

## LEAN MANUFACTURING KAIZEN INCREASES POULTRY PROCESSING BY 50%

**ABOUT PAT'S PASTURED.** Pat's Pastured, a 150+ acre farm located in East Greenwich, Rhode Island, was founded in 2002 by Patrick and Kelly McNiff. The farm raises 100% grass-fed beef, pasture-raised chicken, pigs, and turkeys that are never given antibiotics, steroids, or hormones. The company has nine employees that process on-site to sell via retail and wholesale to local companies and the public.

**THE CHALLENGE.** The farm was experiencing success and growth; however, the chicken processing workflow took far too long to complete and labor shortages were an issue. Associates were spending more time handling the chicken than processing it, creating significant time and motion waste, increasing the time it took to process the chicken. Founder Patrick McNiff had been exploring efficiency concepts after he and several other farmers were inspired by the book, "The Lean Farm," by Ben Hartman. The farms worked with Polaris MEP, part of the MEP National Network™, to form a cohort of lean manufacturing learners.

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** Polaris MEP conducted a kaizen event where Pat's Pastured team members were taught lean principles. "We were lucky enough to have both Nathan [Bonds] from Polaris MEP and another farmer give us shiny eyes" on processes. The event identified non-value-added practices and got the team committed to continuous improvement.

First, the workflow was mapped so the full picture of the process of cutting, transferring and storing birds was clear. Project Manager Nathan Bonds and McNiff quickly determined that swiftly meeting the goal of a 50% increase in production volume could not be accomplished without compromising safety or quality. So the team revised its immediate objectives. "We wanted to get some quick wins - big impact from small changes," said Bonds.

Next, a new workflow or "future state" was created with the help of associates. Through this process a new method of cutting was identified, encouraging the use of both hands and speeding up production. Each station now had their own storage, eliminating wait time. The kaizen event also helped create a culture of continuous improvement.

Additionally, the processing layout evolved into a much more efficient workspace that improved quality and safety. "The more efficiently you can do things, the less opportunities arise for potential contamination," said McNiff. "[The kaizen event] allowed us to identify and eliminate potential food safety issues."

"Polaris MEP really provides you with some resources that change the direction of what your business can be. They get you unstuck from the processes that hold you back. It's being proactive, sharpening the saw to be the most effective person you can be. I think working with Polaris MEP helps you do that – Polaris MEP has great trainers and great support systems."

-Pat McNiff, Founder/Owner

## RESULTS



4 jobs retained



33% decrease in labor expense



Decreased processing time by 5.5 hours a week



\$60,000 invested in new products/processes, equipment, skills



\$26,000 in cost savings

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