



FROM THE FARM TO THE CONSUMER:

Your Guide to Food Processing in Southern Idaho

By Madeleine Bumstead, Southern Idaho Economic Development

Like most stories in the West, Southern Idaho's food processing journey starts on a farm, but this particular one is a dairy farm. As the nation's 3rd leading producer of milk, the region knows a thing or two about dairies. Southern Idaho is home to almost 300 dairies and over 400,000 cows, making dairy and food processing the cornerstone of its economy.

DIVERSITY IN FOOD PROCESSING

Southern Idaho's dairy industry is in a growth phase as the region has expanded to meet capacity from a number of producers including the world's biggest Greek yogurt plant, Chobani, and some of the largest American-style cheese plants. With 29 million pounds of milk production a day that supports over \$7 billion in product annually, Southern Idaho has enough milk supply to welcome a new Chobani-sized processor every four years.

But the region's food processing industry involves more than just milk—with everything from grain to beef to sugar beets, and of course potatoes. Southern Idaho leads the country in aquaculture, too, with hatcheries that raise 80 percent of the trout eaten in the United States each year and recent expansion in feed production. Plus, the area's natural geothermal activity helps grow a variety of fish along the beautiful Snake River.

AN ABUNDANCE OF WATER, CLEAN ENERGY AND SKILLED WORKERS

The Snake River not only contributes to Southern Idaho's unmatched quality of life, it provides access to one million

gallons per minute of crystal-clear spring water for the strong agriculture and aquaculture industry. And, all that water also means hydropower.



Southern Idaho boasts some of the most affordable energy prices in the country, and it is also sustainable, thanks to partners like Idaho Power. The region is one of the only locations in the United States producing commercial power in four of the five renewable energy sectors—with 58 percent of electricity coming from renewable energy sources, including hydroelectric, geothermal, biomass and wind power. And the sustainable leadership does not stop there—in 2019, Idaho Power pledged to provide customers 100 percent clean energy by the year 2045.

In addition to affordability and availability of clean energy, access to skilled workers is critical to food processors looking to expand, which is why the College of Southern Idaho created its Workforce Development

& Training program to not only provide training and apprenticeship opportunities for individuals but also for companies to utilize exceptional, local training for their employees. This program provides a full range of apprentice, industry specific and custom training programs to sustain and grow the regional talent infrastructure. The program ensures current and prospective employers have the workforce they need at every stage.

THE IDEAL LOCATION WITH LOW REGULATIONS

Southern Idaho is also well positioned geographically to get more products, to more people in a short amount of time, and at a much cheaper cost of doing business. In fact, Southern Idaho is less than a day's drive to any of the seven container ports along the West Coast. From easy access to interstate, rail and air distribution, the region's strong infrastructure maximizes product distribution, without the high land costs, excessive taxes and red tape.

These low regulations helped Chobani build the world's largest yogurt factory, at one million square feet, in just 326 days in Twin Falls. And, the Greek yogurt producer has expanded twice since opening in 2012, including a \$20 million R&D facility, a key target industry for Southern Idaho. Chobani CEO even called the Magic Valley the "Silicon Valley of Food Innovation."

A GROWING COMMUNITY OF INNOVATION

And this food innovation and R&D is happening all over the valley. In Jerome and Mini-Cassia, the University of Idaho is building the Center for Agriculture, Food and Environment, a world-class



research institution that will address critical problems like food security, animal safety and sustainable agricultural practices. The Magic Valley is at the heart of Idaho's dairy industry, so it just makes sense that it will be home to the largest and most advanced research dairy in the United States.



Recent R&D investments at companies like AgroPur, Idaho Milk Products, Glanbia, and Chobani are just a few companies in Southern Idaho creating innovative new products and processes that are leading the industry. R&D in Southern Idaho is continuing to grow to become an even stronger link in the country's food supply chain.

Continued growth in food distribution is also expected to expand, like in Burley where NewCold, with its partner McCain Foods, built a state-of-the-art automated cold storage facility, resulting in a total of \$300 million in foreign direct investment. At 25 million cubic-feet, it's one of the largest sub-zero cold storage warehouses in the U.S. The facility uses robots, conveyor systems and automatic stacker cranes to move, stack, scan and load each pallet directly onto trucks. And NewCold is ready to welcome new business to its 90,000 pallet storage capacity, with expectations to expand further.

Affordable, convenient and high-tech product distribution, combined with the region's strategic location, minimal regulations, low business costs, and great quality of life makes Southern Idaho a no brainer when it comes to doing business. The region makes it easy at every level from the farm to the consumer, and will work at the speed of business to help companies stop searching and start building.

STOP SEARCHING, START BUILDING

We know how overwhelming it can be to find the right place to grow or expand your business. The process to capture all of the necessary information is often frustrating and can move slowly. That's why we've made it our mission to move at the speed of business (or quicker) to ensure your questions, needs, and

desires are taken into account so you can stop searching and start building.

Southern Idaho is one of the best places to build or grow your business and our economic development team is at the ready to show you around. Ready to get started? Call us today at 208-732-6459 or email Connie at connies@southernidaho.org. 🏭



**Pro-business
culture**



**Competitive
incentives**



**Strong
workforce**



**Accessible
logistics**

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