ConAgra closes its Banquet plant — Turlock, Stanislaus County, 1993

ConAgra Frozen Foods closed its Banquet plant in Turlock on July 9, 1993, laying off 600 workers and canceling contracts with growers and suppliers — the earliest of four distinct Stanislaus County closure clusters this project has found, thirty-three years before the Del Monte Modesto/Hughson closure that otherwise anchors this county's record.

600

Full-time, year-round jobs eliminated — an $8 million annual payroll.

3

Major Stanislaus County plant closures the Modesto Bee counted within the same three months of 1993.

What happened

ConAgra Frozen Foods announced on Monday, May 10, 1993, that it would close its Banquet plant in Turlock — maker of Banquet- and Healthy Choice-label frozen foods — on July 9, canceling contracts with the growers and suppliers who fed it. The plant was the fifth-largest employer in Turlock, the city's third-largest manufacturer behind Foster Farms and a Butterball turkey operation, and the tenth-largest manufacturing employer in Stanislaus County. Turlock's mayor, Curt Andre, called it "truly a social tragedy for the community," noting many of the 600 workers had been there 20 or 25 years: "What does someone 55 years old who has worked 20 years at ConAgra do now?"

The Modesto Bee's own reporting named this as the first of three major Stanislaus County plant closures inside a single quarter — the others being Nestlé's instant-coffee plant in adjacent San Joaquin County and James River Corp.'s Modesto cardboard-packaging plant, closed because its frozen-food customers were leaving California, a packaging-side echo of the same exodus this closure represents directly.

Impact — what we know, and what we don't

- **Jobs:** 600, per the Modesto Bee's own front-page coverage at the time.
- **Payroll:** $8 million annually, per the same source.
- **Whether the plant or site reopened under different ownership:** not documented in any source found — unlike several other Stanislaus sites in this project's record (Signature Fruit/Seneca Foods, Post Foods' Whitmore Avenue building) where a second owner is known.

Part of a larger pattern

The same article names a Butterball turkey operation, "formerly operating as Armour," as active in Turlock in 1993 — direct, independent confirmation of a previously hedged lead in this project's **Foster Farms Turlock** research, that the F Street plant Foster Farms closed in 2025 may trace back to a pre-1998 Butterball facility.

This closure also pushes Stanislaus County's earliest documented cluster back to 1993 — the same year Kings County's **Safeway milk plant in Hanford** closed, an independent finding in a different county for the same year, not an assumption carried over from one to the other. Stanislaus County's full closure record now spans five distinct periods: 1993 (this closure), 2007–08 (**Hershey's Oakdale plant**), 2012–14 (**Dawn Foods**, **Patterson Vegetable**, and **Post Foods**), 2018 (**Seneca Foods**), and 2024–2026 (**Tropicale Foods**, **Reyes Coca-Cola**, **Foster Farms**, **Bronco Wine**, and **Del Monte**) — the deepest, most continuous county-level closure record in this entire project.

Sources

- The Modesto Bee, front page, Tue 11 May 1993, "Turlock to lose ConAgra plant: Banquet will close on July 9" (byline Tony Walker) and "Mayor: 'Social tragedy'" (byline Alvie Lindsay). Access: offline-archival — holding: newspaper microfilm, repository not yet confirmed; locate the reel through the California Newspaper Project catalogue (see **Data**).
- The Modesto Bee, front page, Thu 29 July 1993, "Another plant to close; 235 jobs lost" (James River Corp., cited as context). Access: offline-archival — holding: newspaper microfilm, repository not yet confirmed; locate the reel through the California Newspaper Project catalogue (see **Data**).

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