve large distribution footprints or nationally recognized brands. Widespread media coverage and viral social media posts can amplify the visibility of a recall, and put it on the radar of class action firms that actively monitor USDA and FDA recall postings.

For processors, minimizing exposure requires careful preparation and disciplined execution. Recall notices should be precise and factual, avoiding sweeping language that could be construed as evidence of negligence or systemic safety failures. Documentation of preventive measures and food safety program diligence should be kept in order and readily accessible. Involving legal counsel early in the process can help ensure that press releases, customer letters, and public statements strike the right balance between transparency and risk management. It is also important that recall team members understand that even well-intentioned statements can have unintended legal consequences.

Given the ease of filing class action lawsuits, and the publicity that often surrounds a recall, this trend is unlikely to fade. In fact, the coming year may see more “copycat” filings in multiple jurisdictions, where the same recall prompts suits in several states. The new and confirmed reality for processors is that a recall today is no longer just a food safety and regulatory event – rather, it is also a potential litigation trigger. Those who prepare for that reality in the near-term, will be in the best position to limit both the commercial and legal fallout when the next recall occurs.

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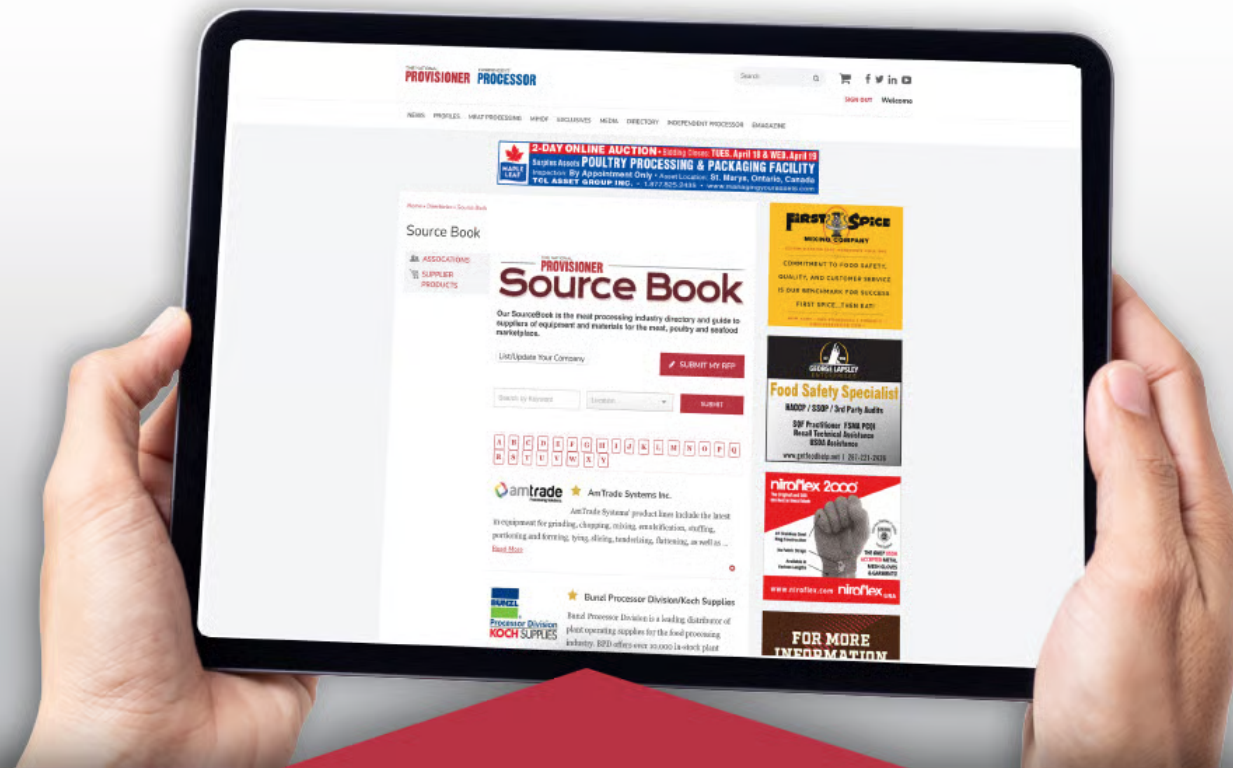
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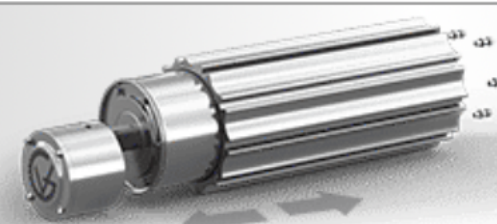
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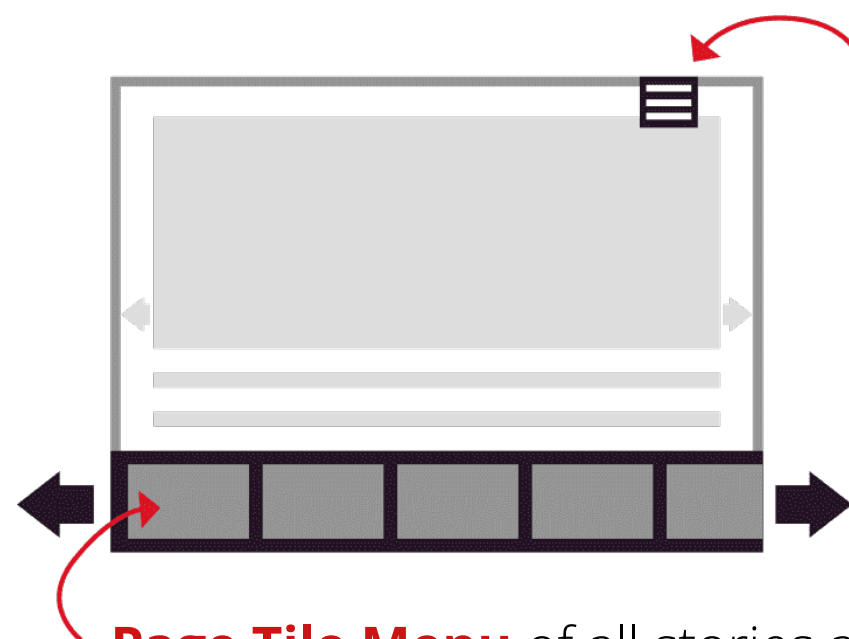


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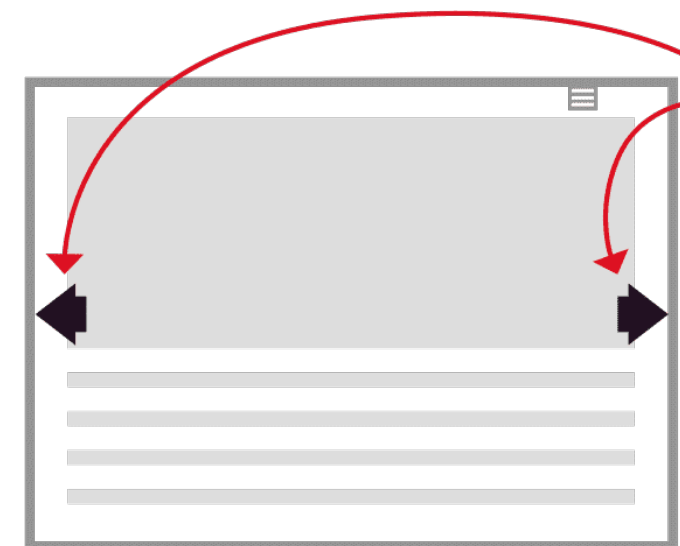


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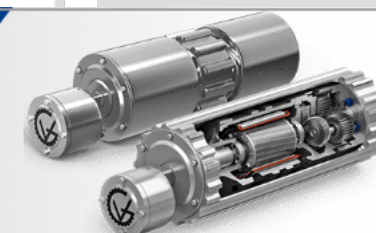
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