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Link to Session

## Interstate 70 Location Powers \$800M Beef Plant Investment

State-of-the-Art Facility Boosts St. Louis Region's Manufacturing Sector

[ST. LOUIS, MO/June 2, 2025] American Foods Group opened a new 800,000-square-foot beef processing facility in April in Wright City, Missouri, adjacent to Interstate 70 (I-70). The location not only connects the new facility to the St. Louis region but also to the global freight network. The \$800 million facility – known as America's Heartland Packing, LLC. -- was the focus of a FreightWeekSTL panel discussion on June 2 hosted by the St. Louis Regional Freightway. The virtual session featured Scott Willert who shared information about the operation and the advantages the new beef processing plant gains from being on I-70 in the St. Louis region. Willert is the President of America's Service Line & America's Logistics, which provides transportation and logistics services for American Foods Group.

Willert explained the strategic location of the new facility allows for excellent freight mobility in and out via I-70. Cattle are primarily shipped to the facility on trucks through the interstate highway system, as well as the associated packaging equipment needed for shipping outbound products. On average, the beef processing facility receives about 10 trucks of cattle every weekday, with the plant harvesting about 400 cattle per day.

The meat processing plant produces varying types of beef, including ground beef and different cuts of steaks, and Willert said they also do rendering at the plant, using all parts of the animal. He said currently the plant ships out eight to 10 trucks of finished products per day to grocery stores, further processors, food service providers and schools, while also exporting products to 52 different countries around the world.

The Missouri Department of Transportation is investing \$2.8 billion to add a third lane in each direction along nearly 200 miles of I-70 between St. Louis and Kansas City, a major project that is expected to benefit the new facility and the employees who work there. The Warrenton-to-Wentzville stretch through Warren County into St. Charles County is the largest single contract in MoDOT history at more than \$600 million and will improve the movement of freight and vehicular traffic in the vicinity of the plant.

"It really is a great location. It provides good opportunity to serve our customers and expand as that becomes an opportunity," said Willert. "Missouri's been a very business friendly state and is interested in economic development. They've been a pleasure to work with from the beginning."

Operations are expected to increase significantly at the facility in the future. Full operational capacity is anticipated to be reached over the next 18 months, with harvesting numbers increasing from 400 cattle a day to 2,400. Willert said the demand for employment opportunities will grow as the facility grows.

"The plant will create jobs in the entire state of Missouri. Not just at the plant, but people that might be supporting the plant, especially in the Warren County area," Willert said. "We have about 400 employees working right now, but that number will increase to 1,300 when we're at full capacity. We have a good supply of cattle in the Midwest and a good amount of people in the surrounding area, which helps from a staffing perspective and helps with the challenge of finding high quality applicants."

Willert said there are a variety of job opportunities within the plant, which has taken advantage of the latest technological advances to create a very modern facility that supports safe and efficient production. Some jobs, he said, do not require higher education, while other job opportunities involving manufacturing, technology, and animal welfare requirements may require specialized training or higher education. To date, Willert said, they have had no problems meeting workforce needs at the facility.

In addition to creating jobs in the region, Willert said America's Heartland Packing is looking forward to becoming a key part of the community in Warren County.

"It's been a great experience so far in Missouri and the Warren County area," said Willert. "We will continue to be a great employer and a great community member in all locations where we operate. We're offering great jobs and benefits, and we're becoming an active member of the community."

The virtual panel session was moderated by Mary Lamie. Lamie is Executive Vice President of Multimodal Enterprises for Bi-State Development, which operates the St. Louis Regional Freightway.

"We're thrilled that American Foods Group has had such a positive experience launching operations in the St. Louis region," said Lamie. "We look forward to watching the Wright City facility grow to the full capacity at its enviable location, where the company will continue to benefit from the major investment being made in Interstate 70."

FreightWeekSTL 2025 continues through June 6. The week-long freight and logistics event is delivered by the St. Louis Regional Freightway. To learn more, register for the remaining virtual panel sessions, or view past sessions for FreightWeekSTL 2025, visit <a href="https://www.freightweekstl.com">www.freightweekstl.com</a>.

## About St. Louis Regional Freightway

A Bi-State Development enterprise, the St. Louis Regional Freightway is a regional freight district and comprehensive authority for freight operations and opportunities within eight counties in southwestern Illinois and eastern Missouri, which comprise the St. Louis metropolitan area. Public sector and private industry businesses are partnering with the St. Louis Regional Freightway to establish the bi-state region as one of the premier multimodal freight hubs and distribution centers in the United States through marketing and advocacy for infrastructure development that supports the movement of freight. To learn more, visit thefreightway.com.