New $165M Poultry Plant For AR

CHRISTINA HUYNH, Associated Press

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — Alabama-based Peco Foods announced plans Monday for a new poultry plant, hatchery and feed mill in northeast Arkansas, a $165 million operation expected to create 1,000 jobs in two rural counties.

"We are extremely pleased to formally announce this new project today," said Mark Hickman, president and chief executive officer of Peco Foods. "Arkansas is an excellent place to do business, and we look forward to providing new jobs and an economic boost to Randolph and Clay counties."

Based in Tuscaloosa, Ala., Peco Foods is the eighth-largest poultry producer in the country. The company processes about 24 million pounds of poultry each week and specializes in boneless breast products for grocers and food-service markets.

Peco Foods will receive more than $4.5 million in state and local incentives, with additional tax breaks planned, according to the Arkansas Economic Development Commission.

The company plans two phases of construction: groundbreaking for the feed mill site in Corning is set for next month, while initial work on the hatchery and processing plant site near Pocahontas is set for July. The company now has operations in Alabama and Mississippi, along with a processing plant in Batesville and a feed mill in Newark.

"As we have experienced firsthand with our complex in Batesville, this state is home to an outstanding workforce that shares the goals and values of our company," Hickman said.

Peco Foods acquired the former Townsends Poultry Complex in Batesville in 2011.

"When Peco Foods acquired an existing Arkansas facility a few years ago, it made a significant investment in the workers of northeast Arkansas," Beebe said. "That investment has ultimately led to this major expansion. We are here today because Peco Foods knows the workforce in Randolph and Clay Counties has the necessary skills to take the company to the next level of success."

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