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## Daily Buzz

### Friday, Sept 4--Poultry Giant To Close Two Worcester Facilities

By Shawn J. Soper, News Editor  
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BERLIN – As part of a larger plan to consolidate its operations and re-invest in its hatchery program elsewhere, Perdue Farms announced last week it is closing its hatchery facilities in Showell and Bishopville early next year, resulting in the loss of dozens of jobs in the county.

Perdue Farms announced last week it plans to invest \$3.7 million to expand production at its hatchery facilities in Salisbury and in Kenly, N.C. as part of the company's ongoing effort to improve the efficiency of its operations. The investment is intended to increase production at Perdue's Salisbury hatchery by 40 percent and double production at the hatchery in North Carolina.

However, the expansions come with a cost as Perdue is forced to close hatchery operations in Showell and Bishopville in Worcester County. The local hatcheries are casualties of the company's large plans to increase production elsewhere. The Showell and Bishopville plants are set to close in May and employees were informed of the decision last Friday.

"The Showell and Bishopville facilities are outdated and require significant investment in facility maintenance and equipment to continue operating," said Mike Roberts, president of Perdue's Food Products Group. "While these changes will not go into effect until early next year, we are letting our associates know now so they can take advantage of openings at other Perdue facilities should they be interested."

The plant consolidation plan will result in the creation of five new positions in Salisbury and North Carolina at the expense of about 36 positions in Showell and Bishopville. According to Roberts, Perdue will work to secure new positions in different areas for the displaced hatchery workers.

"As is Perdue's practice, the company is committed to working with affected associates to offer them jobs at other Perdue facilities," he said. "Perdue is committed to assisting our Showell and Bishopville associates through this transition."

Meanwhile, the closure of the Perdue plants in Worcester County could be symptomatic of larger problems with the poultry industry on Delmarva. Senator Lowell Stoltzfus (R-38), who represents Worcester, Wicomico and Somerset counties, told a group of Ocean City business leaders on Wednesday the poultry industry is facing serious challenges.

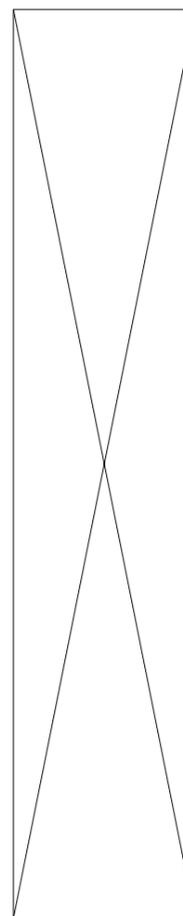
"The economy on the Lower Shore is very dependent on a strong, viable poultry industry, but we're in serious danger of jeopardizing that," Stoltzfus told members of the Governor's Economic Development Committee (EDC) on Wednesday. "We cannot build new chicken houses in Maryland right now.

Stoltzfus said many of the historic chicken houses on the shore have fallen into disrepair and cannot be rebuilt because of stringent state regulations, despite the will and the apparent means to replace them.

"We're losing them daily to attrition and we desperately need to build more to keep our poultry industry viable," he said. "But federal regulations require a comprehensive nutrient management plan and you can't get one in Maryland. Farm Credit is standing by and farmers are lining up financing to do this, but you can't build a new chicken house in Maryland right now."

Stoltzfus said strict state rules on the replacement of chicken houses specifically, and the poultry industry on the shore in general, are reflections of a larger effort of government intruding on private enterprise.

"By regulation, we are killing the poultry industry in Maryland," he said. "Delaware is building new chicken houses. Maryland is not and cannot."



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