



The U.S. layer flock continues to increase as egg producers add new cage-free housing and convert existing cage houses to cage free. *Austin Alonzo*

Ranking the largest US egg companies in 2019

US hen numbers are on the rise as egg producers add cage-free housing and convert high-rise cage houses to cage free.

TERRENCE O'KEEFE

Egg Industry magazine's 2019 Top Egg Company survey identified 67 egg producers whose flocks totaled 337.88 million hens housed on Dec. 31, 2018. The Top Egg Company survey is conducted annually, and the results reported are comprised of a combination of company-submitted information and estimates made based on input from publicly reported information and industry sources. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Chicken & Egg Report released Dec. 22, 2018, estimated the U.S. table egg laying flock to be 330.95 million hens on Dec. 1, 2018.

Top 10 US egg producers

Cal-Maine Foods retains its place at the top of Egg Industry's Top Egg Company rankings, with 40.25 million hens housed on Dec. 31, 2018. In addition to being the largest egg producer in the U.S., Cal-Maine



More Top Company insights: Purchase a spreadsheet of the leading U.S. egg producers over a five-year span, including their headquarters locations and addresses www.WATTAgNet.com/products

Top US egg producers' rankings for 2019

Ranking	Company	Hens (millions)	More information
1	Cal-Maine Foods	40.25	http://bit.ly/2w0PPSF
2	Rose Acre Farms	26.60	http://bit.ly/2MC9vpv
3	Versova Holdings LLC ¹	21.10	http://bit.ly/2Pcxuh0
4	Hillandale Farms	20.00	http://bit.ly/2MB0j4M
5	Daybreak Foods	14.00	http://bit.ly/2vYpd4z
6	Michael Foods	13.29	http://bit.ly/2MFjb2n
7	Rembrandt Enterprises	12.50	http://bit.ly/2MC9r9f
8	Center Fresh Group	10.50	http://bit.ly/2w4mMxv
9	Midwest Poultry Services LP	9.80	http://bit.ly/2R7U000
10	Prairie Star Farms ²	9.40	http://bit.ly/2RsA9V7
11	Herbruck's Poultry Ranch	8.65	http://bit.ly/2TuCU4W
12	Weaver Brothers	8.35	http://bit.ly/2QrR8BG
13	Hickman's Egg Ranch	8.20	http://bit.ly/2AweHnL
14	Opal Foods	8.00	http://bit.ly/2vTLnFl
15	Fremont Farms of Iowa	7.33	http://bit.ly/2R8rLKb
16	ISE America	6.10	http://bit.ly/2Qp0u0I
17	Sparboe Farms	5.84	http://bit.ly/2s873LF
18	Kreider Farms	5.58	http://bit.ly/2TqXLG0
19	Gemperle Farms	5.00	http://bit.ly/2BYfMV7
20	Mid-States Specialty Eggs	4.44	http://bit.ly/2w0ilyn
21	Wabash Valley Produce	4.40	http://bit.ly/2SHBofP
22	S & R Egg Farms	4.35	http://bit.ly/2s8CrcZ
23	Sunrise Farms Inc.	4.10	http://bit.ly/2GVTsRT
24	National Food Corp.	4.08	http://bit.ly/2QqbQ4K
25	Mahard Egg Farms	4.00	http://bit.ly/2RdZrX2
26	Ritewood/Oakdell Egg Farms	3.64	http://bit.ly/2QpAOkC
27	RW Sauder	3.50	http://bit.ly/2COI2em
28	Konos Inc.	3.40	http://bit.ly/2SAbRot
29	Forsman Farms	3.30	http://bit.ly/2FayPzN
30	Cooper Farms	3.20	http://bit.ly/2SBgy1x
31	Eshenshade Farms	2.80	http://bit.ly/2R9G4ON
32	Creighton Bros.	2.70	http://bit.ly/2sbaUHD
33	Minnich Poultry	2.52	http://bit.ly/2BZ29oP
34	CHS (formerly Hamilton Farm Bureau)	2.28	http://bit.ly/2Fdl6r9
35	Sunrise Acres Egg Farm	2.21	http://bit.ly/2R9vy9Z

1. Versova Holdings LLC is a holding company that combines the day-to-day operations of egg producers Centrum Valley Farms LLP, Trillium Farm Holdings LLC and Iowa Cage-free LLP.

2. Prairie Star Farms is the combined egg production of Hoosier Pride, Rindler Poultry, Ross-Medford Farms and J Star Farms.

Top US egg producers' rankings for 2019 *(continued)*

Ranking	Company	Hens (millions)	More information
36	Giroux's Poultry Farm	2.20	http://bit.ly/2VrZZqw
37	Pearl Valley Eggs	2.04	http://bit.ly/2Tzi8kk
38	Braswell Egg	1.87	http://bit.ly/2SDTi30
38	Heritage PMS/LaValle Egg Farms	1.87	http://bit.ly/2Qo9SBO
40	Kreher's Eggs	1.84	http://bit.ly/2Re7T8I
41	Country Charm Eggs	1.67	http://bit.ly/2Rb06bm
42	Schipper Eggs LLC	1.65	http://bit.ly/2GT9Bri
43	Hemmelgarn & Sons Inc.	1.60	http://bit.ly/2AtpABM
43	Lathem Farms	1.60	http://bit.ly/2F6QoAx
45	Berne Hi-Way Hatchery Inc.	1.50	http://bit.ly/2RjOkM7
45	Egg Innovations	1.50	http://bit.ly/2H59BEJ
45	Pine Hill Egg Ranch	1.50	http://bit.ly/2LVhiMs
48	Mercer Landmark	1.49	http://bit.ly/2AEsoB0
49	J.S. West & Company/JEM Eggs	1.36	http://bit.ly/2C9TXSL
50	Dakota Layers LLP	1.35	http://bit.ly/2FJjNS1
51	Simpson's Eggs	1.34	http://bit.ly/2Qx78IO
52	Demler Enterprises	1.33	http://bit.ly/2TCgvm1
53	Sperry Farms	1.30	http://bit.ly/2syjArJ
54	Fassio Egg Farms	1.28	http://bit.ly/2QUkqsR
55	3 Puglisi Brothers	1.27	http://bit.ly/2AQwCFE
56	Morning Fresh Farms	1.25	http://bit.ly/2FjJ7gZ
57	Hertzfeld Poultry Farms Inc.	1.22	http://bit.ly/2ADk8Rz
58	Wenger Feeds/Dutchland Farms	1.14	http://bit.ly/2R5JJNk
59	Hillside Poultry Farms Inc.	1.04	http://bit.ly/2FhhYv8
60	Feather Crest	1.00	http://bit.ly/2ARsfdn
61	Green Valley Poultry Farm	0.92	http://bit.ly/2ARcvaq
62	Wilcox Farms	0.90	http://bit.ly/2Cer1J6
63	Chino Valley Ranchers/MCM Poultry	0.82	http://bit.ly/2JS04V
64	Hidden Villa Ranch	0.73	http://bit.ly/2SYkjhy
65	The Happy Egg Co.	0.60	http://bit.ly/2CiRkhq
66	Sunrise Farms LLC	0.50	http://bit.ly/2VFvJIR
66	Weber Family Farms	0.50	http://bit.ly/2D96hUR
68	Vital Farms	0.30	http://bit.ly/2TDROB2
Total		337.76	

Layer numbers reported reflect the estimated number of hens housed on December 31, 2018.
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is also the largest egg producer in the world, according to WATT's Top Poultry Company rankings.

Rose Acre Farms remained the second largest U.S. egg producer, with 26.6 million hens housed. Versova Holdings LLC, which combines day-to-day operations of egg producers Centrum Valley Farms LLP, Trillium Farm Holdings LLC and Iowa Cage-free LLP, moved up to the third position in the survey with 21.10 million hens housed. Hillandale Farms fell to fourth position with 20 million hens.

Daybreak Foods, with 14 million hens, rounds out the top five egg producers.

Michael Foods moved from seventh in last year's survey to sixth position this year with 13.29 million hens. Rembrandt Enterprises fell to the seventh position in this year's survey with 12.5 million hens. The Center Fresh Group, Midwest

Poultry Services LLP, and Prairie Star Farms remained in the Nos. 8, 9 and 10 spots in this year's survey with 10.5, 9.8 and 9.4 million hens, respectively.

Industry concentration

The level of concentration of the U.S. egg industry hasn't changed much in the past five years. In the 2015 survey, the top five egg producers controlled the output of 34 percent of the hens reported in the Top Egg Company Survey. In the 2019 survey, the top five egg producers controlled the output of 36 percent of the survey's hens. The amount of the country's hens housed by the top 10 egg producers has increased from 50 percent in 2015 to 52.5 percent in 2019. There has been very little change in the proportion of the nation's layer flock controlled by the top 20 producers in the past five years; in 2015, it was 72 percent vs. 72.5 percent in 2019. ■

Egg producers: **Less than half of US hens will be cage free in 2025**

Many major foodservice and retail outlets have pledged to switch to 100 percent cage-free egg purchases by 2025, but not many are setting interim benchmarks to get there.

TERRENCE O'KEEFE

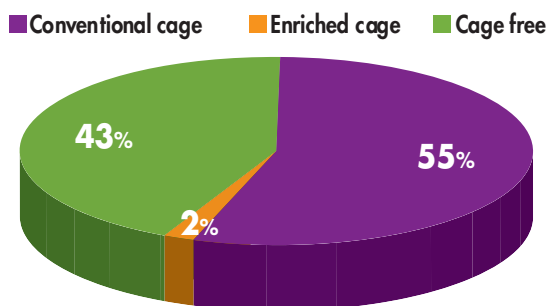
U.S. egg producers have been converting high-rise housing to cage free and have been able to house more hens in the same footprint. *Austin Alonzo*

As part of the 2019 Egg Industry magazine Top Egg Company Survey, U.S. egg producers were asked what percentage of their customers have pledged to purchase only cage-free eggs or egg products by some future date.

Twenty-seven egg producers answered this question. On average, according to their responses, 54 percent of their customers have made future cage-free egg or egg product purchase pledges. The responses to this question ranged from 0 to 100 percent and the median response was 65 percent. If the responses from two producers who already are 100 percent cage free are excluded, the average response of the other companies is 47 percent of customers have made future cage-free purchase pledges.

Producers were also asked what percentage of their customers have established interim benchmarks on their way to purchasing 100 percent of their eggs

2019 US egg producer predictions for how hens will be housed in 2025



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U.S. egg producers predict that 57 percent of the U.S. layer flock will still be housed in cages in 2025.

and egg products from cage-free hens by some future date. The average response was 20 percent, but 14 of the 27 responded that none of their customers had established interim goals for moving to 100 percent cage-free egg purchases. If the responses of egg producers that are already 100 percent cage free are excluded, then the average percentage of customers who have set interim cage-free egg purchase benchmarks falls to 12 percent.

Conversion of cage housing to cage free in 2018, 2019

In 2018, we ...

converted cage housing for	3.22 million hens
to cage-free housing for	4.07 million hens

In 2019, we plan to ...

convert cage housing for	4.57 million hens
to cage-free housing for	5.37 million hens

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Conversion of conventional high-rise cage houses to cage-free systems allows for more birds to be housed in the existing building footprint because manure is stored in another building.

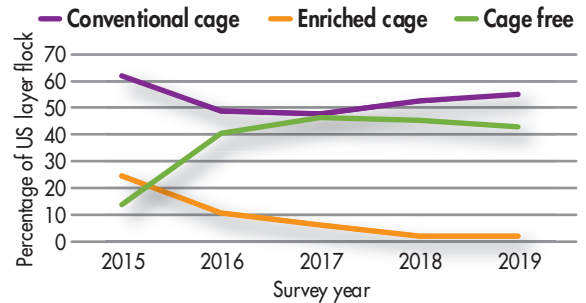
Prediction: Less than half of hens cage free in 2025

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Cage-Free Shell Egg report released Dec. 3, 2018, estimates the total U.S. cage-free layer flock (non-organic cage-free layers plus the certified organic cage-free layers) was 57.16 million. The December 2018 USDA Chicken & Egg report estimates the total U.S. table egg population at around 325 million hens, which puts the cage-free layer flock at 17.6 percent of the U.S. total flock. It is estimated that less than 1 percent of U.S. hens are housed in enriched cages.

Thirty-one egg producers provided their estimates of how they think hens in the U.S. will be housed in 2025. The average responses were 55 percent will be housed in conventional cages, 2 percent in enriched cages and 43 percent cage free. The responses for the percentage of hens housed cage free in the U.S. in 2025 ranged from a low of 20 percent to a high of 100 percent, with a median response of 40 percent.

Egg producers have been asked how they thought U.S. hens would be housed in the Top Egg company Survey every year since the 2015 survey. The percentage of U.S. hens that were predicted be housed cage free in 2025 jumped from 14 in the 2015 survey to 41 percent in 2016. The prediction for cage-free hen housing has remained in the mid- to low 40 percent range over the past three surveys.

US egg producer predictions for how hens will be housed in 2025



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U.S. egg producers consistently predicted over the past five Top Egg Company surveys that less than half of the layer flock will be housed cage free in 2025.

Major market disruption ahead?

To achieve the average prediction from the 2019 Top Egg Company survey — 43 percent of all hens housed — for the U.S. cage-free layer flock, additional cage-free housing for 88 million hens would need to be built or converted in the next six years. To accomplish this would require a conversion or new construction of housing for 14.67 million cage free hens per year. As was noted in the January 2018 issue, the passage of Proposition 12 in

New construction for layer housing in 2018, 2019

In 2018, we ...

built new building for	5.10 million hens
re-caged existing buildings for	0.19 million hens

In 2019, we plan to ...

add new conventional cage housing for	0.70 million hens
add new enriched/enrichable cage housing for	0.82 million hens
add new cage-free housing for	6.58 million hens

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Survey respondents report new buildings constructed in 2018 and 2019 will be able to house 11.68 million hens.

California might absorb the production of as many as 32 million additional cage-free hens as soon as 2021.

In December 2016, the USDA estimated the total U.S. cage-free layer flock at 37.63 million head. Based on USDA estimates, the U.S. cage-free flock has grown by only 13.53 million head in the past two years, less than half the rate needed to meet the U.S. egg producers' prediction of 43 percent of hens housed cage free in 2025.

Converting layer housing from cages to cage free

Cage-free layers are afforded more space per bird than are hens housed in conventional or enriched cages. However, survey respondents report that housing for 3.22 million head of cage-housed hens was converted to housing for 4.07 million head of cage-free hens in 2018. This is likely the result of conversion of pit houses to cage free, where the in-house manure storage area under the cages is utilized for cage-free housing in addition to the area of the house where the cages are placed.

Join us for the U.S. Top Egg Company Survey webinar on March 28 at 10 a.m. CDT. Register at: www.WATTAgNet.com/webinars

Survey respondents report intentions to convert 4.57 million head of cage housing to cage-free housing for 5.37 million layers in 2019.

New housing construction

Survey respondents report adding new buildings to house 5.1 million hens in 2018. They also reported re-caging housing for 0.19 million hens in 2018.

In 2019, survey respondents report intentions to add new housing for 6.58 million cage-free hens. Construction of cage housing has not stopped in the U.S. According to survey respondents, new housing will be constructed in 2019 for 0.7 million hens in conventional cages and 0.82 million hens in enriched/enrichable cages. ■

Top 20 US egg producers in 2019

Learn more about the companies WATT Global Media ranked as the 2019 top egg producers.

DEVEN KING

The top 20 U.S. egg companies account for 244.93 million birds. *Terrence O'Keefe*

The top 20 U.S. egg producers — according to data from Egg Industry's Top Egg Company Survey, which is part of WATT Global Media's database on the world's leading broiler, turkey and egg producers — are ranked according to the size of their layer flocks at the end of 2018.

Collectively, the top 20 U.S. egg companies account for 244.93 million birds.

1 Cal-Maine Foods, 40.25 million hens

The largest producer and marketer of shell eggs in the United States in fiscal 2018, sold approximately 1,037.7 million dozen shell eggs. As of Dec. 31, 2018, Cal-Maine had 40,246,000 laying hens.

Cal-Maine Foods named Sherman Miller president and chief operating officer, effective March 30, 2018.

In April 2018, Cal-Maine Foods issued a voluntary egg recall, as the involved eggs had the potential to be contaminated with *Salmonella Braenderup*. According

to a press release from Cal-Maine Foods, the company was notified of a *Salmonella Braenderup*-related recall issued by Rose Acre Farms on April 13. The Cal-Maine eggs in question were distributed from that same facility. The Cal-Maine recall amounts to one load, or 23,400 dozen eggs purchased from Rose Acre Farms and repackaged at Cal-Maine's facility in Dade City, Florida.

In June, Cal-Maine Foods named Josh Moore vice president of operations. Moore has responsibility for all of Cal-Maine Foods' production and processing facilities located in Ohio and Kentucky. He assumed the position previously held by Marc Ashby, who became the new director of special projects for the company.

The company named Max P. Bowman vice president and chief financial officer, effective Oct. 5. Bowman was also elected to the company's board of directors at the annual meeting of shareholders held in Jackson, Mississippi. Bowman replaced Tim Dawson.

Also, in October, Cal-Maine Foods started the 2019 fiscal year with a return to profitability and a

29.6 increase in net sales, which were \$340.6 million. Reporting the results for the first quarter, which ended on Sept. 1, the world's largest egg company reported a net income of \$12.4 million, compared with a loss of \$16 million for the first quarter of the 2018 fiscal year.

Cal-Maine Foods has closed the acquisition of substantially all of the assets of Featherland Egg Farms Inc., relating to its commercial shell egg production, processing, distribution and sale business. The company announced the finalized transaction in October.

The acquired assets include commercial egg production and processing facilities with capacity for approximately 600,000 laying hens, a feed mill and related production and distribution facilities near Marion, Texas.

Cal-Maine produces caged brown and white eggs, cage-free white and brown eggs, organic and free-range eggs, as well as specialty products. Most of its shell eggs are sold in the southwestern, southeastern, Midwest and Mid-Atlantic regions of the U.S. Cal-Maine sells shell eggs to most American retailers.

2 **Rose Acre Farms,** 26.6 million hens

Rose Acre Farms is a family-owned egg operation that claims the spot of second largest U.S. egg producer. As of Dec. 31, 2018, the company had 26.6 million layers in its flock. In addition to table eggs, Rose Acre Farms produces a variety of egg products ranging from liquid eggs and dried eggs to egg protein powder.

Rose Acre Farms contributed \$200,000 to Purdue University's new animal sciences complex, dedicated on March 22 on the school's campus.

In April, Rose Acre Farms voluntarily recalled 206,749,248 eggs because they were potentially contaminated with *Salmonella Braenderup*, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced on April 13. The eggs were distributed from Rose Acre's farm in Hyde County, North Carolina, and reached consumers in Colorado, Florida, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia through retail stores and restaurants via direct delivery.

In May, the FDA said proper rodent control methods were not being utilized and other sanitary measures were not being followed at Rose Acre Farms facilities connected to a recent *Salmonella Braenderup* outbreak.

In June, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced on its website that the multi-state outbreak of *Salmonella Braenderup* that was linked to eggs from Rose Acre Farms was over. The outbreak resulted in 45 people from 10 states becoming ill, and 11 of those people were hospitalized.

A fire claimed a Rose Acre Farms building south of Rensselaer, Indiana, on the evening of Oct. 16. Emergency personnel responded to a call concerning the fire. When responders arrived on the scene, they found the building fully engulfed and collapsing. Chief Deputy Pat Williamson, Jasper County Sheriff's Department, said in a telephone interview. There were no hens in the building, which was several hundred feet north of the main building on the property, Williamson said, adding that it was his understanding that the structure was a workshop and that "a lot of tools" were lost.

3 **Versova Holdings LLC, 21.1 million hens**

Versova, formed in April 2016, is one of the largest egg producers in the United States.

Versova combines day-to-day operations of egg producers Centrum Valley Farms LLP, Trillium Farm Holdings LLC and Iowa Cage-free LLP. Centrum Valley, Trillium and Iowa Cage-free will continue to exist independently. As of Dec. 31, 2018, the company's layer flock included 21.1 million laying hens. It produces caged and cage-free white and brown eggs, along with liquid egg products. Versova serves as a holding company with a new management team overseeing business functions of Centrum, Trillium and Iowa Cage-free. It handles marketing, customer relationships, information technology, operations, feed management, human resources and finance. This operation is owned by farm families with more than six generations of knowledge in egg production; those families are the Deans, the Hennings and the Boomsmas.

4 Hillandale Farms, 20 million hens

Hillandale Farms is one of the leading suppliers of shell eggs in the U.S. It has production facilities in the Northeast, Midwest and Southeast and supplies retailers and distributors throughout the eastern U.S. The company has 20 million layers and creates egg products.

In May, WTNH reported that Hillandale Farms lost more than 25,000 chickens as a result of a power outage caused by a storm. The 24-hour outage cost Hillandale Farms in Lebanon about half of its chickens in one part of the building. The backup power systems failed, according to the farm. WTNH reported that the farm, with the help of the Department of Agriculture, was investigating what went wrong.

5 Daybreak Foods, 14 million hens

Daybreak Foods Inc. is privately held and is involved in shell egg and egg products production. Its layer flock includes 14 million hens. It produces conventional white eggs and liquid egg products.

Daybreak Foods has been granted an air pollution control permit for its planned expansion project in Lake Mills, Wisconsin. The permit was approved by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources on Oct. 17, 2018. With the granting of the permit from the state agency, Daybreak Foods is authorized to construct three pullet houses, five layer barns and supporting equipment such as feed storage bins, heaters and emergency generators, two animal incinerators, three process boilers, two HVAC units, a corn storage bin and feed mill, reported the Lake Mills Leader. Daybreak Foods will have 18 months to complete the construction project.

6 Michael Foods, 13.29 million hens

Michael Foods Inc. is a leading food processor and distributor with business in egg products as well as refrigerated grocery and potato products. The company is the largest supplier of processed eggs in the world. The company is owned by Post Holdings Inc., which purchased it from GS Capital Partners for \$2.45 billion in 2014. In 2015, Post completed a \$90 million acquisition of Willamette Egg Farms, at the time the 30th

largest egg producer in the U.S. As of Dec. 31, 2018, its layer flock included 13.29 million birds.

Post Holdings' Refrigerated Foods segment saw its net sales increase 29.3 percent on a year-over-year basis for the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2018. The Refrigerated Foods segment includes the operations of egg products company Michael Foods. In a press release that offers an overview of Post Holdings' quarterly financial results, the company also stated that its foodservice egg net sales increased 9.2 percent, driven by a 5.1 percent volume increase and increased market-based pricing.

In January 2018, Post Holdings announced Steve Schonhoff had been promoted to senior vice president of integrated supply chain. The company combined its supply chain leadership for its Michael Foods and Bob Evans Foods businesses under Schonhoff, who previously was vice president, integrated supply chain for Michael Foods.

According to a company press release in February 2018, Post Holdings Inc. announced plans for its Michael Foods business to build a 150,000 square-foot manufacturing and distribution facility in Norwalk, Iowa. The \$85 million project was planned to begin in summer 2018. The plant, which will process eggs and pre-cooked egg products, is expected to be completed in 2019. The facility is expected to create 100-150 new jobs.

In May 2018, a Michael Foods plant location in Klingerstown, Pennsylvania, experienced a fire. All employees were safely evacuated, and no injuries were reported. The cause of the fire, which started in the duct work of an oven, was investigated. As of June, a company statement said the cause of the fire was still being investigated with repairs to the roof and electrical infrastructure in progress. The plant was anticipated to return to full operation by mid-July.

Also in June, a water boil order was issued by the municipal water association servicing its Michael Foods Lenox, Iowa, precooked egg facility.

Post Holdings revealed in the press release that it expects fiscal year 2019 capital expenditures to range between \$300 million and \$310 million. Two of those capital expenditure projects involve the company's egg operations.

7 Rembrandt Enterprises, 12.5 million hens

Rembrandt Enterprises, doing business as Rembrandt Foods, is privately held and focuses on producing egg products for the foodservice and ingredients industries. As of Dec. 31, 2018, the company's layer flock included 12.5 million hens. Rembrandt produces its egg products from white and brown conventionally produced, cage-free, free-range and organic eggs. Its products include liquid egg, dried egg, and hard-cooked, peeled eggs. Rembrandt produces consumer and institutional or bulk-packaged egg products.

In March 2018, Rembrandt was recognized as an Iowa Poultry Association member spotlight.

According to WDHN, in July, Rembrandt Foods notified employees that its Abbeville, Alabama, facility would close by the end of January 2019. More than 50 employees were expected to lose their jobs at the time of the report.

8 Center Fresh Group, 10.5 million hens

Center Fresh Group was founded by eight Iowa farm families. The company is comprised of five divisions involved in egg production: Center Fresh Egg Farm, Sioux County Egg Farm, Hawkeye Pride, Sioux County Pullets and Center Fresh Africa-Mozambique. The U.S. farms are in Iowa and Ohio. As of Dec. 31, 2018, the company's layer flock included 10.5 million hens. Center Fresh produces conventionally raised and cage-free eggs as well as liquid egg products.

9 Midwest Poultry Services LP, 9.8 million hens

Midwest Poultry Services LP is an Indiana-based shell egg producer for the retail market. It is a family-owned business that employs 500. As of Dec. 31, 2018, the company's layer flock included 9.8 million hens. The company produces conventional white eggs, cage-free eggs, free-range eggs, organic eggs and nutritionally enhanced eggs. According to the company website, it produces 5 million eggs per day and has a delivery range of more than 2,000 miles.

10 Prairie Star Farms, 9.4 million hens

Prairie Star Farms markets the combined egg production of Rindler Poultry, Ross-Medford Farms, Hoosier Pride and J Star Farms. The company raises eggs that are produced under animal care standards to meet all cage-free, California Shell Egg Food Safety Compliant and enriched colony housing regulations. As of Dec. 31, 2018, the company's layer flock included 9.4 million laying hens.

11 Herbruck's Poultry Ranch, 8.65 million hens

Herbruck's Poultry Ranch Inc. is Michigan's largest egg farm. As a fully integrated business, Herbruck's is involved in breeding, agriculture, feed and fertilizer production. The company also partners with 25 small farms to produce organic and cage-free eggs.

Herbruck's Poultry Ranch suffered a fire in an egg cooler at a facility in Lake Odessa, Michigan, on Feb. 9, 2018, but it was contained to the cooler area. Six fire departments from the area responded to the fire, according to the Sentinel Standard. The egg cooler, which measured about 70 feet by 100 feet, was considered a total loss. No hens were harmed in the fire, nor were any Herbruck's workers or emergency responders.

In March 2018, the company was one of six farms across the United States to receive U.S. Poultry & Egg Association's Family Farm Environmental Excellence Award during the 2018 International Production & Processing Expo in Atlanta.

According to an April 2018 report, nearly two years after Herbruck's Poultry Ranch announced its intent to build an egg production facility in Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, the company was still waiting to start construction. Officials from the Michigan-based egg company were in Pennsylvania on April 18 to cut the ribbon on a new cold storage warehouse project in the town of Chambersburg. While at the ceremony, according to a report from the Public Opinion, officials from the company also addressed questions about its plans to build what it hopes to be a cage-free egg

production facility with eight barns and 2.4 million hens. “The next step is to build the farm,” said Greg Herbruck, president of the company.

In September 2018, Herbruck’s Poultry Ranch celebrated 60 years of business. The company was founded by Marilyn and Harry Herbruck Jr. in Saranac, Michigan (Ionia County), where the company still has its headquarters.

As of Dec. 31, 2018, the company’s layer flock included 8.65 million hens. Herbruck’s produces white and brown conventionally raised eggs, cage-free eggs, organic eggs and nutritionally enhanced eggs. It also produces liquid egg products, consumer packed and institutional or bulk packaged egg products.

12 **Weaver Brothers,** 8.35 million hens

Established in 1929, Weaver Brothers Inc. is a fourth-generation family farm still owned and managed by the founding family with the fourth generation of the family now working in Versailles, Ohio. The company is fully integrated, featuring grain production, a feed mill, and egg production and processing. The company offers organic, cage-free, hard-cooked and liquid egg whites. As of Dec. 31, 2018, the company’s layer flock included 8.35 million hens.

13 **Hickman’s Egg Ranch,** 8.2 million hens

Founded in 1944, Hickman’s Egg Ranch, also known as Hickman’s Family Farms, is the largest shell egg producer west of the Rockies. It is a family-owned business with hens in Arizona and Colorado, distribution operations in Iowa, Nevada and California, and customers from Iowa to Hawaii. As of Dec. 31, 2018, the company’s layer flock included 8.2 million hens.

In October 2018, Hickman’s Family Farms was sued in federal court, as plaintiffs claimed the egg company’s farms in the Arizona communities of Tonopah and Arlington were heavily polluting the air with ammonia and strong odors. The plaintiffs, which include the

environmental group Don’t Waste Arizona, allege that the company is aware of the situation but is unwilling to do anything about it. Billy Hickman, the company’s vice president of operations, defended Hickman’s Family Farms, stating that he believed the odors people are complaining about are coming from dairy farms in the area.

In September 2017, the company said it was working to meet consumer demands by generating more cage-free egg products, and to branch out of the company’s traditional role of farming into the packaging realm to work with a California recycler to develop 100 percent recycled egg cartons. The company website says Hickman’s is the first and only egg producer packaging eggs in polyethylene terephthalate, known commonly as “PET,” the clear plastic used for water and soda bottle containers. PET is recognized as a safe, non-toxic, strong, lightweight, flexible material that is 100 percent recyclable. The company recycles more than 1 million water bottles weekly for its packaging.

14 **Opal Foods LLC, 8 million hens**

Opal Foods, an entity created by Visalia, California, private equity fund AGR Partners, was launched in May 2014 with the acquisition of Moark’s Midwest operations. As of Dec. 31, 2018, its layer flock included 8 million hens.

Ozarks Food Harvest received a donation of 23,400 dozen eggs from Opal Foods in March 2018 to feed families in southwest Missouri.

In May 2018, Brock Peterson, president of Opal Foods, announced that Opal had acquired the operating assets of Ham & Eggs LLC and The Good Eggs LLC, two egg-laying operations located in north-central Iowa. The acquired assets include commercial egg production and processing facilities with capacity for approximately 2.6 million laying hens.

The company has more than 250 employees, most of which are in the Neosho, Missouri, area. The company specializes in cage-free, organic and all-natural eggs with omega-3s. Opal Foods also provides Land O’Lakes with brown eggs.

15 Fremont Farms of Iowa, 7.33 million hens

Fremont Farms of Iowa is a producer and processor of liquid egg products. As of Dec. 31, 2018, its layer flock included 7,329,000 hens.

16 ISE America Inc., 6.1 million hens

ISE America Inc. is an integrated egg-laying and production operation. As of Dec. 31, 2018, it had nearly 6.1 million layers, as well as its own feed mill and shell egg processing plants. It also performs further egg processing, including fresh frozen eggs, liquid eggs and hard-cooked eggs. The company is a subsidiary of ISE Inc., headquartered in Japan. ISE Inc. entered the chicken genetics and breeding industries in Japan in 1912.

17 Sparboe Farms, 5.84 million hens

Started in 1954, Sparboe Farms started as a day-old chick company and has grown during the past 60 years to become a major shell egg producer and marketer in the United States. Its subsidiary Sparboe Foods provides egg products. The company also owns Agri-Tech, which produces premixes for lower feed cost. As of Dec. 31, 2018, its layer flock included about 5.84 million hens. It offers a broad platform of white and specialty eggs in a variety of packaging options, along with vegetarian-fed brown eggs, cage-free brown eggs and organic eggs.

18 Kreider Farms, 5.58 million hens

The Kreider family, under the third-generation leadership of Ron Kreider, and a staff of approximately 475 people, operates a farming business encompassing approximately 3,000 acres. The dairy and egg operations, which house 1,700 dairy cows and 6 million chickens, supply retail and wholesale customers with milk, ice cream and eggs. Kreider Farms supplies shell eggs to supermarkets and wholesalers in the northeastern United States and sells

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cage-free eggs under the Noah's Pride brand. Kreider is the largest egg producer in Pennsylvania with facilities in Mount Joy, Manheim, Middletown and Mount Pleasant. As of Dec. 31, 2018, the company's layer flock included 5.5 million hens. Kreider produces white and brown, conventionally raised and cage-free, organic and nutritionally enhanced eggs.

According to a November 2018 report from Digital Journal, the company's products will now be available at Giant Food Stores in central Pennsylvania. This expansion comes as part of Kreider Farms' intentional growth strategy for its dairy business, which included a \$5 million investment in generating new production capacity, completed in 2017.

19 Gemperle Farms, 5 million hens

Gemperle Farms produces all varieties of eggs from enriched colony barn eggs to specialty eggs such as browns, organic, cage free, omega-3 and cage-free fertile. All of the company's eggs are produced without hormones or antibiotics. As of Dec. 31, 2018, the company's layer flock included 5 million hens.

20 Mid-States Specialty Eggs, 4.44 million hens

Mid-States Specialty Eggs is an egg producer with a layer flock of 4,438,000 million hens. Mid-States Specialty Eggs was founded in 2008 and is based in Smithton, Missouri, with certified organic farms in Missouri and Arkansas and grading operations also in both states. According to the company's website, "Eggs graded by Mid-States Specialty Eggs are sold by Eggs R Us Inc." Mid-States Specialty Eggs is a certified producer of free-range, cage-free, pasture-raised, organic and non-GMO eggs. ■