

Maple Leaf Farms History

Founded by Donald Wentzel in 1958, Maple Leaf Farms started out as a small duck operation dedicated to producing products with *"quality you can count on."* Its first year, the company produced just 280,000 ducks. By 1964, Wentzel had grown his company and was producing more than one million ducks annually. He continued to nurture the growth of his business in Northern Indiana until his death in 1968.

Wentzel's success can be attributed to his belief that product control yields quality. He was convinced that the U.S. duck industry could make significant progress if properly managed. He passed this vision onto his son-in-law, Terry Tucker. Tucker, who has been with the company since 1963, followed this vision and established Maple Leaf Farms as the leader in the duck industry.

Since the mid-1970s, the duck industry has doubled in size, and Maple Leaf Farms has emerged a market leader. Its first strategic move to become foremost in the industry came in 1976 when it built Serenade Foods, a facility that specializes in value-added duck and chicken items. This move increased the company's production to 3 million ducks.

During the late 1970s, Maple Leaf Farms made several moves to become more involved with each step of production through vertical integration. In 1978, Maple Leaf Farms built a feed mill in Indiana, which allowed it to produce its own high quality feeds. In the following years, Maple Leaf Farms also built a new hatchery and started a diagnostics lab.

In 1981, Maple Leaf Farms acquired C&D Foods of Wisconsin, its largest competitor and a duck industry giant with extensive research capabilities. This acquisition allowed Maple Leaf Farms to become the leader of the duck industry and turn their sights to growth in other areas. In 1984, Down Inc. was formed to manufacture high quality bedding items from the feather and down by-products from Maple Leaf Farms' plants.

In the late 1980s and 1990s, Maple Leaf Farms continued to grow its operations through the construction of new facilities including a biosecure hatchery and a biosecure breeding farm in Indiana. In 1997, Maple Leaf Farms purchased Woodland Farms, a duck company in southern California. This allowed Maple Leaf Farms to capture much of the fresh duck market on the West Coast.

In 2001, the leadership of the company transitioned to the family's third generation when Wentzel's grandsons, Scott and John Tucker, were named co-presidents. They have continued to make strategic moves to grow the business. In fact, they formed MLF Biotech in 2004 to market the company's natural animal health products, and began selling duck breeding stock to international duck producers in 2007.

In recent years, Maple Leaf Farms has continued to capitalize on its position as the world-leading duck producer by pursuing new business ventures that serve the global duck market. The company has introduced the INDUX® System, an integrated duck production system that offers nutrition, diagnostics, research, management and other services to international duck breeding stock customers. To support the growth of the INDUX® System, the company entered into a joint venture with Shandong Yonghui Foods in the Shandong Province of China in 2010. In October 2011, the company opened a new global headquarters in Leesburg, Indiana.

Maple Leaf Farms continues to grow its markets, both domestic and international, each year. Despite its tremendous growth, Maple Leaf Farms has not lost sight of the values and commitment to family, community and quality that have been the foundation of its success for more than 50 years.

