

EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES IN THE MEAT INDUSTRY

The meat and poultry industry employs nearly 800,000 workers. More than 488,000 work in meat packing plants (those that slaughter animals) nearly 118,600 work in meat processing plants that further process meat cuts into ground beef, hot dogs, ham and other products. Almost 225,000 work in poultry processing.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), employees in both meat packing and meat processing plants on average work a 40-hour work week.

Hourly workers in meat packing/processing plants on average earn \$12.44 per hour (Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics). By and large, hourly positions in the meat industry do not require formal education or previous experience. Training is provided on the job.

These hourly wages translate into more than \$25,000 a year in annual wages.

Benefits

Wages alone do not paint a complete picture of compensation in the meat industry. Like many employers in a tight labor market, the U.S. meat industry offers many benefits to attract and retain workers.

According to a 2013 survey of North American Meat Institute members, 100 percent of plants responding indicated that they provide health insurance coverage.

Other key findings from the NAMI survey include:

- 42 percent of responding plants offered wellness programs.
- 83 percent of responding plants offer pension, 401(k) or other investment plans.
- 33 percent of responding plants offered English as a Second Language classes.

Role of Unions

Unions have long played a significant role in the meat industry. According to the United Food and Commercial Workers, 60 percent of meat packing and processing employees are estimated to be represented by the union. This is substantially higher than the overall U.S. private sector union representation rate of 7.9 percent (Source: BLS).

Employee Health and Safety

Ensuring the health and safety of employees is key to reducing turnover and ensuring workforce stability. In 1990, the American Meat Institute, NAMI's predecessor, made worker safety a "non-competitive" issue to encourage members to work together to enhance the industry's worker safety and health record.

Also that year, AMI collaborated with the United Food and Commercial Workers Union and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to develop Voluntary Ergonomic Guidelines for the Meat Industry.

Since that time, "lost workday" illnesses and injuries have declined by

nearly 60 percent. "Total recordable injuries" have declined by more than 70 percent. For more information on worker safety, see the NAMI Fact Sheet "Worker Safety in the Meat and Poultry Industry."

HELPFUL LINKS

North American Meat Institute
<http://www.meat institute.org>
<http://www.workersafety.org>

U.S. Department of Labor
<http://www.dol.gov>

Bureau of Labor Statistics
<http://www.bls.gov>