LIVES ON THE LINE

THE HUMAN COST OF CHEAP CHICKEN

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From agriculture to industrialization

1950
Farms selling chickens: 1,636,705
Chickens sold: 581,038,865
Chickens per farm: 355

2007
Broiler operations: 27,091
Chickens: 8,914,828,122
Chickens per farm: 329,070
Chicken production has skyrocketed to 8.5 billion chickens/year.
4 companies control almost 60 percent of the market

Top 10 companies control 78% of the market
4 companies, dozens of brands, hundreds of products

- Tyson 23%
- Pilgrim's 19%
- Perdue 8%
- Sanderson Farms 8%

Other brands include:
- Savale
- Weaver
- State Fair
- To-Ricos
- WingZings
- Gold Kist Farms
- Jimmy Dean
- Bell Pets
- Bonici
- Wing Dings
- Hillshire Farm
- Up N' Out
- Handy Dandy
- Pinnacle Chicken
- Harvestland
- Bryan
- Coleman Organic
- Savoro
- Tostitos
- Country Pride
- Lady Aister
- Power Spz
- Aidells
- Nuevo Grille
- Tastybird
- Nature Roast
- Super-Chikn
- Sugar Free
- Coleman Natural
- KD Kings Delight
Inside a poultry plant
Life on the line

- Low wages of declining value
- Vulnerable populations working in a climate of fear
- High rates of injury and illness
- Denial of benefits and proper medical treatment
Woeful compensation

Workers average ~$11/hour
~$20,000-25,000/year

40% decline in value since 1980s

Poverty level for family of 3 = $20,090

Qualify for:
- Food stamps
- School lunch
- Head Start

Pilgrim’s CEO: $9 million
Up 290% in just 4 years
Health & safety risks to poultry workers

POULTRY WORKERS SUFFER INJURIES AND ILLNESSES AT RATES FAR HIGHER THAN OTHER WORKERS IN THE US

- Occupational illness cases 2013: 5x higher
- Carpal tunnel syndrome 2011: 7x higher
- Repetitive strain from microtasks 2015: 10x higher
Health & safety risks to poultry workers

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) surveyed 302 current and former poultry workers in Alabama.4
Climate of fear

Harassment and discrimination in the plants
A COALITION WORKING FOR CHANGE

RWDSU
Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union

UFCW
a VOICE for working America

Oxfam America

CATA
Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas – Farmworkers Support Committee

Food Chain Workers Alliance

Interfaith Worker Justice

Worker Justice

WorkChainMix

Worker Center 2002

Nebraska Appleseed

Coalition of Black Trade Unionists

N. W. Arkansas Worker Justice Center

Centro de Derechos Laborales

NELP
National Employment Law Project

SPLC
Southern Poverty Law Center

CPR
Center for Progressive Reform
Raising awareness and mobilizing consumers (2015)

Also: poultry buyers, faith community, investors, and students
No Relief: Report on denial of bathroom breaks (2016)

Many other industrial production plants have systems in place to make sure workers can use the bathroom. But the poultry industry cuts corners on worker safety—to enrich the few owners at the top.

DEBBIE BERKOWITZ
Senior fellow, National Employment Law Project
former OSHA official

#GIVETHEMABREAK OXFAM America
No Relief: Report on denial of bathroom breaks (2016)
Petition Delivery to Tyson Foods (2016)

Faith and community allies joined with members of the Northwest Arkansas Workers’ Justice Center to deliver petitions to the Tyson Foods headquarters in Springdale, Arkansas.

150,000 signatures from all 50 states
And 37 different countries
Initial incremental achievements

- Oct. 2015 – Tyson wage increase
  - 30k workers, $10 starting wage
- Oct. 2015 – Tyson health and safety pilot
- Apr. 2017 – Tyson Commitment for Workplace Improvements

- Oct. 2015 – OSHA emphasis program
  - Increased enforcement and oversight
- April 2016 – GAO: Additional Data Needed to Address Continued Hazards in the Meat and Poultry Industry
- Dec 2017 – GAO: Better Outreach, Collaboration, and Information Needed to Help Protect Workers at Meat and Poultry Plants
- Jan 2018 – USDA rejects NCC petition to increase line speeds in poultry processing
Faith and community allies joined with representatives of CATA (The Farmworkers Support Committee) and Oxfam for a vigil outside a Perdue plant in Salisbury, Maryland.
Worker led activities

Poultry worker leader giving a press conference during a vigil outside the Case Farms processing plant in Morganton, North Carolina.
Shareholder Activism

SHUCKS, SANDERSON, DON’T LET FACTS CLOUD YOUR JUDGMENT.

Sanderson claims there is no “credible science” to discourage its use of antibiotics. This disregard for facts threatens both the health of its workers and its bottom line.
Shareholder Proposals – 2018 Annual General Meetings

Sanderson Farms
• Adopt an enterprise-wide policy to phase out the use of medically important antibiotics
Reasoning:
• Sanderson: “there is not any credible science that leads us to believe we’re causing antibiotic resistance in humans.”
• WHO & CDC - antibiotic resistance is a global public health crisis that threatens to overturn many of the medical advances
• Research has shown that poultry processing workers are 32x more likely to carry antibiotic-resistant E. coli bacteria,
• Sanderson Farms’ current use of antibiotics threatens the health and safety of many of its 11,000 employees

Pilgrim’s Pride:
• Include minority & female candidates in Board of Directors (BoD)
Reasoning:
• Business case for BoD diversity is well documented
• Pilgrim’s BoD has no women or African Americans
• A diverse board would more accurately reflect the gender/racial composition of the workforce and therefore make better decisions on workers health and safety
TAKE ACTION:
HELP SPREAD THE WORD

www.OxfamAmerica.org/LivesOnTheLine
Our coalition working for change

- UFCW: a voice for working America
- OXFAM America
- Food Chain Workers Alliance
- Interfaith Worker Justice
- NELP: National Employment Law Project
- SPLC: Southern Poverty Law Center
- NORTWEST ARKANSAS WORKERS JUSTICE CENTER
- CENTRO DE DERECHOS LABORALES
- Greater Minnesota Worker Center
- CATA: Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas – Farmworkers Support Committee
- Coalition of Black Trade Unionists
- RWDSU: Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union
- CPR: Center for Progressive Reform