

From a Cotton Patch to Billions of Eggs



Q: What is the history of Cal-Maine?

A: The success of Cal-Maine Foods, Inc. starts with its founder, Fred Adams. Fred's business interest and ingenuity began at the age of 10 when his father gave him two milk cows and a cotton patch. Fred worked the cotton patch and sold the milk from his cows. In 1957, Adams took the first step to starting an enterprise that has become the largest supplier of eggs in the United States. Purchasing a used truck, he delivered feed in rural areas surrounding Jackson, Miss. Later that year, Fred started his first chicken farm on leased property and in 1958 started his first commercial layer operation in Mendenhall, Miss.

In 1963, the enterprise expanded to build the world's largest egg farm in Edwards, Mississippi and Fred's success drew the attention of national radio commentator, Paul Harvey. In 1969, Adams Foods, Incorporated merged with Dairy Fresh Products Company of California and Maine Egg Farms of Lewiston, Maine, creating Cal-Maine Foods, Inc., supplying eggs from California to Maine. Cal-Maine has maintained its position as the largest producer and distributor of fresh shell eggs in the United States for several years. In 2014, the company achieved a milestone by selling more than one billion dozen eggs in one year.

Q: How do eggs get from your chickens to a consumer's plate?

A: We focus exclusively on shell eggs, including the production, grading, packaging, marketing and distribution of our product. Our total flock is the largest in the U.S.

Most of our customers rely on us to provide most of their shell egg needs, including specialty (nutritionally enhanced, cage free, organic and brown eggs) and non-specialty eggs. You can find our specialty eggs in your grocery store as Egg-Land's Best, Land O'Lakes, Farmhouse and 4-Grain products.

We sell most of our shell eggs to a diverse group of customers, including national and regional grocery store chains, club stores, food service distributors and egg product consumers.

Q: Where can consumers find your eggs?

A: You can find our eggs in major grocery store chains, from Walmart to Costco to Kroger (owner of Dillons). Since we also supply eggs to food service companies, you may be enjoying our eggs when you eat at a restaurant or cafeteria. In 2017, we supplied approximately 20 percent of the domestic shell egg market, so there's a good chance you've eaten a Cal-Maine egg. One of our farms is in Chase, Kan., so our eggs purchased in Kansas were likely raised right here in the state.

Q: What do you want consumers to know about your eggs or your business?

A: White shelled eggs are produced by commercial hens with white feathers and ear lobes. Brown shelled eggs are produced by commercial hens with red feathers and red ear lobes.

Yolk color depends on the diet of the hen. Natural yellow-orange substances such as marigold petals may be added to light-colored feeds to enhance colors. Artificial color additives are not permitted, and no hormones are ever given to laying hens.

A significant number of our customers have committed to cage-free eggs and we are working with them to meet their goals. Our focus for future expansion at our farms will be environments that are cage-free or with equipment that can easily be converted to cage-free, based on a timeline to meet our customer's needs.