

# PORK • BEEF • CHICKEN

## JOURNEY TO YOUR PLATE



Have you ever thought about the path food takes to reach your table? Start here to begin the journey!

# Beef – Pork – Chicken: Journey to Your Plate

Whether it's a hotdog at a ballgame, burgers or chicken on the grill, or bacon on, well, everything ... it's hard to imagine a meal or gathering with family and friends where meat doesn't play a starring role. The U.S. meat and poultry industry safely and reliably processes, packages and delivers a variety of meats every day to nearly 40,000 grocery stores and 650,000 food service facilities. Nearly 5.5 million people in beef, pork and poultry production feed 326 million Americans.

## Pounds consumed in the U.S. each year



**CHICKEN**  
42 billion



**BEEF**  
26 billion



**PORK**  
25 billion

## Road Trip!

The meat we eat begins on the farm where farmers, their families, employees and a team of experts like veterinarians, agronomists and nutritionists work together to produce crops to feed and raise healthy animals. The U.S. is home to two million farms of all kinds providing the food we enjoy each day.

**1** - Beef cattle are raised in all 50 states. In total, the U.S. has about 728,000 farms and ranches raising 32 million head of cattle and calves.

- About 25,500 family farmers produce approximately 9 billion chickens each year.
- Nationwide, about 60,000 farmers raise and market more than 115 million pigs annually.

**2** Livestock and poultry are safely transported from farms to packing plants for processing into meat.

**3** - Thousands of federally inspected livestock and poultry plants operate in the U.S. including 835 livestock plants for beef and pork as well as nearly 3,000 poultry plants. Each plant is designed to process a specific animal.

- USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) ensures that our nation's meat, poultry and processed egg supply is wholesome, safe and properly labeled. Through prevention-based policies and practices, USDA relies on science to continuously improve safety standards.

- Major beef plants working two shifts can process 2,000 to 6,000 head of cattle per day. The average weight of a market steer reaches approximately 1250 pounds. Pork plants are located in close proximity to where pigs are raised. The market weight of an average pig is 280 pounds. A single pork plant, if running double-shifts, may process 20,000 pigs a day.

**4** **Cooking, Cutting and Seasoning:** Beyond the plants that process the initial animals into meat, more than 3,700 meat companies specialize in preparing the vast variety of meat products we enjoy today. This includes a range of activities like making sausages and chicken nuggets; packaging meat for restaurants or fine dining; custom cuts for retail grocery stores; or preparing items for schools, hospitals and other

businesses. These meat companies add further value, packaging and branding to meet requirements of their customers.

**5** **Cold Storage:** Think of this like a large freezer. These locations can safely store meat products frozen until the supply chain needs them. Cold storage facilities are critical to food safety and food security. Meat and poultry products, like fruits and vegetables, are highly perishable and temperature sensitive. In any given month, cold storage facilities in the U.S. house 500 million pounds of beef, 625 million pounds of pork and 900 million pounds of chicken.

**6** **Exports:** People around the world savor U.S. beef, pork and poultry. The U.S. exports millions of metric tons of meat and poultry products every year including 1.26 MT of beef, 2.45 MT of pork, and 3.7 MT of chicken.

**7** **Service Institutions:** We often only think of eating at home or away at restaurants or our favorite take-out place. Stop and think about other businesses such as hospitals, schools, colleges, nursing facilities, retirement homes, military bases and event centers that also prepare and serve food.

**8** **Restaurants:** The U.S. has more than 650,000 food service facilities across the country. This includes all forms of away-from-home eating occasions such as quick-service restaurants, cafes, fine dining, take-out and catering/delivery services.

**9** **Grocery Stores:** Some form of meat typically tops consumer grocery shopping lists, whether shopping online or in store. The U.S. is home to 40,000 grocery stores. Consumers find beef, pork and chicken in the fresh meat case, the frozen food aisle, the deli case, and in other food products such as soups and frozen entrees.

