Locations For The Food Processing Industry: The Food Puzzle

It takes a variety of participants and processes to make the food industry a whole industry. And so far the pieces together seem to indicate a year of success.

By the BF Staff
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VINELAND, NEW JERSEY: WHERE IT’S ALWAYS GROWING SEASON

Selecting the right location is a key component of any strategic business model. Companies have to look for the right blend of resources, workforce and business climate. The City of Vineland, New Jersey offers these advantages, and more, to food production, processing and related industries looking for a place to expand or relocate.

Vineland is conveniently located along NJ Route 55, providing a quick and direct connection to customers in Philadelphia, Wilmington, Baltimore, Washington D.C., New York City and beyond. Vineland also offers competitive rail service, while freight air service and deep water port facilities, which include Foreign Trade Zones, are just a short drive away. Additionally, food processing and other agri-business companies are supported by a number of large and small trucking firms in Vineland, which carry market-ready food products in dry and refrigerated trailers to locations throughout the United States.

The new 75,000-square-foot AdvancePierre production facility in Vineland, NJ will include two raw and four cooked production lines for Philly steak. AdvancePierre is a wholly owned subsidiary of Tyson Foods, one of the world’s largest food companies. (City of Vineland)
“Vineland truly does stand out in terms of location and accessibility to major markets, municipal infrastructure, support services, state and local incentives, and very competitive operating costs, all of which are necessary ingredients for a healthy and profitable business environment,” said Mayor Anthony Fanucci. “These factors, along with our rich agricultural history, which includes hosting the largest farmers’ cooperative on the east coast in the Vineland Produce Auction, have helped draw a number of international companies to our city.”

In fact, over the past three years, Vineland has seen over $100 million dollars invested by food processing and cold storage operations, including Townsend Farms, AdvancePierre Foods, Bridor USA, Mamacita Foods, Lucca Freezer & Cold Storage, Safeway Fresh Foods, First Choice Freezer & Cold Storage, RLS Logistics and Davy Cold Storage.

“Business development is a collaborative effort,” said Vineland Economic Development Director Sandy Forosisky. “The Department of Economic Development offers ‘Business Concierge Service,’ which is designed to make expansion and relocation projects easier. We are a clearinghouse for information, while acting as a liaison to city government, as we help guide developers smoothly through the permitting and licensing process. Additionally, we are able to provide support through our successful Urban Enterprise Zone revolving loan fund when additional capital is required to move a project forward.”

For example, Oregon based Townsend Farms, a leading grower, buyer, processor and shipper of frozen fruits throughout the U.S., was looking to expand their operations. “We were doing a lot of business with blueberry packers in Hammonton, buying their fruit and shipping it to the west coast for processing,” said Vice President Margaret Townsend. “But as we began to outgrow our facilities and shipping costs were increasing, we wanted to set up a permanent east coast operation.” The company found a reasonable location in Vineland with an existing 215,000-square-foot building. Additionally, the city was able to provide a $4 million Urban Enterprise Zone loan to assist with renovation costs.

AdvancePierre Foods, a subsidiary of Tyson Foods, recently cut the ribbon on a new 75,000-square-foot facility in Vineland. “This new facility expands our production capacity and geographic reach in a product category that is primed for growth,” said George Chappelle, COO of AdvancePierre. “The investment in four cooked production lines underscores the importance of this new capability in our product portfolio in meeting the market demand for this versatile, easy-to-prepare, premium product. We expect this business to grow, we expect this plant to grow and we expect this to be a very long relationship with the City of Vineland.”

In order to keep up with their growing demand, First Choice Freezer and Cold Storage currently is adding 61,000 square feet to their existing 210,000-square-foot facility, and is negotiating with the city to acquire 10 additional acres for a separate expansion in the Vineland Industrial Park South. Both projects also are utilizing financing from the Vineland UEZ loan program. “First Choice has already outgrown their last expansion three years ago,” Forosisky said. “As demand from local
Likewise, Lucca Freezer and Cold Storage, which serves as the flagship United States perishable facility for the AGRO Merchants Group, recently completed a major 100,000-square-foot addition to their existing operation. The location serves customers in the U.S. and abroad, including New Zealand, Italy, Peru, Argentina, Spain, Morocco and South Africa. “We are pretty diverse now on the different products coming into our warehouse,” said Company President Rusty Lucca. “There is steady growth here. That is why we’ve made another addition.”

“Lucca Cold Storage is the largest produce import facility in the United States,” Forosisky said. “When companies are making commitments and investments of this kind, it shows they have a real interest in our community.”

“We have taken a very aggressive approach when it comes to development, in marketing to companies and letting them know what type of assets we really have to offer,” Mayor Fanucci continued. “As a result, we are confident about the future and our ability to keep the momentum going. There are already new projects in the pipeline. We have acquired 68 additional acres to expand our industrial park, and our municipal electric and water utilities provide among the lowest rates in the state, which is especially critical to the food processing industry.”

For more information, please contact the City of Vineland’s Director of Economic Development, Sandy Forosisky at (856) 794-4100, or via e-mail at sforosisky@vinelandcity.org.