

OHIO'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES CURRENT



Ohio's Agribusinesses are Filling Holiday Tables

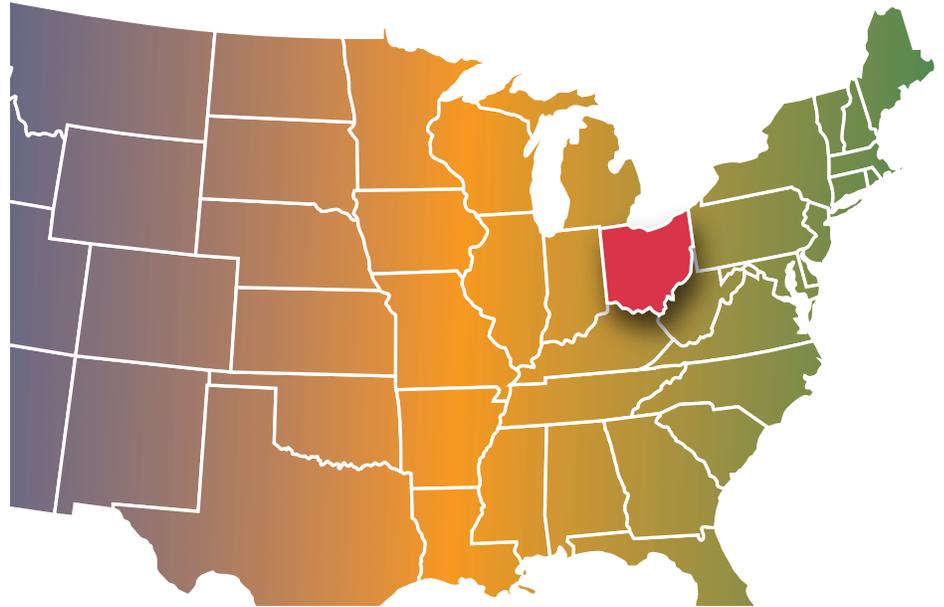
When chefs and home cooks prepare the Thanksgiving turkey, ham and side dishes, it's highly likely the entire array of main course proteins, vegetables, breads, seasonings and even beverages were produced, harvested and processed in Ohio.

Here are 5 reasons why Northwest Ohio is home to many of the country's top food brands and is an exceptional location for new and expanding food processing businesses.

1. Nine of the top 10 food processing companies have facilities in Ohio, as do 20 of the top 25.

Ohio's location as the easternmost state in the highly productive "corn belt" positions it closest to the east coast markets. However, this region offers a diversity of agricultural production beyond corn and soybeans, encompassing livestock, vegetables, fruits, tree nuts, berries and greenhouse plants.

The Midwest represents one of the most intense areas of agricultural production in the world and consistently affects the global economy. (Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture)



The entire value chain from growers and producers, processors, packagers, distributors and retailers, is located in Ohio.

"Ohio has a lot to offer—we have it all," says Tim Derickson, JobsOhio managing director of food and agribusiness. "Over 1,500 food manufacturers have realized that strategically this state can benefit their bottom line."

"We have our fair share of livestock and poultry, we have 13.1 million acres of farm ground to raise it or feed it, and we have a very mature logistics system," Derickson notes.



Demand for healthier food options prompts production expansions.

“Prior to COVID, JobsOhio’s food and ag sector pipeline typically had 30-35 active projects. Now the norm is about 45 projects,” Derickson says. “The past three years have seen a significant increase in capital investment. What continues to drive a lot of these projects is food manufacturers responding to customers’ interest in healthier food options by either increasing production or adding a new line.”

Big investments are also being made in healthier options for pets. Ohio has two pet food projects under construction, a \$550 million plant in Clermont County and a \$350 million investment in Preble County.

“Aside from these new investments, a lot of food companies already in Ohio are looking to expand,” Derickson adds. “Agribusiness and food processing is a very busy sector for Ohio.”



2. A thriving agribusiness industry provides a readymade support structure.



“We have a readymade support structure of companies that provide services and products that complement our agribusiness and food processing enterprises,” says Jared Ebbing, community and economic development director for Mercer County, Ohio. “Northwest Ohio—including Mercer County—is home to a thriving network of suppliers and machine shops that can make and fix parts required by our agribusinesses. Our local companies just know how to figure things out and our people know how to work.”

Farming has evolved over the past several decades to include many contract growers, Ebbing explains. “Cooper Farms is a great example of the profound ripple effect of agriculture benefiting our communities. It’s not just the individual farmer and their family, it’s the many businesses they contract with and their suppliers too.”

Cooper Farms is celebrating 85 years of producing Thanksgiving turkeys in Northwest Ohio.

Cooper Farms is one of the many integrated ag production and food processing companies with deep roots in Ohio. Growing healthy live turkeys, hogs, chicken egg layers and producing quality food products has been a tradition for the Cooper family of Northwest Ohio for four generations.

Founded in 1938 by Virgil and Virginia Cooper, Cooper Farms is still family owned and operated. Today, Cooper Farms is a leading food supplier, selling a variety of fully cooked and ready-to-cook turkey, ham and chicken products, as well as table eggs and liquid egg products to customers throughout North America.



“When protein demand expanded dramatically post-World War II, Cooper Farms’ turkey flock quickly grew from 500 to 10,000,” said Jacob VanCleve, fourth generation family member and Cooper Farms’ facilities manager. “Now we have about 30 live animal facilities, plus 8-10 support systems facilities including truck wash stations, offices and maintenance facilities.”



Fast facts about Cooper Farms from Jacob VanCleve:

- Cooper Farms produces three core proteins: turkey, pork and eggs.
- We hatch about 16.5 million turkey poults per year.
- We’re in the breeder business; 18 Cooper-owned farms in NW Ohio supply fertilized turkey eggs for the farm’s two hatcheries.
- It takes about five months for a turkey to grow to full size.
- Turkeys are processed in St. Henry, Ohio, then go to our Van Wert facility to be cooked for deli meat slicing.
- We have 8 sow farms that produce 800,000 piglets annually.
- Cooper Farms produces over 155 million dozen table eggs each year with a diverse network of contract family farmers and our own layer complexes.
- Cooper Farms is still family-owned and led by the co-founders’ children: Jim, Dianne and Gary, who continue the tradition of quarterly team meetings with all 2,400 employees.
- About 15 family members work in the business.
- We have 3 wind turbines that provide about 75% of the power for Cooper Farms Cooked Meats in Van Wert, Ohio.



Cooper Farms economic impact extends well beyond their animal facilities to include:

- **Contract growers numbering over 400** that raise both turkeys and hogs for Cooper Farms. Feed for all contract growers is processed at five company-owned feed mills and delivered with the company’s feed trucks. “Some contractors have been with us for 40 years,” says VanCleve. “The economic impact of these relationships is spread out to all the communities where our growers operate.”
- **“Companywide, we have about 2,400 employees,”** says VanCleve. “You can be anything you want to be here—veterinarian, truck driver, material handler, lab tech, farmer, accountant, marketing manager—there’s such a wide variety of jobs.
- **Grain is purchased from many local farmers** further extending the economic impact.
- **Processing facilities and cooking facilities** prepare millions of pounds of cooked and ready-to-cook products for distribution throughout North America.

Cooper Farms is in good company. These food and agribusiness companies also call Northwest Ohio home.

- New Horizons Baking Company
- Bob Evans Frozen Foods
- Sheetz’ \$150M food preparation and distribution facility in Findlay will employ 750
- Prairie Star Farms/Rindler Poultry²
- Wenning Poultry²
- Pine Valley Ranch layer barns and egg processing²
- MPS Feed LLC¹
- Kuck Farms²
- Custom Quality Meats in New Haven, IN¹
- Emerald Forest Pottery by Gloria Craig produces tableware and mugs¹
- Pappy’s Sassafras Tea¹
- Golden Fresh Farms, a 20-acre greenhouse producing vegetables
- Mercer Landmark
- The Fremont Company, a manufacturer of tomato-based sauces including ketchup and barbecue sauce
- Basic Grain Products, a manufacturer of multigrain crisps and rice cakes and chips
- Buschur Feeds²
- Buschur Custom Farm Service²
- Homan, Inc., builder and ag related construction services²
- JES Foods
- MVP Dairy
- Dannon Yogurt
- Beckman & Gast Co.², manufacturer of canned vegetable products
- Val-Co, a leader in commercial poultry, egg and swine production equipment
- Wendel Poultry Services²
- Green’s Meat Market
- S&K Products², a manufacturer of industrial equipment for bakeries and food production

¹Served by Paulding Putnam Electric Cooperative

²Served by Midwest Electric

3. The food processing and agribusiness talent pool is deep and experienced.

“The number of people employed as a result of a thriving agribusiness and food economy is profound,” says Ebbing. “Nearly 40% of Mercer County’s employment is impacted and/or has some connection to agribusiness and its network. Other large industry sectors include manufacturing (40%) and health care. It all adds up to who we are and what we do.”

“My role as community and economic development director is to make sure companies have the assets they need—roads, utilities, sites, and most importantly workforce,” says Ebbing. “We created www.HometownOpportunity.com to help companies source employees. Our mission is to connect job seekers of all ages with local businesses and careers that are available right here, right now.”

With a workforce of 16,000 dedicated to Northwest Ohio’s 300 food processing companies, the agribusiness talent pool is deep and experienced.



4. Ohio’s electric cooperatives have powered rural development and food production for nearly 90 years.



Electric cooperatives began forming and providing electricity to rural Ohio farms in the mid-1930s, about the same time that Virgil and Virginia Cooper raised their first flock of 300 turkeys.

Midwest Electric, Inc. and Paulding Putnam Electric Cooperative, Inc. are two of Ohio’s electric cooperatives serving members in Northwest Ohio, including many Cooper Farm facilities and partners.

Paulding Putnam’s largest accounts are quite diverse and include copper/aluminum remanufacturing, auto manufacturing, steel mill, food production, schools and agricultural production facilities.

Midwest Electric’s largest accounts are primarily agricultural and include Cooper Farms Processing in St. Henry, Ohio, three very large egg laying and egg processing facilities, feed mills and schools.

“Midwest Electric’s most recent power availability rating was 99.98%,” says Joel Johns, business development coordinator for the local cooperative. “We’re constantly doing upgrades to improve system reliability and restore power safely and efficiently.”



Midwest Electric is currently installing a distribution automation (DA) and supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) system, that will reduce the length of major outages by using automation to transfer load (or “backfeed”) remotely and quickly from one source to another.

“Being a member-owned cooperative, we take pride in our ACSI member satisfaction score,” says Johns. “We tied for the top score in the country earlier this year with a 92*(Q2 2023). This speaks highly about the level of service that we provide our members and their satisfaction with Midwest Electric.”

“Paulding Putnam is local, member owned, and right here in the community. We value each member. The exceptional member service we provide shows that,” says Peter Niagu, energy advisor and key accounts representative for Paulding Putnam Electric Cooperative. “I’m literally one call away, right down the road from our key accounts.”



“When you put an emphasis on reliability, that shows up in ACSI scores,” says Niagu. “Co-ops generally rank much higher than investor-owned utilities. We work continuously on the reliability of our system. One example is the multi-year work plan to rebuild our substations.”

For expansion projects, both local cooperatives can provide nearly any size of power needs. Ohio’s Electric Cooperatives provide resources for the local cooperatives and abundant power is generated by Buckeye Power.

5. Northwest Ohio has prime agribusiness and food processing sites served by a mature logistics infrastructure.

Ohio’s central location and multiple transportation options offer efficient, cost-effective ways to obtain raw materials, produce goods and deliver food to market.

An extensive transportation network and intermodal connections allow for fast, efficient and cost-effective access to partners and customers.

Northwest Ohio is home to dozens of sites ready for immediate development and numerous recently constructed spec buildings.

Companies looking for communities with infrastructure capacity, a capable and hardworking workforce, a transportation network with high-capacity rail, highway and intermodal,



and an extensive network of exiting food and agriculture companies, will find their home in Northwest Ohio.

Look for Us:

Touchstone Energy NEXT Conference

January 29-31, 2024
Indian Wells, California

Industrial Asset Management Council (IAMC) Spring Forum

April 6-10, 2024
Greenville, South Carolina

Site Selectors Guild Annual Conference

April 3-5, 2024
Nashville, Tennessee

Buckeye Power and Ohio's Electric Cooperatives can help with:

- Comprehensive site and building portfolios
- Preliminary site studies
- Site search tours
- Assistance in identifying financial incentives
- Electric rate analyses
- Community profiles
- State and local government contacts
- Contractor introductions

OHIO'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives 

Ohio's Electric Cooperatives
6677 Busch Blvd
Columbus, OH 43229
www.ohioec.org/ed

Contact Us:
Dennis Mingyar
dmingyar@ohioec.org
614-430-7876