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**SEAFOOD  
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## TOP-VIEWED NEW CONSUMER PRODUCTS:

1. Applebee's introduces O-M-Cheese Burger
2. Protein Pockets debut at Subway
3. Burger King debuts Ultimate Steakhouse Whopper
4. Freddy's introduces smashburger taco
5. Protein-zza debuts at Blaze Pizza in response to GLP-1 needs



## MOST-POPULAR FEATURES:

1. New USDA 'Product of USA' guidance going into effect in 2026
2. 2025 Top 100 Meat and Poultry Processors: Record meat sales fuel
3. Rastelli Foods Group marks 50th anniversary
4. Affordability and versatility power poultry sales
5. The Meat Locker aims to optimize how processors search for information and solve problems in real time



1. Episode 219: AI-automation at meat plants with Creekstone Farms COO Andrew Baltz and Marble CEO Chafik Berber
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# SEAFOOD PRICES TRENDING UP OVERALL



SEAFOOD CONSUMERS TEND TO SPEND MORE OVERALL AT THE GROCERY STORE AND PUT MORE EXPENSIVE ITEMS IN THEIR SHOPPING BASKETS.

BY FRED WILKINSON  
CHIEF EDITOR

**HEADING INTO 2026**, prices for finfish and shellfish have been trending higher, averaging more than \$10 a pound in December 2025, according to Circana retail sales data analysis. Price inflation for fresh, frozen and shelf-stable seafood picked up in the second half of 2025 after holding mostly throughout 2024 and the first half of the year.

The seafood market heads into 2026 with strong performance for shelf-stable seafood, with increases in dollars, units and pounds. Circana research finds frozen seafood dollar sales up, while volume is down year-over-year. Fresh seafood sales totaled \$744 million in December 2025, indicating declines in both dollars and pounds sold. In the full-year view, dollar sales did gain year-over-year, though pounds fell 0.5% behind 2024.

Circana data suggest finfish grew in dollars and pounds sold throughout 2025, while shellfish sales fell in December and in the full-year view. Shellfish pound sales have trended down starting in early 2024, posting average declines of eight to 10 percentage points year-over-year quarterly through 2025.

	December 2025			2025		
	Average price per pound	Change vs. YA	Change vs. 2YA	Average price per pound	Change vs. YA	Change vs. 2YA
Total fresh seafood	\$10.25	+1.8%	+4.9%	\$9.78	+2.2%	+1.9%
Fresh finfish	\$10.72	+3.3%	+2.1%	\$10.48	+0.4%	-0.5%
Fresh shellfish	\$10.09	+0.0%	+8.3%	\$9.15	+5.6%	+5.8%
Total frozen seafood	\$8.28	+8.4%	+6.5%	\$7.48	+3.0%	-0.9%
Shelf-stable seafood	\$5.82	+8.4%	+5.5%	\$5.18	+1.2%	+0.0%

Source: Circana, Integrated Fresh, Total US, MULO

Sales data analysis shows salmon tops sales in the fresh/refrigerated seafood category, with salmon posting \$4.1 billion in sales for 2025 (representing 47.4% of all fresh/refrigerated seafood sales in December 2025). Salmon produced gains in dollar sales (up 5.8%) and pounds sold (up 2.4%).

Although Circana found that shrimp sales outpaced crab overall in 2025, in December crab sales exceeded shrimp sales (\$112 million versus \$80 million). Crab sales have been down all year, while shrimp sales were strong early in 2025 but struggled in the second half of the year.

## SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD

Seafood has long benefited from the “healthy halo” effect thanks to being a lower fat protein as well as a source for healthful omega-3 fatty acids.

Consumers’ embrace of clean-label “smart protein” options positions wild-caught and responsibly harvested seafood to meet these consumer needs.

Wild Alaska seafood outperformed the total seafood category in 2024-25, posting 5.4% volume growth vs. 0.5% for the total seafood market overall, according to the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute.

ASMI is a kind of a public-private partnership between the state of Alaska and the Alaska seafood industry (a \$6 billion industry), serving as the official marketing organization for Alaska seafood and the Alaska Seafood brand through contributing financial and promotional support for Alaska seafood domestically and around the globe.

According to ASMI, wild Alaska-sourced seafood drives larger retail grocery purchases, with buyers of refrigerated Alaska seafood averaging a spend of \$110 per trip (vs. \$97 for the category average).

US Food and Drug Administration guidance updates to its “[healthy](#)” claim rule, allowing many seafoods (including higher-fat fish like salmon) without added ingredients to automatically qualify due to their nutrient profiles aligns with the recent [dietary guidelines update](#) encouraging more protein consumption. The label-claim change became effective in early 2025, with a full compliance date in February 2028.

ASMI Communications Director Greg Smith said consumer trends for clean nutrition, sustainability and transparency in their seafood purchases are shaping the seafood marketplace – and also play to Alaska seafood’s strength.

“Consumers want protein that’s clean, trustworthy and climate conscious, and Alaska seafood, which is always wild, checks these boxes,” Smith said. “We have sustainably managed fisheries in our state constitution.”

Alaska has a law that bans the farming of finfish in the state, he said.

“Sustainability is the entire operation in Alaska,” said John Burrows, ASMI seafood technical director. “It’s a legal foundation, and it’s a major advantage that we have for both buyers and consumers. Sustainability is mandated by law. It’s written specifically and explicitly into our state constitution, and that’s a driver of quite a few of the state’s actions as far as natural resources and especially for fisheries.”

Key Alaska seafood species include king crab, king salmon, halibut and sablefish.

“We know people are prioritizing health and ease,” Smith said. “There’s a lot of great diversity and innovation within the Alaska seafood industry to make sure that we can deliver what consumers want. We have a broad number of species that can really hit at all price points. Seafood offers consumers lean, nutrient-dense protein and omega-3s in a variety of product forms,” Smith said, including frozen fillets, or canned or other value-added products like little fish nuggets.”

Smith said frequent purchasers of seafood and wild-caught seafood tend to spend more overall and put more expensive items in their shopping baskets.

“We see a lot of health and wellness driven shoppers,” he said, adding that Alaska seafood also appeals to consumers’ environmental and social values.

Opening photo credit: Getty Images: rудисилл



# LAND O' FROST LANSING PLANT: HIGH-VOLUME DELI PRODUCTION MEETS FLEXIBLE AUTOMATION

LAND O' FROST'S LANSING, ILL., PLANT COMBINES AUTOMATION AND SKILLED OPERATORS TO DELIVER HIGH-VOLUME, FLEXIBLE PRODUCTION.

BY SAMMY BREDAR  
ASSOCIATE GROUP EDITOR

LANSING, ILL. — LAND O'FROST'S LANSING, ILL., facility is one of the company's most versatile and high-volume plants, producing roughly 128,000 pounds of deli meats and hot dogs each day. Designed for rapid SKU changeovers and tight end-of-line footprints, the facility balances throughput with operational flexibility, allowing teams to respond quickly to customer needs while testing new technologies.

The Lansing plant recently became the first in Land O'Frost's network to integrate multiple gantry-style palletizing robots in partnership with Formic. The automated systems handle up to 12 picks per minute, reducing manual strain on employees and maintaining consistency across every pallet.



"Lansing is one of our highest-volume and most versatile facilities," said Alfred Williams, vice president of manufacturing at Land O'Frost. "It also serves as a proving ground for new technology within Land O'Frost."

The robotics complement the facility's high-paced production lines without replacing human expertise. Operators manage the advanced systems, switching pallet patterns with the touch of a button, which streamlines changeovers and allows for faster turnaround on new SKUs. Williams noted that the technology frees up engineering time for additional improvement projects, highlighting how automation supports both efficiency and innovation.



Automated Formic equipment stacks packaged products at Land O'Frost's Lansing, Illinois, facility, where food safety protocols are integrated throughout the production process.

Product development is another key function at Lansing. The plant works closely with Land O'Frost's R&D, quality, and commercial teams to pilot new products and adjust packaging or case configurations. Production lines are designed to accommodate frequent SKU shifts, and the automated palletizing systems enhance this agility. Williams explained that the team's approach accelerates product development and ensures solutions are informed by operational knowledge.

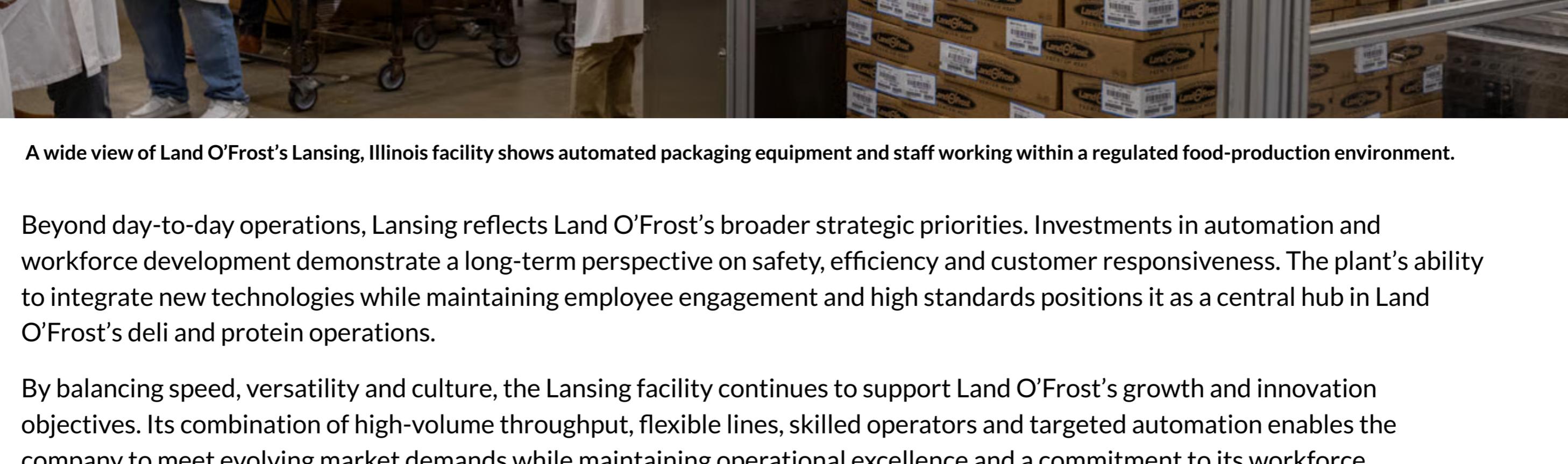
Workforce expertise and culture are central to Lansing's success. Many employees have been with Land O'Frost for years, bringing institutional knowledge that keeps operations running efficiently. Williams said, "Lansing exemplifies the heart of Land O'Frost's companywide 'One Team' value, with experienced operators, technicians, and continuous improvement leaders who take pride in their craft and embrace new technology."



Team members gather inside Land O'Frost's Lansing, Illinois, plant, where food safety standards guide daily operations.

When robotics were introduced, the workforce adapted quickly, seeing the systems as an opportunity to expand skills and improve safety. Operators who once stacked boxes manually now oversee automated lines, performing higher-value tasks that reduce physical strain. Williams noted, "By automating repetitive tasks, employees can focus on higher-value work, fostering growth, collaboration, and continuous improvement while reducing physical strain."

The Lansing facility also serves as a model for integrating technology without disrupting culture. Employees and supervisors collaborate daily to refine processes, test new formats and ensure products meet customer expectations. This combination of experienced staff, advanced equipment and continuous improvement creates a flexible operation capable of supporting diverse product portfolios.



Land O'Frost team members review operations on the production floor at the company's Lansing facility, following established food safety and quality procedures.

Automation and workforce expertise converge to give the Lansing plant a competitive edge. The facility can pilot programs, adjust quickly to customer requests and maintain consistent quality across high-volume production. By designing lines for both speed and adaptability, Land O'Frost ensures the plant can handle both everyday throughput and the demands of innovation.

Williams said the facility's success comes from combining technology with a people-first approach. "Operators who once manually stack boxes are now overseeing advanced robotic systems, showcasing the facility's dedication to streamlining operations and creating a more efficient, employee-friendly environment."

Photos courtesy of Land O'Frost



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## MEAT AND POULTRY PROCESSORS LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY AND STRATEGIC DESIGN

TO EXPLORE CURRENT INNOVATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES SUPPORTING MEAT AND POULTRY PRODUCTION EFFICIENCY, THE NATIONAL PROVISIONER SPOKE WITH BURNS & MCDONNELL, JBT MAREL, JLS AUTOMATION AND CARGILL.

BY SAMMY BREDAR  
ASSOCIATE GROUP EDITOR

MEAT AND POULTRY PROCESSING FACILITIES FACE A COMPLEX SET OF OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY CHALLENGES, including labor availability, energy use and maintaining food safety while meeting increasing production demands. To explore current innovations and best practices supporting meat and poultry production efficiency, *The National Provisioner* spoke with Burns & McDonnell, JBT Marel, JLS Automation and Cargill.

According to Burns & McDonnell's Brian Chrisman, senior business development manager, Niyush Sharma, project manager, and Dan Blake, EPC project manager, labor shortages have fundamentally changed how plants operate, prompting investments in automation, ergonomic improvements and process optimization to maintain throughput with smaller teams. Aging infrastructure and legacy equipment further complicate operations, creating bottlenecks that increase energy consumption and reduce overall efficiency.

Facilities must also reconcile efficiency with flexibility. Consumer demand for greater product variety, shorter production runs and faster changeovers challenges plants originally designed for high-volume, single-product operations. Burns & McDonnell noted that strategic retrofits, such as flexible processing lines, modern refrigeration and smart building controls, are increasingly essential for maintaining operational reliability while adapting to evolving production schedules.

Balancing throughput, energy consumption and product quality is a primary consideration during facility upgrades or redesigns. Burns & McDonnell explained that the approach begins with identifying system constraints and optimizing overall process flow, rather than focusing specifically on individual equipment. Aligning line speeds, buffer strategies and process capacities ensures stable production at the desired throughput. Energy efficiency is addressed through right-sized refrigeration, heat recovery and load-matched utilities, while product quality is maintained by minimizing handling, reducing dwell time and integrating automation where variability has the greatest impact.

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Several emerging technologies and process innovations are expected to drive efficiency gains in the next few years. Advanced robotics and automation are increasingly applied to labor-intensive tasks such as deboning and portioning, improving consistency while addressing workforce constraints. Real-time data platforms and analytics provide operators with insight into throughput, yield and equipment performance, enabling predictive maintenance and faster operational adjustments. Burns & McDonnell highlighted that modular and scalable processing lines, along with hygienic and easily cleanable equipment, are reducing downtime and shortening sanitation cycles. Energy-focused technologies, including variable-speed drives, intelligent refrigeration and heat recovery systems, further enhance operational efficiency and lower costs.

Plant size, layout and product type also shape efficiency strategies. High-volume commodity facilities benefit from standardized layouts, higher automation levels and balanced line capacities to support continuous production.

Smaller or more flexible plants producing value-added products prioritize modular layouts, quick changeovers, and scalable utilities to manage variability in product mix and demand. Legacy facilities often require targeted upgrades, such as improved buffering or selective automation, to unlock capacity without full rebuilds. Burns & McDonnell staff noted that efficiency strategies must align with throughput targets, product complexity, and physical constraints to achieve sustainable long-term improvements.

Automation has become a central tool for improving throughput without compromising quality. Michael Newcome, vice president of sales at JLS Automation, said processors increasingly view robotics as a precision tool, rather than just a speed multiplier. He noted that modern systems in portioning, weighing and handling provide consistent, repeatable decision-making that is difficult to maintain manually at scale. By integrating multiple process steps, upstream and downstream operations are synchronized, reducing handoffs and rework while improving consistency and yield.

Successful automation retrofits depend on understanding existing operations. Newcome explained that legacy facilities often present constraints around space, utilities and sanitation. Incremental upgrades allow operators to validate performance, build confidence and minimize disruption. "Retrofits are most successful when automation is designed to work with existing processes – rather than forcing the plant to adapt to a rigid system – and when maintainability and cleanability are addressed upfront, not as afterthoughts," Newcome said.

Workforce skills are evolving alongside automation adoption. Operators are shifting from manual tasks to system oversight, troubleshooting, and optimization. Newcome emphasized that cross-training between operations, maintenance and engineering teams is increasingly common, with training focused on electrical, mechanical and controls fundamentals. Early investment in training, particularly during commissioning, enables faster adoption, higher uptime and stronger long-term returns from automation.

Dan Wolff, manager of sales engineering at JBT Marel's A&B Process Systems, highlighted additional efficiency considerations, particularly around food safety. "Easy-to-clean technology is becoming increasingly important as efficient operations remain a priority," he said.

Wolff noted that clean-in-place systems and equipment designed for rapid sanitation help minimize downtime while maintaining regulatory compliance. Workforce development is similarly critical, as facilities need employees capable of operating and maintaining increasingly automated systems. Wolff added that automation presents an opportunity to recruit younger workers familiar with advanced technology while providing safer, less physically demanding environments for an aging workforce.

Data-driven decision-making is transforming plant floor operations. Real-time monitoring allows processors to respond immediately to issues rather than waiting for end-of-shift or next-day reporting. Leon Fletcher, vice president of operations at Cargill, described CarVe, the company's AI-powered computer vision system. "Until now, processors didn't have an accurate, real-time way to see how much good meat might still be left on the bone. CarVe helps us to capture more red meat, identifying edible portions that traditional processing might miss."

The AI-powered system provides instant visual feedback at the workstation, allowing employees to adjust knife motion and cutting technique on the spot. Fletcher said early trials show yield improvements of up to 0.5%, translating to millions of pounds of additional beef at scale. Beyond yield, the system functions as a training and development tool, enhancing product consistency, reducing rework, and improving throughput and safety. The technology emphasizes teamwork, coaching and real-time insight, complementing operator expertise rather than replacing it.

Processors adopting data-driven systems must measure success beyond traditional KPIs. Metrics such as throughput relative to design capacity, yield, labor efficiency, energy use and sanitation downtime provide a comprehensive view of operational efficiency. Fletcher noted that real-time data also supports sustainability goals, allowing facilities to monitor water, energy and other resource usage, set benchmarks and track improvements over time.

Across the industry, trends point toward increased flexibility, automation and data integration. Systems that handle more SKUs, faster changeovers and varying product inputs are in demand, supported by AI, robotics and connected analytics. Operators are empowered to make informed decisions in real time, while plants can maximize throughput, reduce waste and maintain product quality. Combining these tools with strategic workforce training ensures that efficiency gains are sustainable and aligned with long-term operational goals.

The operational efficiency landscape in meat and poultry processing is evolving rapidly. Facilities that integrate automation, energy-efficient systems, real-time data and skilled operators are positioned to maintain throughput, enhance product quality and optimize resource use. While challenges such as labor shortages, legacy infrastructure and evolving consumer demands persist, processors leveraging technology and strategic design are building resilient, high-performing operations for the future.

Opening photo credit: Cargill



# 2025 RECALLS

## THE YEAR IN REVIEW

COMPARING FOOD PRODUCT RECALLS IN 2025 AND 2024 SHOWS THE INDUSTRY MADE PROGRESS IN SOME LONG-STANDING PROBLEM AREAS, BUT ALSO FURTHER ROOM TO IMPROVE.

BY SHAWN K. STEVENS  
FOOD INDUSTRY COUNSEL LLC

A CLOSE COMPARISON OF FOOD PRODUCT RECALLS IN 2025 AND 2024 shows a food industry that made progress in some long-standing problem areas, only to stumble in a few new and uncomfortable ways. On the USDA side of the coin, total recalls increased from 52 in 2024 to 62 in 2025. Undeclared allergens accounted for the most USDA-regulated food recalls in 2025, with foreign materials accounting for 17 recalls, and *Listeria monocytogenes* accounting for eight.

Looking at the grand total recalls of both USDA- and FDA-regulated products in 2025, food and beverage recalls rose to a total of 567 in 2025 from only 513 in 2024. In both categories, undeclared allergens remained the perennial heavyweight of recall causes, proving to be stubbornly consistent year over year, dipping only slightly from 263 events in 2024 to 261 in 2025. In other words, nearly half of all recalls in both years can still be traced back to labeling failures rather than other types of contamination.

Within the allergen category, however, the mix changed noticeably. Wheat and gluten recalls fell sharply from 58 to 38, while egg-related recalls dropped from 23 to 18. On the other hand, milk recalls increased from 49 to 62, and tree nut recalls climbed from 32 to 43. Soy remained relatively stable, declining modestly from 47 to 44. The takeaway? Allergen controls may be improving in some areas, but the industry continues to struggle with the “big nine” in different ways at different times.

Pathogen-related recalls told a more optimistic story. Total pathogen recalls declined from 159 in 2024 to 148 in 2025. *Listeria monocytogenes* remained the leading microbial culprit, but, even there, total recalls dropped from 81 to 70. *Salmonella* followed a similar pattern, slipping from 58 to 54. Perhaps, most striking, was the sharp decline in *E. coli* recalls—from 14 events in 2024 down to just five in 2025 (three of those were USDA-regulated products). For companies investing heavily in environmental monitoring, sanitation validation, and supplier controls, this is one of the few areas where the data clearly suggests that prevention efforts may be paying dividends.

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Unfortunately, any celebration is short-lived once foreign material recalls enter the picture. This category more than doubled, surging from 42 recalls in 2024 to a startling 89 in 2025. Metal fragments increased from 22 to 28, plastic from 16 to 27, and wood from a barely noticeable single event to 11 separate recalls. Glass remained flat at four events in each year, while rodent activity held steady at two. These numbers point less to random mishaps and more to systemic equipment, maintenance, and facility-control issues—often the unglamorous side of food safety that tends to get attention only after something goes wrong.

The miscellaneous category added a few more data points worth noting. Lead-related recalls declined modestly from 18 in 2024 to 16 in 2025, while mold-related recalls dropped more significantly from six to only two. Swollen or bloated packaging, however, ticked upward from six to eight events, often a red flag for process control failures or post-process contamination.

Viewed together, the 2025 versus 2024 recall data paints a picture of an industry that is slowly tightening the screws on pathogens, treading water on allergens, and losing ground on basic physical controls. It's a reminder that food safety doesn't fail in just one way, and that progress in one area can be easily overshadowed by complacency in another.

So, if 2025 taught us anything, it's this: food safety wins are real—but they're fragile. And the recall numbers never stop keeping score. Good luck to all in 2026.

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# LATEST FINDINGS DETAIL HOW THE US POULTRY INDUSTRY USES ANTIBIOTICS RESPONSIBLY

REPORT SHOWS CONTINUED PROGRESS IN REDUCING ANTIBIOTIC USE ACROSS BROILER CHICKEN, TURKEY AND EGG-LAYING HEN OPERATIONS.

BY DR. DENISE HEARD

VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH PROGRAMS FOR USPOULTRY

**THE US POULTRY & EGG ASSOCIATION (USPOULTRY)**, working with the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), has released an updated report describing how antibiotics are used on US poultry farms. The report shows continued progress in reducing antibiotic use across broiler chicken, turkey and egg-laying hen operations, while also recognizing that antibiotics remain an important tool for protecting bird health when disease occurs.

For many years, the poultry industry has focused on responsible antibiotic use as part of its commitment to animal health, food safety and sustainability. Antibiotics considered “medically important” to human health are used carefully, only when necessary, and under veterinary oversight. The updated findings highlight long-term reductions in antibiotic use, as well as the challenges producers face when responding to disease outbreaks.

The research was led by Dr. Randall Singer, DVM, Ph.D., of Mindwalk Consulting Group, LLC and the University of Minnesota. The report includes 12 years of data, from 2013 to 2024, for broiler chickens and turkeys, and nine years of data, from 2016 to 2024, for layer hens. Because broilers, turkeys and layers differ in life span, size, disease risk and available treatments, the report emphasizes that antibiotic use data should not be combined or compared across poultry types.

Importantly, the data in this report were collected directly from poultry companies, including veterinarians and live production personnel. This approach provides a practical, real-world picture of how much antibiotic product is used on farms and under what circumstances. These on-farm data also provide critical context to the FDA’s annual antibiotic sales reports, which reflect only the volume of product sold, not how or whether those products are ultimately used. By capturing actual on-farm use, the USPOULTRY survey helps bridge the gap between sales data and real-world antibiotic use.

For broiler chickens, the data shows substantial reductions in antibiotic use over time. Hatchery antibiotic use declined from 90% of broilers in 2013 to less than 1% in 2024. Medically important antibiotics delivered through feed have largely been eliminated, including the complete phase-out of in-feed tetracycline since 2019. While water-soluble antibiotic use decreased significantly earlier in the study period, modest increases since 2019 have been linked to higher disease pressure, including secondary bacterial infections following avian metapneumovirus outbreaks.

Turkey production shows a similar overall trend. Hatchery antibiotic use declined, though recent disease challenges required targeted treatments to protect young pouls. In-feed and water-soluble antibiotic use decreased significantly over the long term, with some recent increases tied to disease outbreaks (i.e. aMPV) and limited treatment alternatives.

Antibiotic use in egg-laying hens remains very low. Because hens produce eggs daily and most antibiotics require withdrawal periods that would prevent eggs from entering the food supply, antibiotic use in table egg production is minimal. Less than 0.1% of total hen-days were exposed to the primary antibiotic used, chlortetracycline, which can be administered in feed without requiring egg withdrawal.

USPOULTRY will continue to support annual data collection to monitor antibiotic use trends, improve stewardship practices and better document disease challenges in poultry flocks. This ongoing effort, supported through USPOULTRY and public-private partnerships with the FDA, reflects a continued commitment to transparency, science-based decision-making and responsible poultry production.

*By Dr. Denise Heard is vice president for research programs for USPOULTRY.*

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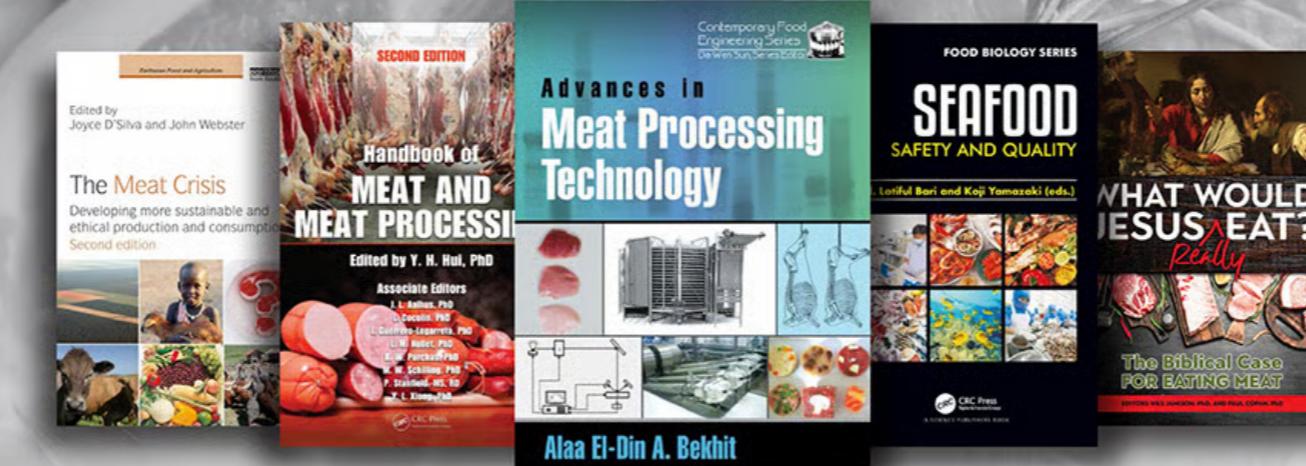
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# SUPPLEMENTING FINISHING CATTLE GARLIC-CITRUS EXTRACT AFFECTS PALATABILITY ATTRIBUTES OF BEEF STEAKS AND PATTIES

SUPPLEMENTATION WITH GARLIC-CITRUS EXTRACT (GCE) HAS BEEN REPORTED TO PROMOTE A REDUCTION OF ENTERIC METHANE EMISSIONS IN RUMINANTS.

BY MEGAN E. ECKHARDT<sup>1</sup>, M. S. HERNANDEZ<sup>2</sup>, J. F. LEGAKO<sup>2</sup>, TY E. LAWRENCE<sup>1</sup>, AND LONI W. LUCHERK<sup>1\*</sup>

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IT IS WELL KNOWN, AN ANIMAL'S DIET AND THE VARYING COMPONENTS OR SUPPLEMENTS of the diet may promote biochemical changes in meat products, thus impacting overall palatability and acceptability of beef products. Supplementation with garlic-citrus extract (GCE) has been reported to promote a reduction of enteric methane emissions in ruminants. Previous research has evaluated the detectability of garlic aroma and/or flavor in red meat when garlic or garlic components were included in the animals diet as a means to mask other meat off-flavors, increase feed palatability and intake of animals, or improve performance and meat quality. Garlic-containing products are rich in sulfur compounds, providing multiple antimicrobial, biological, and nutritional benefits to the ruminant diet. Via ruminal digestion of plant components, garlic supplementation is suggested to alter protein and fatty acid composition, which promotes biochemical transformations in meat products including meat color and biochemical profiles. Limited information exists regarding the effect of feeding GCE upon beef palatability. The objective of this study was to evaluate the effect of finishing cattle with a GCE feed additive on retail color, palatability, volatile compounds, and fatty acid profiles of beef steaks and patties.

Akaushi-cross cattle (n = 19) were supplemented with 0 (CON) or 27g/d GCE for 9 or 12 months (9MO; 12MO). Treatments enlisted 5 hd per each diet and duration-fed combination (except only 4 hd within CON-12MO). From each animal, strip loin steaks (mean marbling score = Moderate<sup>14</sup>) were retained; clods and outside rounds were ground and mixed to generate patties (mean fat percentage = 11.98%). Consumers (n = 100) evaluated steaks and patties for palatability traits, acceptability, and eating quality. Trained panelists evaluated each sample for 13 beef flavor lexicon attributes and garlic intensity. Volatiles and fatty acid profiles were quantified. Data were analyzed via mixed models using a 2 × 2 treatment structure; treatment comparisons were tested using  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

Diet and duration-fed interactive effects existed (patties: off-flavor intensity, premium quality level, oxidized,  $\alpha$ -linolenic and eicosadienoic fatty acids [FA]; steaks: total percent polyunsaturated FA;  $P \leq 0.039$ ), suggesting duration of GCE supplementation impacted beef palatability attributes. Of particular note, trained panelists detected greater ( $P = 0.013$ ) garlic intensity among GCE steaks and a tendency ( $P = 0.064$ ) among GCE patties, especially when fed for a longer duration (12MO). Consumers rated GCE-12 patties higher ( $P = 0.020$ ) for off-flavor intensity than GCE-9; whereas CON patties (both CON-9 and CON-12) remained intermediate for off-flavor ratings. This suggests, the longer cattle were fed with the GCE supplement, the greater the perceivable off-flavor. Differences existed among descriptive panel attributes, volatile analysis, and fatty acid profiles for diet and duration-fed. Results indicate cattle finished with GCE supplementation produce similar biochemical composition of steaks and patties when compared to a CON diet, though differences in prevalence of off-flavors and perceived overall liking, as well as garlic flavor in beef from GCE-fed cattle suggests GCE supplementation may negatively impact beef sensory attributes.

No diet × day interaction occurred ( $P \geq 0.106$ ) for the retail color analysis. For all other ground beef patty color assessments, a significant day effect occurred ( $P \leq 0.042$ ) for all attributes, except for 9MO-patty lightness ( $L^*$ ) values ( $P = 0.169$ ). Values for 9MO-patties, redness ( $a^*$ ) and yellowness ( $b^*$ ) declined ( $P \leq 0.011$ ), whereas discoloration percentage increased ( $P < 0.001$ ) over time for 9MO-patties. Notably, upon transportation, 9MO-patties produced considerable discoloration (mean = 33.36% discolored), abnormal for d-0 display. Regarding 12MO-patties, all instrumental color values declined ( $P \leq 0.042$ ) over time, whereas discoloration percentages increased ( $P < 0.001$ ). Interactions among steak 9MO-diet treatments by day included instrumental  $L^*$  values ( $P = 0.008$ ) in which, generally GCE-9 steaks sustained higher brightness ( $L^*$ ) values through d 5 of display when compared to CON-9 steaks. Moreover, 9MO steaks declined in instrumental redness ( $a^*$ ) values over time ( $P < 0.001$ ) and differed ( $P = 0.011$ ) among diets. Within 9MO steaks, redness values were higher ( $P = 0.011$ ) for GCE-9 than CON-9 steaks.

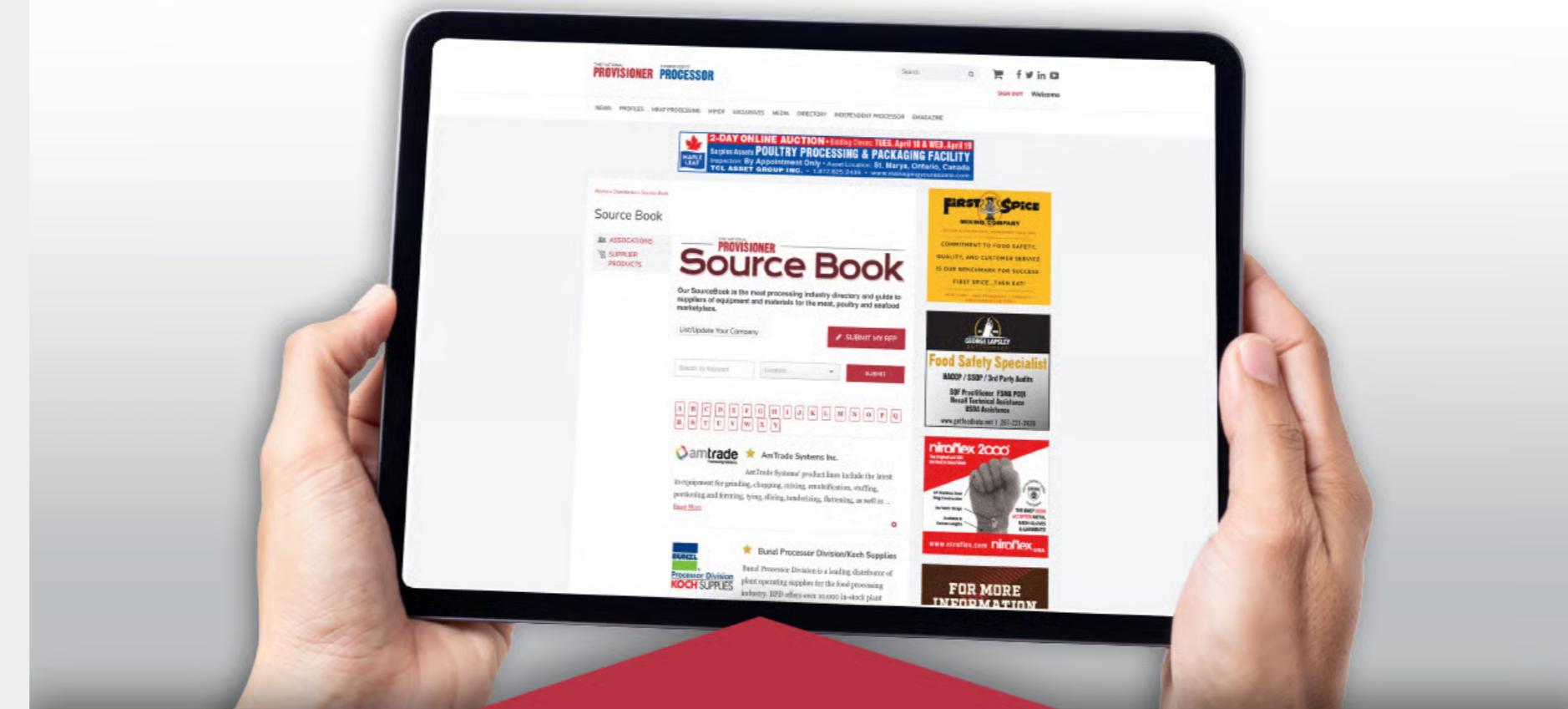
Duration of GCE fed minimally impacted palatability, whereas diet resulted in numerous effects including proximate analysis, consumer ratings and acceptability of palatability traits, descriptive trained sensory, biochemical composition, as well as retail color, with no effect on instrumental tenderness. Despite similar eating experiences of GCE steaks and patties when compared with a CON diet for consumers' overall liking, and ultimately no differences in percentage acceptability for palatability (juiciness, tenderness, flavor and overall liking) of steaks and patties derived from cattle of different supplemented-diets, trained panelists confirmed initial olfactory garlic detection via garlic flavor intensity ratings from steaks and patties of GCE-fed cattle. Nonetheless, data from this study suggests cattle of the same breed composite produce carcass characteristics as used in our study are likely to produce negligible quality and palatability differences between GCE-supplemented beef and beef of standard finishing diets.

Eckhardt, M. E., Hernandez, M. S., Legako, J. F., Lawrence, T. E. & Lucherk, L. W., (2025) "Supplementing Finishing Cattle With Garlic-Citrus Extract Affects Palatability Attributes of Beef Steaks and Patties", *Meat and Muscle Biology* 9(1): 19039, 16.  
doi: <https://doi.org/10.22175/mmb.19039>

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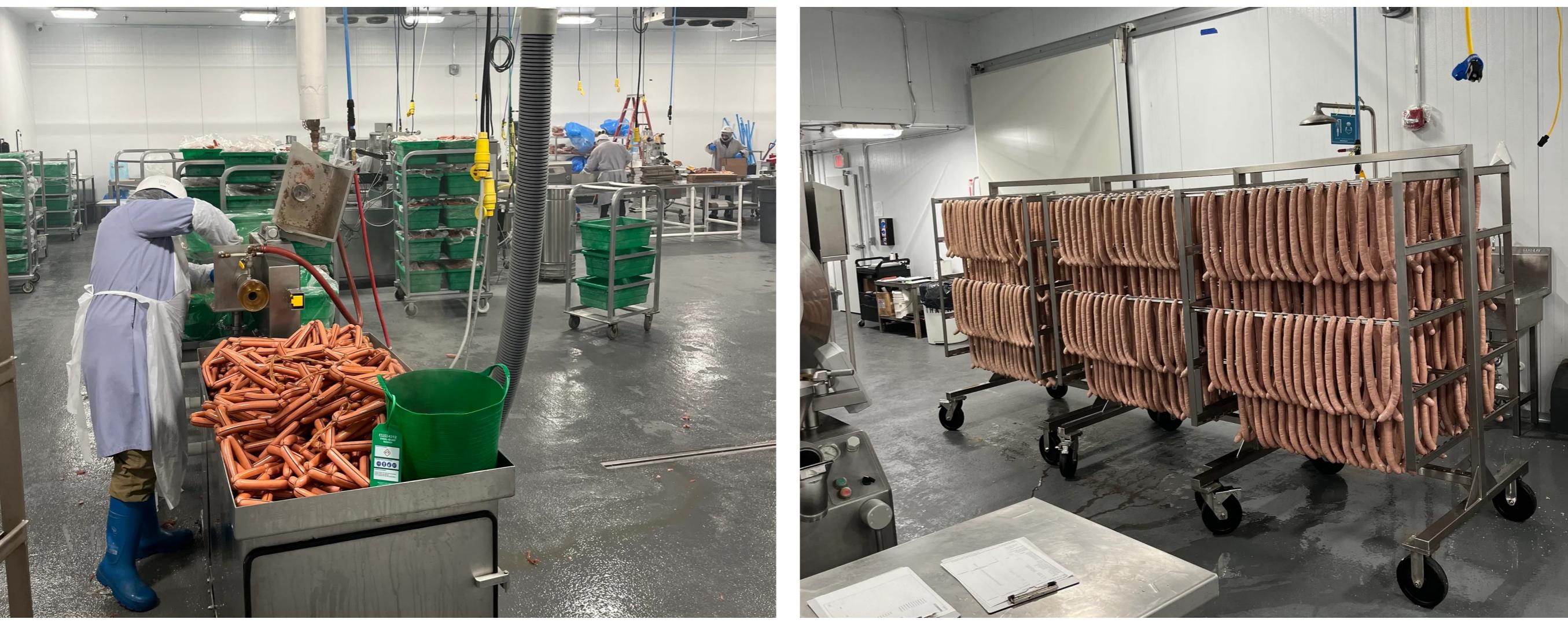
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## MAKOWSKI'S REAL SAUSAGE CO. DOUBLES PRODUCTION SPACE WITH NEW PLANT

FOURTH-GENERATION FAMILY-OWNED MAKOWSKI'S SAUSAGE CO. MOVES TO LANSING, ILL.,  
TO SUPPORT CONTINUED GROWTH.

BY SAMMY BREDAR  
ASSOCIATE GROUP EDITOR

**WHAT FIRST BEGAN IN 1920 AS VICTORY SAUSAGE CO.** has grown into one of Chicagoland's longstanding sausage producers: Makowski's Real Sausage Co. Now led by fourth-generation owner Nicole Makowski, the company recently expanded its production footprint with a newly opened facility in Lansing, Ill., to meet sustained growth and rising demand.

The business traces its roots to a small butcher shop in Central Wisconsin, where the Makowski family specialized in hams and smoked sausages. As demand increased, the then-named Victory Sausage Co. relocated to Chicago and entered into a manufacturing agreement with the US Army. In 1938, Victory Sausage acquired Real Sausage Co., changing the name to Real Packing Co. and Inc.

Nicole Makowski's grandfather, Ted Makowski, joined the company in 1937 and assumed leadership by 1946. Following World War II, demand shifted away from canned meats and toward deli. By the early 1970s, sausage had become the company's primary focus, prompting a return to the Real Sausage Co. name.



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In 1952, Nicole's father Jerry Makowski and uncle Louis Makowski joined the company. They took ownership of the company in 1985 following the retirement of Ted Makowski.

Nicole Makowski took over in 2002, purchasing the business from her father and uncle and renaming the company Makowski's Real Sausage Co. With continued growth and strong demand for the company's sausage products, Makowski's Real Sausage decided it was time for a move and expansion.

"We've been growing about 30% for the last three years now," Nicole said. "There was no way we could continue that out in Chicago."

In early 2025, Makowski's acquired a 26,800-square-foot facility at 16700-16710 Chicago Avenue in Lansing, Ill.'s, industrial corridor. Throughout the year, Makowski's rehabbed the two buildings on the property — one for offices and the other for the company's sausage-making and packaging operation — and in November of the same year, hosted a groundbreaking ceremony, with production beginning in December.

Lansing was a natural fit for the Makowski's transition. The community itself was welcoming, transparent and open to working with Makowski's as a business, while the new facility itself offers multiple operational advantages.

Though the square footage between the Chicago plant and Lansing facility is similar, the company was only able to use about 50% of the Chicago building. "In Lansing, we can actually use racking, which doubles our space," Nicole said.

The top priorities for the new facility were modernization and expanded production capacity. By upgrading its smokehouses to pass-through systems, Makowski's gained cooking efficiencies and reduced smoke cycles and cooking time. The company is seeing better yields due to the inflatable door seals and technology from Alkar and Red Arrow, who did all of the facility's liquid smoke installation.

The expanded production space combined with modernized, efficiency-focused renovations place Makowski's in a position to meet the rising demand for its sausage products.

Food safety and USDA inspection considerations were another top priority for the new facility, shaping the plant layout, sanitation design and product flow. "That was absolutely key from our old facility. We were so excited to be in a modern-day facility where we had a full circle pass-through operation," Nicole said.

With sanitation front of mind for the plant design, the new facility has sanitation corridors for employees. "And in refrigerating all of our departments, which we were not able to do in Chicago, that was absolutely key," Nicole said.

She noted that the USDA worked closely with her company, making the process seamless. "They also were there to answer any questions, to review all of our plans and to make suggestions for us, of which we implemented."

The new Makowski's plant positions the company for future growth in private label, co-manufacturing and new product categories. With three acres of land, the property offers plenty of room for future expansion and growth.

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All photos courtesy of Nicole Makowski

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# TINNED IS STILL IN FOR SEAFOOD PURCHASES

TINNED FISH PRODUCTS OFFER CONVENIENCE AND CONSISTENCY.

BY FRED WILKINSON  
CHIEF EDITOR

**CONSUMERS WANT PROTEIN THAT'S CONVENIENT**, affordable and easy to enjoy, and they're not willing to compromise on flavor or quality to get it.

That's a big driver in new seafood product innovation for both retail and foodservice:

Retail frozen shrimp brand SeaPak Shrimp & Seafood has rolled out [three new products](#): chili lime shrimp, breaded flounder tenders and breaded scallops, offering seafood shoppers globally inspired flavors along with a prep time of less than 10 minutes.

North American processor and marketer of value-added frozen seafood High Liner Foods Inc. has launched a new line of fully cooked, [Panko-breaded Pollock products](#) for foodservice.

As with new product development for other proteins, globally inspired flavors are resonating with seafood consumers -- spicy, smoky and savory, with influences from Mediterranean, Asian and Latin food traditions.

While seafood products check key nutritional boxes for protein and being lower in fat, many consumers shy away from seafood, being unsure how to best prepare and enjoy it at home.

Innovation is helping close that gap.

While for many consumers tinned fish brings to mind tuna or sardines (along with the expectation of a pedestrian if not downright utilitarian eating experience), tinned fish products have hitched a ride on consumers' embrace of more novel meal approaches such as charcuterie boards. Tinned fish products have cashed in on a mix of nostalgia and trendiness, offering consumers protein, convenience, shelf life and access to seafood products at a lower price point than many fresh or frozen seafood options. That matters, especially as consumers become more budget-conscious but still want nutritious options.

Orders of tinned fish [tripled in 2025](#), according to Food delivery service Grubhub.

Circana retail sales data analysis finds shelf-stable seafood product sales totaled \$3.4 billion from December 2024 through December 2025, with dollar sales rising 2% year over year and units sold up 1%.

While overall center-store grocery sales have been under pressure, shelf-stable fish has proved resilient.

Seafood cans and pouches generated \$252 million in December 2025 weeks, with Circana finding all species experiencing increases in dollar sales – with gains highest for sardines.

Packaging has become a huge part of the product experience, with consumers gravitating to food packaging that's easy to open and helps with portioning. That demand for speed and simplicity is a factor influencing consumer embrace of tinned fish products. Tinned fish products are positioned well from a convenience standpoint: single-serve formats perfect for consumers eating on the go.

Health and convenience are leading purchase motivators, with a majority of consumers saying healthfulness (62%) and convenience (57%) rank as top food priorities, according to an IFIC Food & Health Survey.

Shelf-stable seafood offers seafood consumers long shelf life, strong nutritional value and consistent quality.

Innovation today isn't just about what's new, it's about what makes seafood easier to choose, easier to prepare and easier to enjoy on a regular basis.

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## MANUFACTURERS CAN CAPTURE TAX SAVINGS WITH QUALIFIED PRODUCTION PROPERTY

NEW INCENTIVE ALLOWS A 100% DEDUCTION FOR THE COST OF REAL PROPERTY USED IN QUALIFIED MANUFACTURING ACTIVITIES.

BY MICHAEL DEPRIMA

US MANUFACTURERS RECEIVED A MAJOR BOOST IN THE ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL ACT (OBBBA) with the creation of Qualified Production Property (QPP). This new incentive allows a 100% deduction for the cost of real property used in qualified manufacturing activities.

While full expensing of assets is not new, it generally has applied only to tangible personal property like machinery and other assets with short tax lives. However, items of real property (i.e., a building's structural components such as walls, roofs, and lighting) are generally not eligible for full expensing and have a lengthy depreciation period of 39 years.

The opportunity to fully deduct real property is significant – and when coupled with the permanent extension of 100% bonus depreciation – it can result in the immediate write-off of manufacturing-related assets in a facility.

**What is Qualified Production Property?**

QPP is defined as nonresidential real property used as an integral part of a qualified production activity. Production activities generally include:

- manufacturing tangible personal property
- chemical production
- agricultural production
- refining operations.

Only a facility's production-related areas can qualify. Areas dedicated to offices, administrative functions, lodging, research activities, and warehousing are excluded.

Items specifically eligible for QPP treatment could include the following within eligible production areas:

- structural walls
- lighting
- HVAC
- plumbing lines
- insulation
- roofing.

### ORIGINAL USE AND APPLICABLE DATES

The original use of the property generally must commence with the taxpayer for QPP purposes. There are special rules for acquiring property previously used in manufacturing that may warrant additional analysis. If renovations occur after an acquisition, those renovations should be eligible for QPP treatment.

Two dates are important for QPP eligibility: construction start date and placed in service date. QPP construction must begin after January 19, 2025 and before January 1, 2029, and the QPP must be placed in service before January 1, 2031.

### QUALIFIED PRODUCTION PROPERTY OWNERSHIP CONSIDERATIONS

Taxpayers operating manufacturing trades or businesses would be eligible to claim the QPP election on property owned directly by such trade or business. However, current QPP rules indicate leased property isn't eligible, including property leased to a related party.

### LEVERAGING COST SEGREGATION FOR QPP

A cost segregation study is an engineering-based analysis splitting building components into different asset classes for tax purposes. It identifies portions of a property that can be depreciated over shorter recovery periods (e.g., 5, 7, or 15 years) instead of the standard 39-year period for commercial buildings.

A cost segregation study should be conducted to isolate the items of personal property not eligible for a QPP definition (but would most likely be eligible for bonus depreciation). The remaining assets within a qualified area could then be further analyzed for QPP eligibility (e.g., roofing, walls, and lighting).

### QUALIFIED PRODUCTION PROPERTY EXAMPLE

ABC Company, a widget manufacturer, is looking to expand its production space. It currently holds its facility within ABC HoldCo (a separate LLC) and is considering purchasing an existing warehouse next door or building an expansion on the vacant land adjacent to the existing facility. The warehouse is at record low pricing and could be an excellent investment.

The warehouse hasn't been used for manufacturing. It would need substantial work and would most likely have areas for expanded office personnel, a research lab, and shipping/packaging space. If ABC were to build on the vacant lot, the land isn't large enough to accommodate all functions and would instead be completely dedicated to widget production.

### QPP EXAMPLE FAQS

- Which entity can hold the new space to be eligible for QPP?

Based on the current lack of guidance and the plain reading of the statute, it appears only the operating entity (ABC Company) could hold the assets and take advantage of QPP. Without further guidance from the IRS, ABC HoldCo wouldn't be permitted to be the owner of these areas and claim QPP.

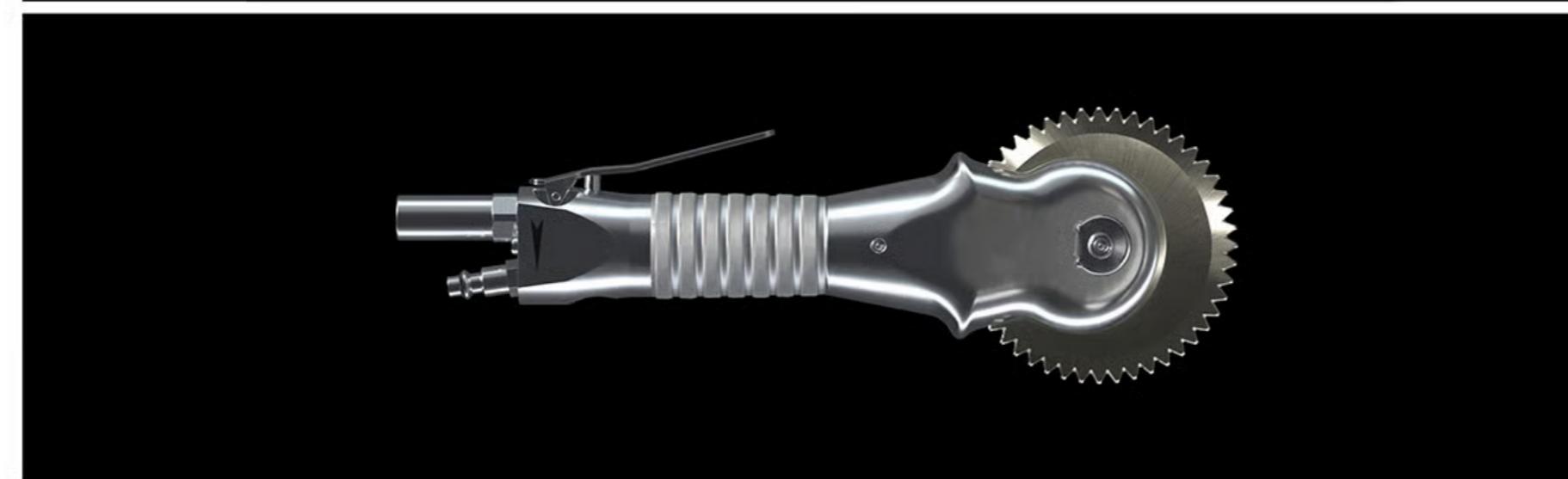
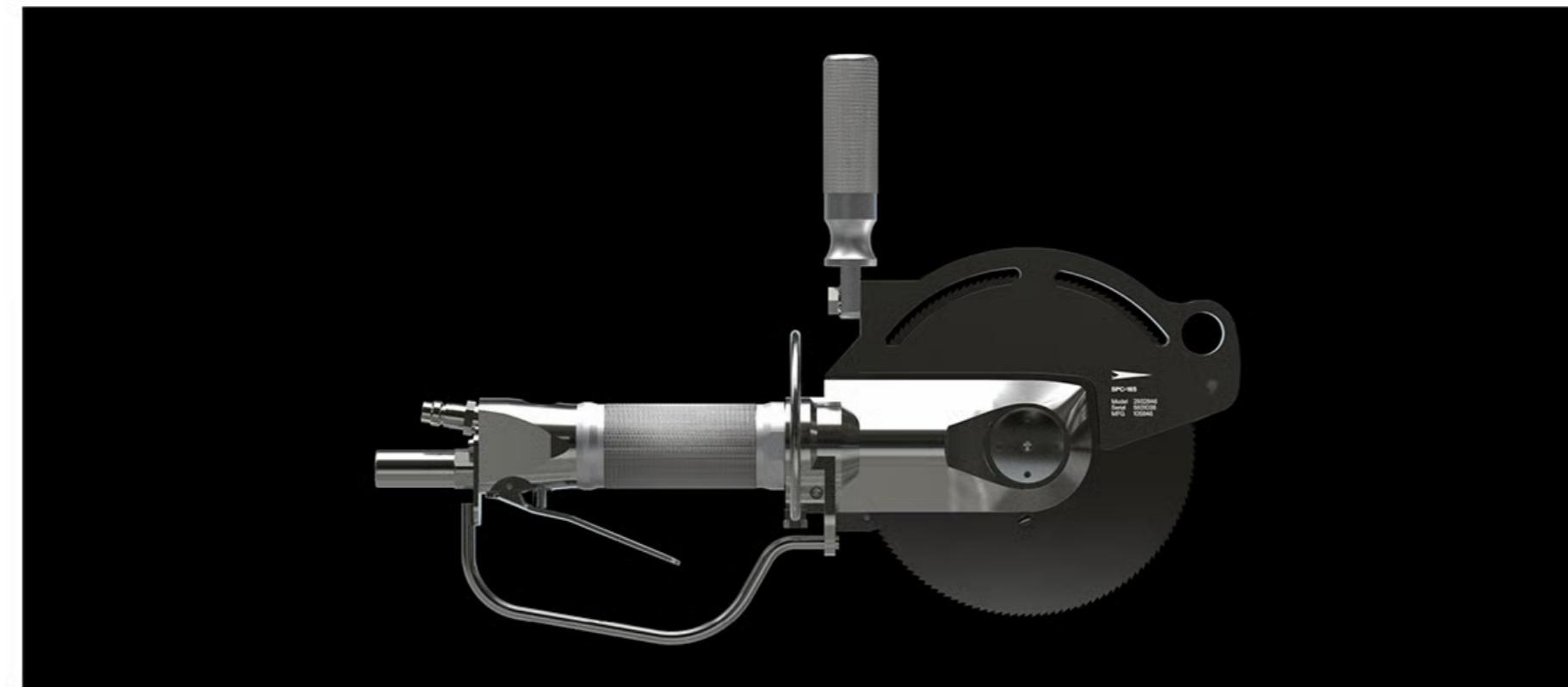
- What improvements would be eligible for QPP?

Under the purchase option, the production areas could be treated as QPP once the items of tangible property have been segregated.

Under the expansion option, the entirety of the space could be eligible for QPP treatment once the items of tangible property have been segregated.

*Michael DePrima leads CliftonLarsonAllen's federal tax strategies group.*

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