North Carolina is home to over 1,200 food and beverage manufacturing establishments. 23 of the 50 largest food & beverage companies in North America have operations in North Carolina.

North Carolina's statewide food and beverage processing industry generated $17 billion of the state's GDP in 2019, making it the third largest in the United States.

North Carolina’s mid-Atlantic location and superb transportation network provide access to over 170 million hungry customers within a day’s drive. More than 66,000 people work directly in North Carolina’s food and beverage industry, ranking second in the Southeast U.S. for total jobs in this sector. Jobs in the industry have grown 13% in the past 5 years, ensuring a pipeline of talent.

NORTH CAROLINA's food & beverage advantage

Largest manufacturing workforce in the Southeast. Lowest corporate income tax in the nation. Two deepwater seaports. North Carolina is where an appetite for growth meets an eye for expansion. The state offers speedy access to customers and a robust food supply chain spanning crop production, food processing, packaging, and product distribution. Several top food and beverage companies operate in North Carolina, including Smithfield Foods, Sierra Nevada Brewing Company, Bimbo Bakeries, Morinaga, and Pilgrim’s Pride.

Food and beverage companies choose North Carolina for its winning combination of location, world-class workforce, existing industry strength, and business-friendly environment. Top-tier university partnerships support the industry's continued success. Home to more than 18.5 million residents, our state is the ninth largest in population and ranks third for highest net migration rate in the U.S. With a designation by Forbes as "Best State for Business" three years in a row, more business and individuals are becoming part of our community every day. Cultivate with us. Consider North Carolina for your next location or expansion decision.

WHAT CAN EDPNC DO FOR YOU?

The Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC) proudly serves as North Carolina’s statewide economic development organization. The EDPNC recruits new businesses to the state, supports the needs of existing businesses, and connects exporters with customers around the globe.

We provide FREE assistance with:

- Real estate and site identification
- Incentive and tax benefit inquiries
- Regulatory navigation
- World-class workforce solutions
- Supplier and distribution connections
- Export services and global market expansion

For more information about North Carolina, contact the EDPNC at 919.447.7744 or clientservices@edpnc.com.

NORTH CAROLINA’s food & beverage industry leaders

North Carolina’s food and beverage industry includes Smithfield Foods, Sierra Nevada Brewing Company, Bimbo Bakeries, Morinaga, and Pilgrim’s Pride.

North Carolina’s food and beverage industry leaders

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NORTH CAROLINA's food & beverage advantage

#3 FOOD INDUSTRY

North Carolina’s statewide food and beverage processing industry generated $17 billion of the state’s GDP in 2019, making it the third largest in the United States.

1,200+ ESTABLISHMENTS

North Carolina is home to over 1,200 food and beverage manufacturing establishments. 23 of the 50 largest food & beverage companies in North America have operations in North Carolina.

66K+ EMPLOYEES

More than 66,000 people work directly in North Carolina’s food and beverage industry, ranking second in the Southeast U.S. for total jobs in this sector. Jobs in the industry have grown 13% in the past 5 years, ensuring a pipeline of talent.

170M+ CUSTOMERS

North Carolina’s mid-Atlantic location and superb transportation network provide access to over 170 million hungry customers within a day’s drive.
North Carolina has the largest manufacturing workforce in the Southeastern U.S. In the last five years, the state’s manufacturing workforce has grown by 4%.

Largely fueled by domestic in-migration, North Carolina has one of the largest labor forces in the U.S. From 2010-2019, North Carolina was among the top three states for net migration.

North Carolina is home to more than 25,000 Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math grads annually, ranking second for STEM grads in the Southeastern U.S.

PLentiful & Skilled Workforce

5.1M+ Labor Force

Largely fueled by domestic in-migration, North Carolina has one of the largest labor forces in the U.S. From 2010-2019, North Carolina was among the top three states for net migration.

475K+ Employees

North Carolina has the largest manufacturing workforce in the Southeastern U.S. In the last five years, the state’s manufacturing workforce has grown by 4%.

33K+ Food Processing Workers

North Carolina is among the top four states for total number of food processing workers. This sector’s workforce has grown 10% over the past five years and is projected to continue growing.

North Carolina is among the top four states for total number of food processing workers. This sector’s workforce has grown 10% over the past five years and is projected to continue growing.

Labor Supply for Top Food & Beverage Occupations

North Carolina offers food and beverage companies an abundant and affordable supply of labor. North Carolina’s wages for this sector are 19% below the national average.

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<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food Processing Workers</td>
<td>33,323</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>$27,294</td>
<td>$28,162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productions Workers</td>
<td>96,816</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>$32,434</td>
<td>$33,942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors of Production Workers</td>
<td>21,607</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>$58,552</td>
<td>$60,424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ind. Machinery Repair &amp; Maintenance Workers</td>
<td>17,978</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>$47,608</td>
<td>$51,680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators</td>
<td>23,648</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>$33,196</td>
<td>$34,756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooks &amp; Food Prep Workers</td>
<td>93,483</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>$22,300</td>
<td>$24,888</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Blue Ridge Community College and Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College offer top-notch programs in brewing, distillation and fermentation. Their credentials are valued by local companies like Sierra Nevada Brewing Co., which employs 400 people in Asheville, NC.
THE PERFECT CLIMATE FOR GROWING TALENT

UNIVERSITIES

UNDERGRADUATE & GRADUATE DEGREES

North Carolina has 53 colleges and universities. The state’s three Tier 1 research universities: North Carolina State University (NCSU), Duke University, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, are at the cutting edge of education and R&D. NCSU’s College of Agriculture & Life Science houses 19 different departments that focus on various food and agricultural specialties. NCSU resources include the Center for Advanced Processing & Packaging Studies and the Sensory Service Center, which provides targeted food testing that helps solve flavor problems. North Carolina A&T State University offers relevant programs in livestock production, horticulture, sustainable agriculture, and agroforestry.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES

VOCATIONAL DEGREES

The North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) is the nation’s third-largest community college system, pioneering the nation’s most advanced vocational and technical programs. More than 480,000 students enroll at one of NCCCS’s 58 campuses each year. NCCCS offers degrees and certificates relevant to the food processing industry such as food science & technology, foodservice technology, applied animal science technology, and horticulture technology to name a few.

NCWORKS

CUSTOMIZED TRAINING PROGRAMS

NCWorks is a free job screening, recruiting, and training program for new and expanding businesses. North Carolina’s BioNetwork program offers curricula and training tailored to address the specific needs of food, natural products, and biomanufacturing industries. Training can be delivered at company sites, at one of the state’s training facilities, online, or via the state’s 58 community colleges. BioNetwork resources include the Natural Products Lab and the Test Kitchen that provides onsite equipment rental.

INDUSTRY RESOURCES

TARGETED INDUSTRY SUPPORT

North Carolina has numerous programs and research centers that support food & beverage businesses. Examples include:

- The North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDACS) operates research and support facilities across the state. The organization provides agribusiness development services for food-related businesses. The in-house Food & Drug Protection Division meets with prospective and existing companies to explain, review, and plan for regulations. The Department is also responsible for the "Got to Be NC" marketing initiative, increasing the visibility of local products.

- The North Carolina Food Manufacturing Task Force was established in 2014 to diversify and add value to the state’s food manufacturing industry. Goals of the task force include recruiting food processing companies to North Carolina, supporting the growth of food manufacturing entrepreneurs, and increasing training and outreach to agricultural-based businesses in the state.

- NC State University and NC A&T State University’s NC Cooperative Extension supports agricultural extension services across the state. Agricultural specialists assist with in-field research and provide educational programs and research-based information to both the agricultural community and the general public.

- The NC Food Innovation Lab (NCFIL) is a partnership between the NC Department of Agriculture, NC State University, and the NC Research Campus. It is a state-of-the-art, cGMP-certified, pilot-scale facility that offers resources for plant-based food research, development, and commercialization for entrepreneurs and established food manufacturers.

- NC A&T State University’s Center for Excellence in Post-Harvest Technologies (CEPHT) fosters interdisciplinary research in post-harvest technologies such as functional food R&D, shelf-life extension, food packaging, and food processing engineering.
UNMATCHED BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

#1 BEST STATE FOR BUSINESS
- Forbes (2019)

#2 TOP STATE BUSINESS CLIMATE
- Site Selection (2019)

#3 BEST STATE FOR BUSINESS
- CNBC (2019)

#3 COMPETITIVE LABOR ENVIRONMENT
- Area Development (2019)

LOW COST OF LIVING
The cost of living in North Carolina is well below that of other states with strong food manufacturing clusters.

Average construction costs in North Carolina’s metropolitan areas are up to 16% below the national average.

North Carolina businesses lead the nation in innovation with 70% patent growth over the past 10 years.

RIGHT TO WORK STATE
North Carolina is one of 27 right to work states.

THE DECISION TO LOCATE HERE IN CABARRUS COUNTY IS A REFLECTION OF THE COMMUNITY OF KANNAPOLIS [NORTH CAROLINA] AND THE WORKFORCE THAT LIVES HERE AND IN THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES.

JEREMY LANÉZ,
CEO, PRIME BEVERAGE GROUP

LOW BUILDING COSTS
Average construction costs in North Carolina’s metropolitan areas are up to 16% below the national average.

AAA BOND RATING
North Carolina is one of only four states to earn Standard & Poor’s highest rating for over 55 consecutive years.

UNPARALLELED INNOVATION
North Carolina businesses lead the nation in innovation with 70% patent growth over the past 10 years.

LOW ELECTRICITY COSTS
NC’s industrial electricity costs are about 10% below the national average.

Source: Energy Information Administration
INCENTIVES

Targeted, performance-based incentive programs complement North Carolina’s competitive cost structure. The Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC) helps companies navigate the incentive process.

JOB DEVELOPMENT INVESTMENT GRANT (JDIG)

JDIG is a performance-based, discretionary incentive program that provides cash grants to new and expanding businesses to help offset the cost of locating or expanding a facility in North Carolina. Companies can qualify for a JDIG based on the project location, number of jobs, and average wage. The grant amount is based on a percentage of the personal income tax withholdings associated with new jobs.

ONE NORTH CAROLINA FUND (ONE NC)

One NC is a discretionary cash-grant program that allows the Governor to respond quickly to competitive job-creation projects. Awards are based on the number of jobs, level of investment, project location, economic impact, and importance of the project to the region. Awards may be used in new or existing buildings for installation or purchase of equipment, structural repairs and/or renovations, construction and/or improvements to utility lines.

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE & TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS

NC offers a number of programs to fund public infrastructure development, including the Community Development Block Grant Economic Development Program, Utility Account, Rural Division’s Economic Infrastructure Program, NCDOT’s Rail Industrial Access Program, NC Railroad Company’s NCRR Invests program, and the NC Department of Commerce’s Joint Economic Development Program with the NCDOT.

BUILDING REUSE PROGRAMS

North Carolina offers two different programs that provide grants to renovate and upfit vacant industrial and commercial buildings including:
- Community Development Block Grant Building Reuse Program
- Rural Division’s Building Reuse Program

OTHER INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

- NCWorks Customized Training Program
- Foreign Trade Zones
- NC Biotech Center Economic Development Award
- Recycling Business Development Award Grants
- Golden LEAF Foundation Grants
- Building Demolition Programs

CORPORATE INCOME TAX

North Carolina has the lowest rate among the 44 states that levy this tax. NC uses single sales factor apportionment.

PERSONAL INCOME TAX

The standard deduction is $10,750 for single taxpayers and married couples filing separately, $21,500 for married couples, and $16,125 for heads of households.

STATE SALES & USE TAX

Counties levy an additional 2-2.75%. Sales tax exemptions are available for manufacturers, large fulfillment centers, and data centers.

STATE PROPERTY TAX

There is no state-level property tax. Real and personal property taxes vary by local government. In 2019, N.C. had the 6th lowest commercial and 10th lowest industrial effective property tax rates in the U.S.

WE ARE SO PLEASED TO BE THE RECIPIENT OF THE ONE NORTH CAROLINA GRANT, WHICH WILL ENABLE THE EXPANSION OF OUR BAKERY, BOLSTER PRODUCTION OF OUR IRRESISTIBLE FOODS AND CREATE MORE JOBS IN EDGECOMBE COUNTY [NORTH CAROLINA].

CRAIG BAHNER,
CEO, SARA LEE FROZEN BAKERY
MARKET ACCESS & TRANSPORTATION

North Carolina’s robust transportation infrastructure connects companies to domestic and international markets. Ten airports offer commercial services, including four international airports that connect North Carolina to major cities in the U.S. and abroad. North Carolina also has the second-largest state-owned highway system and major controlled-access arteries such as I-95 (running the length of the East Coast), I-85, and I-40 (running from North Carolina to California). Two deepwater seaports and an integrated rail system ensure that North Carolina companies can easily reach suppliers and customers.

ROADS

Second-largest state-owned highway system
North Carolina’s highways stretch for more than 80,000 miles (129,000 km). The state’s central East Coast location offers easy access to the country’s most important transportation corridors.

Major controlled-access arteries include:
- I-95, running the length of the East Coast
- I-40, linking North Carolina to California
- I-85, stretching through the manufacturing heart of the Southeast

PORTS

Two deepwater seaports in-state with on-dock rail
North Carolina’s ports offer fast turn times and capacity for ships carrying up to 14,000 TEUs. An inland port in Charlotte provides easy market access, North Carolina companies also enjoy easy access to the Port of Norfolk and the Port of Charleston.

Port of Wilmington
- Container and general cargo operations
- Channel depth of 42 feet M.L.L.W.
- On-terminal cold storage facility and 1M sf of covered storage
- Next-day rail service to Charlotte inland port

Port of Morehead City
- General cargo and bulk handling facility
- Channel depth of 45 feet M.L.L.W.
- 1M sf of covered storage

AIR

The world’s 7th busiest airport is located in Charlotte
Ten airports offer commercial services, including four international airports that provide easy access to global markets. International airports include:
- Charlotte-Douglas International Airport (CLT), world’s seventh-busiest airport
- Raleigh-Durham International Airport (RDU), fifth in passenger satisfaction among large North American Airports
- Wilmington International Airport (ILM), home to the ILM Business Park with easy access to highways, rail, and the Port of Wilmington
- Piedmont Triad International Airport (GSO), a premier air cargo center and home to the FedEx Mid-Atlantic Air Hub

RAIL

Two Class 1 Carriers
North Carolina has more than 3,200 miles (5,100km) of track. Two Class 1 carriers, CSX Transportation (CSX) and Norfolk Southern (NS), offer direct service to North American markets and to all major ports along the U.S. East Coast.

- Intermodal service hubs in Charlotte (NS, CSX) and Greensboro (NS). Another planned for Rocky Mount (CSX) in 2021.
- Direct intermodal service from Port of Wilmington to CSX terminal in Charlotte
- Major rail yards in Lexington (NS) and Hamlet (CSX)
- 19 regional railroads, including six that connect to both NS and CSX railroads
NORTH CAROLINA WAS CHOSEN FOR THE LOCATION, FOR THE UTILITY AND TRANSPORTATION ADVANTAGES, AND THE STATE CONTAINS AN EXCEPTIONAL WORKFORCE. IN ADDITION, WE CAN SERVICE OUR CUSTOMER BASE QUICKER AND PROVIDE MORE COST-EFFECTIVE TRANSPORTATION.

GERARDO MURAIRA, OPERATIONS DIRECTOR, NUTEC GROUP

With fast turnarounds times, North Carolina’s two deepwater seaports offer easy access to domestic and international markets. The Port of Wilmington has one of the highest crane productivity rates on the U.S. East Coast and is significantly less congested than neighboring ports. With 40 crane moves per hour and an average of 32 minutes for a dual truck move, it’s no wonder the Port of Wilmington ranks as the most productive port in North America.