

SUCCESS STORY: TYSON FOODS OMAHA BACON PLANT

2018 Sustainability Business of the Year



The ongoing sustainability efforts at the Tyson Foods Bacon Plant in Omaha underscore the core value of stewardship that is embraced and embedded throughout the largest food company in the United States.

“At the Omaha plant, more than 99 percent of the incoming raw material is converted to a finished marketable product,” says Nick Jarecke, plant manager. “A new waste water treatment facility, plant-wide LED lighting upgrades, routine electronics recycling, along with on-going water usage reduction initiatives, are among the many improvements aimed at making our operations more sustainable.”

Bacon product manufacturing at the Omaha plant dates to 1988, when Millard Processing Services began operations as a privately held company. In 2002, Tyson Foods purchased the 329,000-square-foot facility and made it part of its Prepared Foods Division.

The facility has since grown through investment in capabilities and capital expenditures of more than \$50 million. Today, approximately 900 “team members” produce more than 170 million pounds of raw and fully cooked bacon annually, making it one of the largest bacon production facilities in the world.

Tyson Foods’ Omaha operation first partnered with the Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC) in 2012 when it began its Lean manufacturing journey by sending its first team member through the NBDC Lean Certification program. Jarecke says Lean training has taught his team members key skills in problem solving and process improvement, which in turn helps them address sustainability opportunities at the plant.

“We are putting sustainability at the center of our business and finding solutions to sustainably feed the growing population,” he says. “This requires us to rethink and reimagine our role as a big food company and explore new ways to create a more sustainable food system. We intend to figure out how to create accessible, affordable and delicious food, while also making a difference in the environment, and doing the right thing for our key stakeholders.” He says the plant’s efforts to improve sustainability, and to employ more environmentally conscious practices, are two elements of the company’s overall focus on creating an environment that emphasizes the importance of food safety, and the safety of its team members.

“We’re doing this in part by focusing on engagement with team members and utilizing communication ‘huddles’ to keep them informed and prepared for their day,” Jarecke says. “We emphasize safety one-on-ones to empower our team members to help provide safe and efficient processes and equipment. We also have begun quarterly town hall-style meetings to bring everyone together and share our successes, challenges and further communicate our commitment to safety and sustainability.” He says three groups have successfully completed the NBDC Lean training. “We now have more than three dozen change agents leading and coaching daily plant improvement.”

REPORT DATE

- March, 2019

INDUSTRY

- Food processing

CONSULTING

- Lean training
- Lean Certification

RESULTS

- Three Tyson teams have completed the lean certificate program
- “It’s a great program and partnership, and we are thankful that Nebraska has these resources to help us invest in our team members and our business success.” —Nick Jarecke

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