

GEORGIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



GEORGIA BUSINESS HISTORY INITIATIVE

Sharing the Stories of the Businesses that Built Georgia



**fieldale farms
corporation**





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FIELDALE FARMS

A PROFILE IN GEORGIA'S
BUSINESS HISTORY

Fieldale Farms has emerged from a local, homegrown business to be one of the largest independent poultry producers in the world. Family-owned and located in north Georgia, Fieldale Farms has a significant contributor to the economy and workforce in the state.

FIELDALE FARMS

A PROFILE IN GEORGIA'S BUSINESS HISTORY



DID YOU KNOW?

- Georgia produces more than 20 million pounds of chicken and 11 million eggs per day.



Beginnings

In 1972, Joe Hatfield and brothers Lee and Tom Arrendale purchased the Northeast Georgia Poultry Operations of the Ralston-Purina Corporation. They named their new company Fieldale Farms, a combination of their last names. Both Hatfield and the Arrendales came from families with extensive experience in the Georgia poultry industry. Hatfield owned Gainesville Fryer, a poultry processing company. The Arrendale family owned a feed store and 10,000 acres with 22 poultry farms, a hatchery, breeders, and a poultry processing plant. With a combined experience of more than 70 years in the poultry industry, Hatfield and the Arrendale brothers were well-poised to make the company a success, and they increased the value of the company to more than seven times the original value in just ten years.

Top: Fieldale Farms. Left: Arrendale Hatchery.

All images in this publication are courtesy of Fieldale Farms unless otherwise noted.

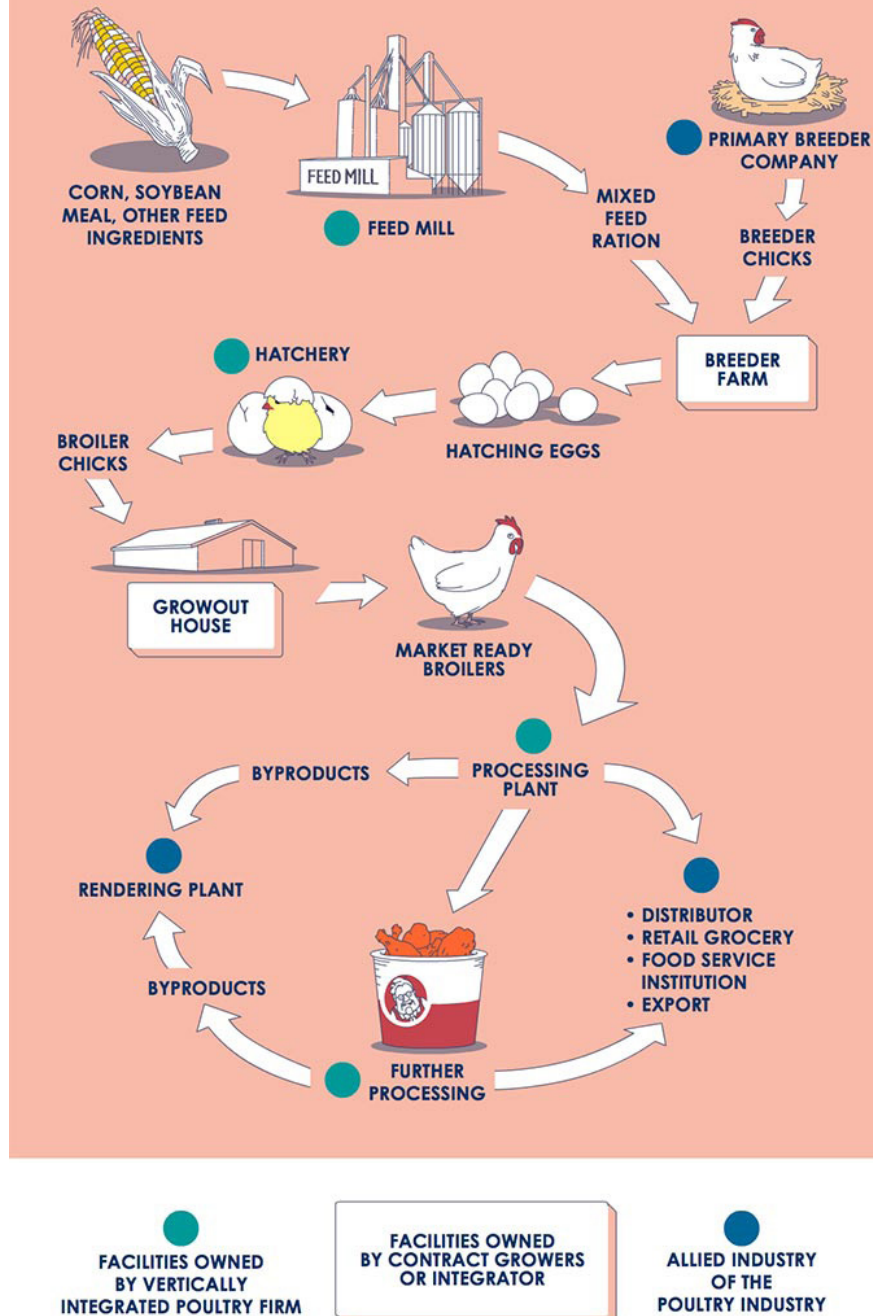
Vertical Integration

Fieldale Farms is a vertically integrated poultry producer, which means that the company owns all the aspects of production including raw materials, processing, and distribution, from the hatching of the chicks to the sale of poultry products used in homes and restaurants around the world. The company specializes in raising broiler chickens, which is a chicken that is bred and raised specifically for meat production. All the chickens processed by Fieldale Farms are raised from hatchlings purchased from companies that specialize in breeding chickens.

Once a hen lays an egg, the egg is removed from the nesting box and transferred to a **hatchery** for **incubation**. The incubation process takes three weeks for the eggs to hatch. Fieldale Farms then sends its chicks to one of over 350 independent, family-owned farms in Georgia and South Carolina where they are raised in houses with strict environmental conditions and feed tailored to their specific nutritional needs. The broilers stay on the farms until they reach their target weight.



TYPICAL OPERATION OF A VERTICALLY INTEGRATED POULTRY FIRM



Right: Flow chart depicting a typical vertically integrated broiler company. *By Christopher Dang.* Left: Poultry Farm.

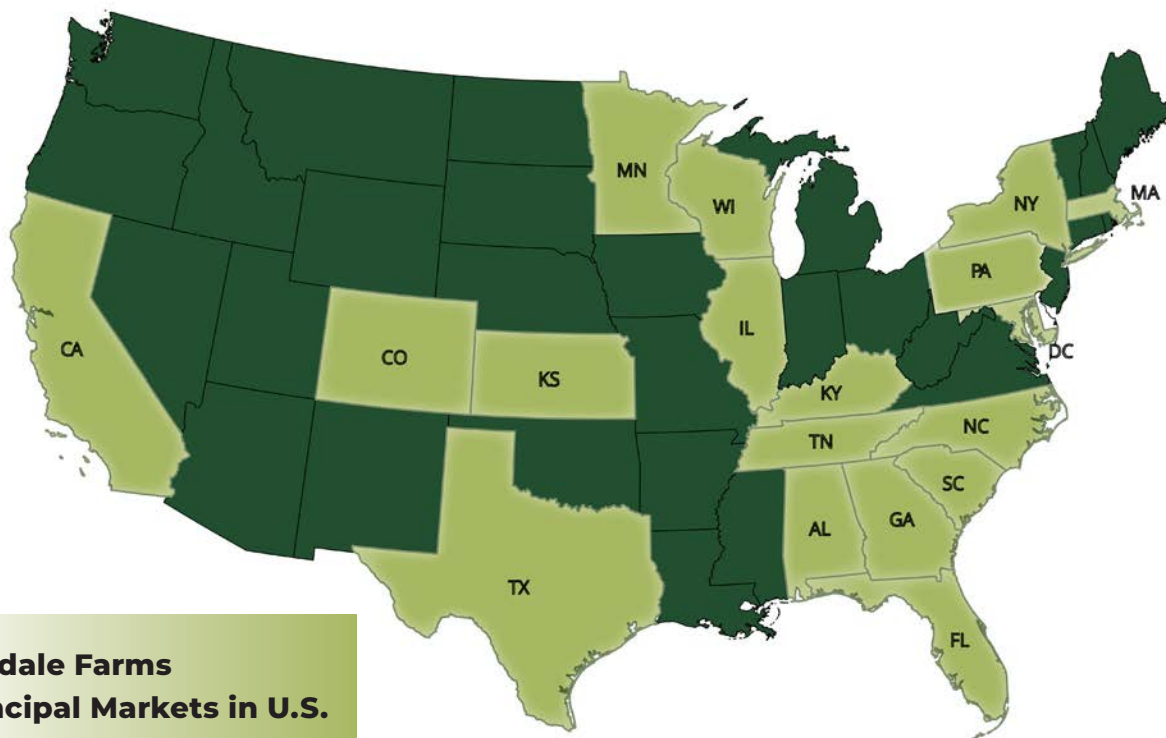


The broilers are then transported to one of Fieldale Farms' two processing plants. A third processing plant specializes in creating various products with specific cuts, marinades, and breeding for specific restaurant chains and grocery stores.

Processing and Distribution

Fieldale Farms processes about 3 million chickens per week. The chicken is sold fresh in tray packs for the grocery store as well as in bulk to restaurants. A portion of the chicken is also marinated, breaded, and fully cooked to customer specifications, mainly for restaurants. Fieldale Farms is proud to own and produce the private label Springer Mountain Farms®, seen in restaurants and grocery stores across the country. The company uses the latest technology to secure the chain of production and to ensure that its products are healthy and safe for consumers around the world.





To ensure consistency in every bird, Fieldale Farms manufactures a variety of feed at the company's two feed mills and uses an on-site laboratory for testing. The company uses 100% U.S. grown corn and soybeans in their feed produced by local farms mainly in the Midwest. To qualify for the Springer Mountain Farms® label, birds must be certified by the United States Department of Agriculture to have received no antibiotics and have been fed an all-vegetable diet, with no animal byproducts. In addition to the governmental approvals, Springer Mountain Farms® was also the world's first American Humane Certified™ chicken producer. This ensures all Springer Mountain Farms® chickens are treated with care and respect, and their policies and procedures are backed by science and approved as humane.



Bottom: Fieldale Farms feed mill and truck.





Top: Fieldale Farms wastewater treatment tanks.
Bottom: Fieldale Farms employees and partners.

Fieldale Farms is committed not only to keeping the food supply safe but also to protecting and preserving the environment. Good environmental practices are not only good for the planet, but they are also good for business. Fieldale Farms has invested in environmentally sound practices such as recyclable packaging, tree farming, land management, and wastewater treatment. In 2021, the company earned the Industrial Wastewater Treatment Facility of the Year award for its efforts to reclaim and reuse wastewater.

While cutting-edge technology and smart environmental practices make Fieldale Farms an industry leader, the real key to the company's success is its employees. Many of the employees are second- or third-generation workers for the company. Fieldale Farms employs a diverse workforce. A large percent of the company's 4,700 employees are ethnic or racial minorities who speak more than 27 different languages.

Continuing to build on its rich history, Fieldale Farms is looking to the future. The company is working with its stakeholders to make improvements to the supply chain and in the animal care and environmental practices.



CASE STUDY

Fieldale Farms and the Industrialization of the Poultry Industry

Poultry was not always a big business in Georgia. At the end of World War I, many of the state's farmers were still growing cotton. Chickens were mainly raised by women for food or eggs that could be sold or traded for items that could not be produced on the farm. However, when faced with economic hardship caused by the arrival of the boll weevil and the Great Depression, Georgia's farmers were looking for new economic opportunities. The answer was provided by Georgia feed merchant Jesse Jewell, who made large-scale poultry farming affordable.

In 1936, Jewell began selling baby chicks and feed on **credit**, with the promise of buying back the adult chickens at a price that would cover his costs and allow the farmers to make a **profit**. The process was so successful that the number of chickens raised in Georgia rose quickly from 1.2 million birds in 1935 to over 2 million just four years later. Poultry quickly became the new **cash crop**.

In response to the Great Depression, the United States government passed a series of acts aimed at helping the economy recover. Two of the New Deal programs were designed specifically to help farmers.

The first program was the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA). Passed in May 1933, the program attempted to raise farm prices by limiting supply and paying farmers not to

The Great Depression and the New Deal

What was the Great Depression?

The Great Depression was an economic decline that began in 1929 and lasted until WWII. This period saw drastic deflation and widespread unemployment in the United States and around the world.

What was the New Deal?

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt promised a "New Deal for the American people," which included a series of government programs aimed at economic recovery. Forty-three new federal agencies/programs were created to carry out the new programs of the New Deal. Several of the programs came to an end by the 1940s, but many are still in operation today.



WPA mural, Cohen Building, Washington, D.C. *Courtesy of the Library of Congress.*

Selected Timeline of New Deal Programs

March 31, 1933

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)

May 12, 1933

Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA)

May 12, 1933

Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA)

June 10, 1933

National Park Service (NPS)

June 16, 1933

Farm Credit Act

May 11, 1935

Rural Electrification Administration (REA)

Using both this case study and [this information from the Living New Deal](#), investigate the impact of these programs in Georgia.

Questions to consider

- How were these programs intended to rebuild the economy?
- How were they implemented?
- How did they help Georgia's citizens?



grow crops; however, the program did not benefit all farmers. Payments typically went to the landowners, while the majority of Georgia farmers were sharecroppers or **tenant farmers**, and therefore did not benefit

from the government subsidies. During the 1930s, Georgia experienced a decline in sharecropping, resulting in significantly fewer people farming, and leading to the creation of larger farms.

WHAT IS SHARECROPPING?

Sharecropping was an agricultural system that developed after the Civil War as a contract labor system. Under this system, Southern landowners could keep their land and hire out laborers who were paid with a portion of the crop at the end of the season, rather than through monetary wages.

The second program was the Rural Electrification Act (REA). Passed in May 1936, the REA brought electricity to rural areas during the 1940s and 1950s. Electricity made it possible for farmers to take advantage of the latest technologies, which significantly reduced the man-hours needed to complete farm tasks, requiring fewer people to work larger farms.

Before the REA, chicken was a seasonal product. Farmers brought their chickens to the market each spring, and with all the chickens

PRIMARY SOURCE INVESTIGATION:

"About Chickens"

by Jos. Wardin, *The Atlanta Constitution*, March 3, 1912, page 44.
(Courtesy of NewspaperArchive)

- Based on this article from 1912, what were the benefits of using an incubator?
- How might expanded access to electricity impact farmers?
- How do you think the Rural Electrification Act impacted the use of incubators on a large scale?

About Chickens

By JOS. WARDIN.

HOW INCUBATOR BENEFITS FARMER.

1. It enables him to start his chickens absolutely free from lice that otherwise would stop growth and cause death.
2. It cares for all the eggs that are incubated, none being broken by hens.
3. It saves the time otherwise lost in feeding and dusting the hens, cleaning nests and removing broken eggs.
4. It permits him to start the broody hens laying again, instead of wasting three weeks setting on eggs.
5. It guards against the loss of high-priced settings of eggs which the hen may have refused to set upon after a day or two of incubation, thus spoiling them.
6. It prevents the multiplication of lice in the fowl house or barn, where the hens would set.
7. It may be operated in or near his own residence, where his wife has an easy access to it in all weathers, so saving her time, guarding her health and sweetening her temper.
8. It hatches the chicks at a time when the hen won't set, and enables him to make \$50 on 100 chicks in March or April, for which in June or July he would probably get only about \$20, after paying three months' additional feed bill.
9. When not in use hatching his own eggs he can run his machine for the benefit of his neighbors at 5 cents per egg, thereby soon paying its cost.
10. In ten weeks he can hatch all the chicks he can well care for, and have them up and out of danger long before the hot weather is upon him. An up-to-date, progressive farmer cannot do without an incubator.

reaching the market at the same time, prices tended to be lower. This all changed with the advent of electricity. Electric heaters and lights with timers allowed farmers to raise chickens year-round, which helped to avoid overproduction and stabilize prices. Farmers could keep pace with the market by either slowing down or speeding up the growing cycle to match demand. The growing cycle could be adjusted by controlling the amount of light to which chickens were exposed. Increased light meant that chickens "slept less, ate more, and grew faster."

Other improvements such as electric water pumps and **brooders** saved farmers time and labor. This allowed for increased production, including more poultry houses and larger flocks. **Mechanization** allowed farmers to raise multiple flocks per year. Raising chickens had evolved from being "women's work" to being a male-dominated industry.

Georgia went from being ranked seventeenth in the nation for chicken production in 1934, to fourth in the nation by 1943.

The industrialization of the poultry industry brought about another development at the end of the 1930s. Jesse Jewell, the owner of Hall County's seed-and-feed store, began purchasing facilities that would allow him to own all phases of the business in one company, including **raw materials**, **processing**, and **distribution**. This became known as vertical integration. In 1941, Jewell purchased a hatchery, and in 1954 he completed the vertical integration of his company when he purchased a feed mill and **rendering plant**. Jewell was an innovative force in the poultry industry. Not only was he the first to trademark frozen chicken, but he was also the first to hire African-American workers.

Before World War II, there was not a large consumer demand for poultry; however, that changed with the United States' entry into World War II in 1941. Shortly after the U.S. entered the war, the government began to ration red meat. This caused an increased demand for poultry. Georgia responded by producing more chickens, increasing from 2.8 million in 1940 to over 10 million by 1942.

The U.S. Army quickly became the prime buyer of chicken, and the government soon implemented regulations and standards for inspections and increased production. The regulations made it difficult for small farmers to compete with large, mechanized farms. Despite the regulations, poultry farming remained extremely profitable until the end of the war. In 1946, the government canceled all its poultry orders and lifted the rations on red meat. This caused a surplus of frozen chicken in the market and poultry prices plummeted. Farmers lost money, but integrators such as Jewell made up the financial loss through the sale of chicken houses or machinery which they required farmers to buy as part of their contracts.

After seeing the prosperity gained while they were away, many returning soldiers were eager to start commercial farms despite **county extension agents** cautioning against relying solely on poultry farming to earn a living. Among the returning soldiers were Lee and Tom Arrendale. By 1950, there were over



Jewell Poultry Parade, 1955. *Courtesy of the Northeast Georgia History Center.*

7,000 commercial poultry farms in Georgia. In 1951, Georgia became the leading poultry-producing state in the nation. By the 1960s, Georgia's poultry farmers sold over 400 million chickens and 2 billion eggs each year.

As the industry grew, integrators required that farmers continually purchase equipment and make improvements to modernize and mechanize their farms. As a result, farmers provided almost 50 percent of the **capital** needed to run an integrated firm, and most of them had to work at other jobs just to make ends meet. Farmers who couldn't afford the improvements or wanted to raise and sell chickens independent of integrators found that it was impossible to continue farming. The only choices they had were to agree with the integrator's contract terms or stop farming altogether.

PRIMARY SOURCE INVESTIGATION:

Ration Books

During World War II (WWII), in order to supply both the American people at home and soldiers abroad, the federal government established a system to ration high-demand goods. Each person was issued a specific number of "points," in the form of rations books and stamps, with which they could purchase these specified items. Items that were rationed included tires, gasoline, sugar, coffee, meat, cheese, and many other every-day supplies.

Look closely at the ration books.

- What kind of information is required?
- Why do you think the personal details were requested?
- How might someone try to get more items than allowed?

Further investigate rationing at the [National World War II Museum](#).

WWII ration books. [Georgia Historical Society](#).

and indic

Any person signing on behalf of Book Holder must sign his or her own name below

(Signature of, or on behalf of, Book Holder)

[Book Holder's Own Name]

I, the undersigned, do hereby certify that I have observed all the conditions and regulations governing the issuance of this War Ration Book; that the "Description of Book Holder" contained herein is correct; that an application for issuance of this book has been duly made by me or on my behalf; and that the statements contained in said application are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Certificate of Book Holder

The Stamps contained in this Book are valid only after the lawful holder of this Book has signed the certificate below, and are void if detached contrary to the Regulations. (A father, mother, or guardian may sign the name of a person under 18.) In case of questions, difficulties, or complaints, consult your local Ration Board.

Certificate of Registrar

to the Rationing Orders and Regulations of PRICE ADMINISTRATION, an

to whom the book is issued:

First name: Rebecca Middle name: (Middle name)

(Street or R. F. D.)

Johnston N.C. (City or town)

(Street No. or P. O. Box No.)

Belmont (City or town)

5 ft 4 in. (Height) 148 lbs. (Weight) 37 yrs. (Age) Sex { Male ☐ Female ☒ (Color of eyes) blue (Color of hair) light

has been issued the attached War Ration Stamps this 4th day of May, 1942, upon the basis of an application signed by himself ☐, herself ☒, or on his or her behalf by his or her husband ☐, wife ☐, father ☐, mother ☐, exception ☐. (Check one.)

(Registrar)

Local Board No. 51-1 County Johnston State N.C.



War Ration Book OF AMERICA

WARNING

1 Punishments ranging as high as Ten Years Fine, or Both, may be imposed under Regulations thereof arising out of infractions of Regulations.
2 This book must not be transferred. It must be on behalf of the person to whom it has presenting it thereby represents to the Office an agency of the United States Government, and its use for any misuse of this book it may be taken from the holder by the Office of Price Administration.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA OFFICE OF PRICE ADMINISTRATION

WAR RATION BOOK No. 3

Identification of person to whom issued: PRINT IN FULL

First name: Lilla Middle name: M Last name: Hawes

Street number or rural route 23 East 34th St.

City or post office Savannah State Georgia

AGE 25 SEX F WEIGHT 136 Lbs. HEIGHT 5 Ft. 4 In. OCCUPATION

SIGNATURE Mrs. J. M. Hawes (Person to whom book is issued. If such person is unable to sign because of age or incapacity, another may sign in his behalf.)

WARNING

This book is the property of the United States Government. It is unlawful to sell it to any other person, or to use it or permit anyone else to use it, except to obtain rationed goods in accordance with regulations of the Office of Price Administration. Any person who finds lost War Ration Book must

LOCAL BOARD ACTION

Issued by (Local board number) (Date)

Street address

State



In the following decade, **overproduction** and lower poultry prices caused many of Georgia's integrators to lose money and sell their companies to large corporations, among those who sold their companies were Joe Hatfield, the owner of Gainesville Fryer, and the Arrendales. Each sold their respective companies to Ralston-Purina in 1961, and then went to work for the company as general managers.

Ralston-Purina went on to become one of the world's largest producers of broilers; however, in 1971, the corporation decided to sell off its Northeast Georgia poultry operations. In an odd twist of fate, Hatfield and the Arrendale brothers were able to purchase the poultry division from Ralston-Purina. In 1972, they established their new company in Habersham County and named it Fieldale Farms, a combination of their last names.

Large integrators, like Fieldale Farms, located their hatcheries and processing plants in rural areas near the farms where the chickens were raised. This led to the poultry industry being concentrated in a small area of the state. While locating processing plants near chicken farms made it easier and cheaper for the integrators, rural areas have a smaller available workforce, making it difficult to find employees.

Rural areas across the state experienced a decline in population following World War II. Many of the state's residents were drawn to urban areas looking for employment with the more than 800 new industries and regional offices that had relocated here after the war. Georgia's urban population grew during the 1980s and 1990s due to an influx of people moving from other states and countries.

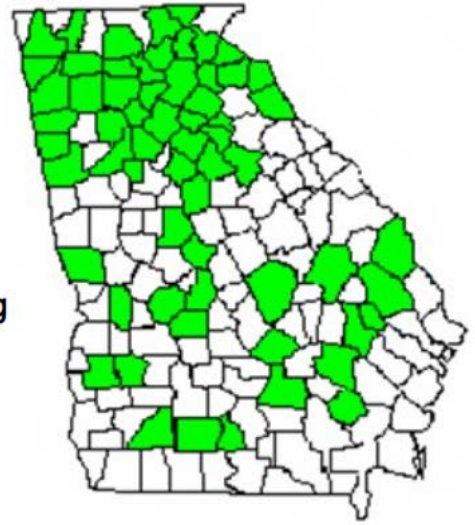
Poultry Employment Across Georgia

Chicken Geography

- Based on the map to the right and [this article in the New Georgia Encyclopedia](#), where is the poultry industry predominantly located?
- Where would you expect to find the largest concentration of the poultry workforce?

59 Counties with one or more:

Broiler Processing
 Fowl Processing
 Further Processing
 Breeder Facility
 Egg Packing
 Egg Products
 Hatchery
 Feed Mill
 By-products Processing



Poultry Employment Across Georgia map. Prepared by Georgia Poultry Federation, July 2012.

Experiencing labor shortages and price instability due to overproduction, integrators turned to mechanization to control production better and reduce the need for workers; however, increased mechanization made the work less desirable to the those who worked in the plants during the 1960s and 1970s.

As more and more local workers left the industry, migrant workers from Mexico helped ease the labor shortage. In 1994, the United States entered the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Canada and Mexico. The purpose of the agreement was to increase trade between the nations and make it easier for nonimmigrant workers in specific industries to work. The influx of migrant workers caused a cultural shift as the number of Latinos in North Georgia

increased from several hundred to more than 50,000 in less than twenty years. In the 1990s the Latino population grew in Georgia by 300 percent, and by nearly 500 percent in Hall County in north Georgia.

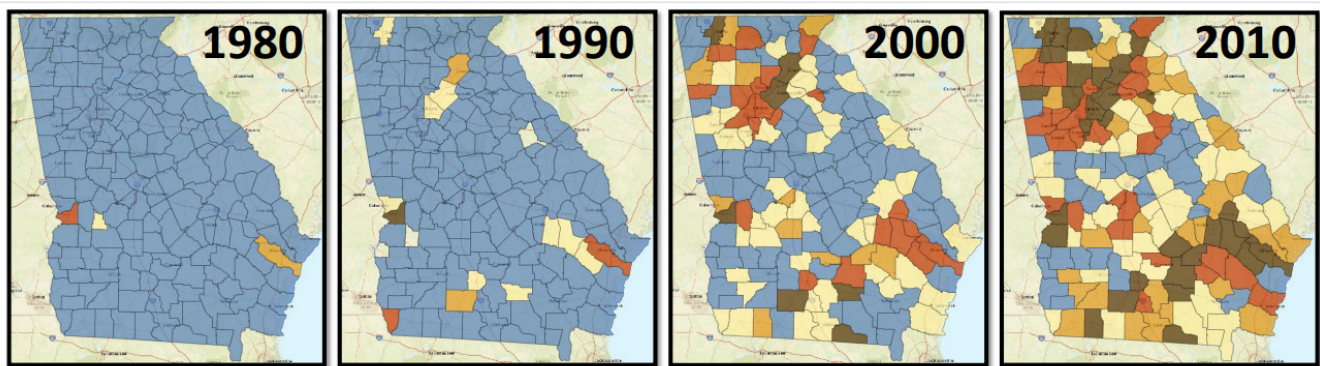
Innovative processes and a focus on animal welfare and sustainability has helped Fieldale Farms grow and become one of the nation's largest processors of chicken, producing millions of pounds of chicken per week. Fieldale Farms products can be found in homes and restaurants across the country and around the globe.

The Population Shifts from the 1940s to Today

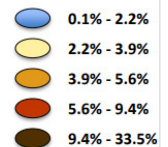
Using the following resources, what trends can you identify about Georgia's population?

- What are the similarities between this map and the map of Poultry Employment Across Georgia?
- What can you infer about Georgia's workforce?
- What other questions does it raise?
- Based on the workforce chart, is the labor force increasing or decreasing?

Percent Hispanic/Latino Population, by County, 1980-2010



The maps above show the growth pattern of the Hispanic/Latino population (by county) from 1980 to 2010. **In 1980, the Hispanic/Latino population was concentrated in and around the state's military bases – Fort Benning (Chattahoochee County) and Fort Stewart (Liberty County).** However, beginning in the 1990s, the Hispanic/Latino population began to migrate to the other major metros in the state. **By 2010, the Hispanic/Latino population makes up over 2% of the population in the majority of the counties of the state, with many counties over 5% Hispanic/Latino, and a few approaching 30% or more.** **Whitfield County**, the global leader in the carpet industry, **has the highest concentration of Hispanics/Latinos currently, with Hispanics/Latinos making up 33.5% of the total population.**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010



regional impact + local relevance



Georgia Workforce

	2022		2000		1990	
Civilian Labor Force	Foreign Born	U.S. Born	Foreign Born	U.S. Born	Foreign Born	U.S. Born
Population (16 and older)	1,105,792	7,602,518	520,438	5,732,570	157,747	4,774,105
% in the civilian labor force	71.7%	61.9%	67.7%	64.9%	70.4%	66.4%
Civilian labor force (age 16 and older)	792,853	4,705,959	352,116	3,717,953	111,063	3,168,357
% unemployed of the total civilian labor force	3.0%	4.4%	5.2%	5.4%	5.4%	5.6%
Civilian Employed Workers (age 16 and older)	769,549	4,503,627	333,679	3,515,685	105,075	2,989,668
% change: 2000-2022	130.6%	28.1%				
% change: 1990-2000	217.6%	17.6%				

Top: Percent Hispanic/Latino Population, by County, 1980-2010. *Neighborhood Nexus*.

Bottom: Georgia Workforce Map. *Migration Policy Institute*.

VOCABULARY

Annual revenue - The amount of money a company makes in a year from its normal business operations.

Broilers - A chicken that is bred and raised specifically for meat production.

Brooders - A device or structure for the rearing of young chickens or other birds.

Capital - Money and or equipment used to start or run a business.

Cash crop - A crop grown for money.

County Extension Agent - An agent employed by the county government to work with the farmers to increase crop yield, prevent erosion, and eliminate blights or pests.

Credit - The ability of a customer to obtain goods or services before payment is based on the trust that payment will be made in the future.

Distribution - The process of giving things out to several people or spreading or supplying something.

Hatchery - A place where the hatching of poultry eggs is artificially controlled for commercial purposes.

Incubation - The process in which a bird, etc, keeps its eggs warm until the young bird comes out (hatches).

Mechanization - The introduction of machines or automatic devices into a process, activity, or place.

Overproduction - Producing too much of something; when supply exceeds demand.

Poultry - Poultry are domesticated birds kept by humans to harvest useful animal products such as meat, eggs, or feathers. The practice of raising poultry is known as poultry farming.

Processing - Performing a series of mechanical or chemical operations on (something) to change or preserve it.

Profit - The money a company makes after all its expenses have been paid.

Raw Material - The basic material from which a product is made.

Rendering - The processing and cooking of poultry meat that remains after an animal is slaughtered and the meat used for food has been removed.

Rendering Plant - A factory where waste products and livestock carcasses are converted into industrial fats and oils (such as tallow, used to make soap) and other products (such as fertilizer).

Tenant Farmer - A poorer farmer who did not own land and had to live on and work the land of others, either for wages or a share of the crop they produced.

Georgia Standards of Excellence addressed throughout this document:

- Information Processing Skills K-12: SSIPS6, SSIPS1
- Map and Globe Skills K-12: SSMGS6 – 8; SSMGS10 – 11
- Middle School Social Studies: SS8H8 – 10; SS8E2

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Founded in 1839, the Georgia Historical Society is the premier independent statewide educational and research institution responsible for collecting, examining, and teaching Georgia and American history. Founded in 1839, the Georgia Historical Society is the oldest continuously operating historical society in the South and one of most prestigious in the nation.

Making the past relevant to the present is at the core of our mission. Through our award-winning public programs, publications, teacher training, and research services, we aim to use the power of our shared history to offer all Americans new and deeper perspectives on the past and present.

What We Believe

We believe in the value of history.

We believe that public knowledge of our past is fundamental to our future.

We believe our shared history is what binds us together as Americans.



Each year the Georgia Historical Society selects iconic companies in our state to be honored through the Georgia Business History Initiative.

By showcasing these companies, GHS seeks to teach Georgia students, citizens, and tourists alike about the pivotal role of Georgia's leading businesses in the economic, cultural and social development of Georgia and the United States.

