Land O'Lakes closes its Tulare cheese plant — Tulare County, 2010

Land O'Lakes idled the cheese-manufacturing line at its Tulare plant in 2010, cutting about 80 jobs — the earliest commodity-processing closure this project has documented in Tulare County, and the first of four such closures found across the Central Valley's four-county record for the 2010–2016 window, more than a decade before the 2024–2026 wave this project otherwise tracks.

80

Jobs eliminated — cheese-manufacturing employees at the Tulare site.

4

Commodity-processing closures this project has documented in the 2010–2016 window — this one, Dawn Foods, Patterson Vegetable, and ConAgra's Helm plant.

What happened

Land O'Lakes, the dairy cooperative, announced on April 27, 2010 that it would close the cheese-manufacturing operation at its Tulare site, with the shutdown expected in the second half of 2010. A secondary WARN tracker lists a notice date of August 14, 2010, covering 80 employees — this archive could not independently verify that filing against the official state WARN report, which does not cover a period this far back.

The company tied the decision to declining California milk volumes and to a recent investment it had made in the same site's *butter*-manufacturing operations — shifting milk there instead of to cheese production was, in the company's framing, the more efficient choice. A company executive called it "a difficult decision that was driven by a variety of factors." Affected employees were offered the company's Employee Assistance Program, and Land O'Lakes said it would work with the Teamsters Union on the transition.

The Tulare site's butter-manufacturing operation was not affected and kept running — this was a partial exit, one product line closing while the rest of the site continued, the same pattern this project later documents at Foster Farms' Turlock plant in 2025.

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

- **Jobs:** ~80, per the company's own figure and a secondary WARN tracker; not independently confirmed against an official state filing.
- **What happened to the workers:** Beyond the Employee Assistance Program offer, no source found tracks outcomes.
- **The building's fate:** No source found describes what became of the cheese-manufacturing building or equipment after 2010.
- **A discrepancy in the reporting itself:** coverage of this closure uses both "idle" and "close" to describe it, sometimes in the same outlet — not resolved by the source text.

Did this closure move Tulare County's economy?

We checked, with a real statistical method (synthetic control) rather than an assumption — and caught our own false positive doing it. An early result looked significant, but the gap it found (4,700–14,400 jobs) was two to three orders of magnitude larger than this 80-job closure could plausibly cause — almost certainly the Great Recession's regional recovery and the 2012–2016 drought, not this plant. See **Measuring Closures** for the full check.

Part of a larger pattern

This project's main record documents commodity-processing closures from 2020 forward. Searching the 2000–2020 window specifically, to see whether the pattern reaches back further in the Central Valley's four core counties, turned up four: this one (2010), **Dawn Foods' Modesto bakeries** (March 2012), **Patterson Vegetable Company** (June 2012), and **ConAgra's Hunt-Wesson plant in Helm** (2016). None of these were previously documented anywhere in this project's record. Tulare County, in particular, had no documented closure case study before this one — the county's continuing exposure to the same sector (noted on the main **Case Studies** page) now has an actual historical anchor point.

Sources

- Dairy Herd, "Land O'Lakes to Close California Cheese Plant." Access: web-blocked — the outlet refuses automated requests, so no URL could be verified for it here.

- Brownfield Ag News, "Land O'Lakes to idle Tulare cheese plant." Access: web-blocked — the outlet refuses automated requests, so no URL could be verified for it here.
- Secondary WARN tracker (not independently verified against an official state filing — predates this project's local WARN-PDF archive, which starts at fiscal year 2014–2015). 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**.
