Seneca Foods closes its Modesto cannery — Stanislaus County, 2018

Seneca Foods closed its Modesto canned-fruit operation in 2018, ending a complex ownership lineage that runs all the way back to Tri Valley Growers' 2000 bankruptcy — and leaving this project with one of its starkest unresolved discrepancies: is this the second-largest closure in the entire record, or a mid-sized one?

265

Full-time employees, per Seneca Foods' own SEC filings — the harder, company-sourced number.

1975

Jobs lost, per a 2022 workforce-development report cited by the Modesto Bee — nearly 7x the company's own figure, neither verified nor disproven.

What happened

Seneca Foods Corporation announced in February 2018 it would close its Modesto plant, used primarily to package and warehouse the company's peach and fruit cocktail products, citing large operating losses, reduced peach availability, rising costs for growers and the company alike, and import competition from China and Europe. Production stopped before the 2018 canning season; warehouse and distribution operations continued through November 30, 2018. The company recorded $14.1 million in pre-tax restructuring charges, about $7.2 million of it employee separation costs, and sold the facility itself for $63.3 million, completed October 9, 2018 — a sale that produced a roughly $50.4 million pre-tax gain for the company the same quarter.

The plant's full ownership history, traced through 2006-era Modesto Bee coverage, runs: Tri Valley Growers (bankrupt 2000, risking roughly 11,000 Central Valley jobs company-wide) → John Hancock Life Insurance Co. (bought the Modesto plants in 2001) → Signature Fruit Co. (John Hancock's operating brand, 2001–2006) → Seneca Foods Corp. (bought the operation from John Hancock in 2006) → this 2018 closure. In 2006, Signature Fruit operated two plants near Modesto Airport in the Beard Industrial District, employing 4,100 workers at seasonal peak across both; that year, one of the two — "Plant 1" — was idled for the season

at a cost of about 1,100 jobs, while "Plant 7" kept running and was the one Seneca bought and continued operating until this 2018 closure. Workers and officials were notably positive about the 2006 ownership change itself: a 37-year mechanic at the complex called Seneca's reputation "a positive move." In March 2015, Seneca had separately agreed to sell the Modesto business to Pacific Coast Producers, a Lodi-based canner — that deal fell through, and Seneca kept operating the plant for three more years before this closure.

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

- **Jobs:** 265 full-time, per Seneca Foods' own SEC disclosures — or 1,975, per an unnamed "2022 report from local partners" the Modesto Bee cites in a 2026 retrospective. Neither figure has been independently reconciled; it's possible the larger number reflects a broader workforce-board estimate (direct plus indirect/induced jobs, or a multi-year cumulative count) rather than a single-point plant headcount, but that's speculation, not a confirmed explanation.
- **Seasonal workforce:** no figure found for this plant, unlike the 2026 Del Monte Modesto/Hughson closure, where year-round and seasonal counts were both documented.
- **Buyer of the physical plant after the 2018 sale:** not named in any source checked.

Part of a larger pattern

If the 1,975 figure holds up, this would be the second-largest closure in this project's entire record, behind only **Prima Wawona's 5,411-job liquidation** — larger than **Del Monte Modesto/Hughson's** own best estimate (1,800) and far larger than **Patterson Vegetable Company's** 1,015. Even at the company-confirmed 265, it's a real, dateable closure that sits alongside **Dawn Foods** (2012), **Patterson Vegetable** (2012), and **Post Foods** (2013–14) as further evidence the pattern is long-running, not new. Pacific Coast Producers, Lodi, is the one clearly-growing regional player to turn up twice in this project's Stanislaus research — Seneca's unconsummated 2015 buyer here, and the entity that bought Del Monte's product inventory in the 2026 bankruptcy auction without taking over that plant.

Sources

- The Modesto Bee, Sat 22 July 2006, front page + "The Back Page" (p. A12), "Thousands employed at cannery in Modesto during summer peak" (byline John Holland). Access:

offline-archival — holding: newspaper microfilm, repository not yet confirmed; locate the reel through the California Newspaper Project catalogue (see **Data**).

- The Modesto Bee, 21 Jan 2026, "What workers can expect as Del Monte Modesto shuts down," p. A1. Access: paywalled — read in the print edition; the publisher's online copy sits behind a subscription.
- einpresswire.com, "Seneca Foods to Close its Modesto, California Facility"; Seneca Foods Corporation, SEC EDGAR filings (data/88948), 8-K (16 Aug 2018) and subsequent 10-Qs. Access: not-captured — a public URL exists for this source and this project has not recorded it.

Full citation detail and source archive: **Data**. Back to **all case studies**.
