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## Huntley Dean Foods plant to close leaving 130 without jobs



**Madhu Krishnamurthy**

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The Dean Foods plant in Huntley will close in September and leave

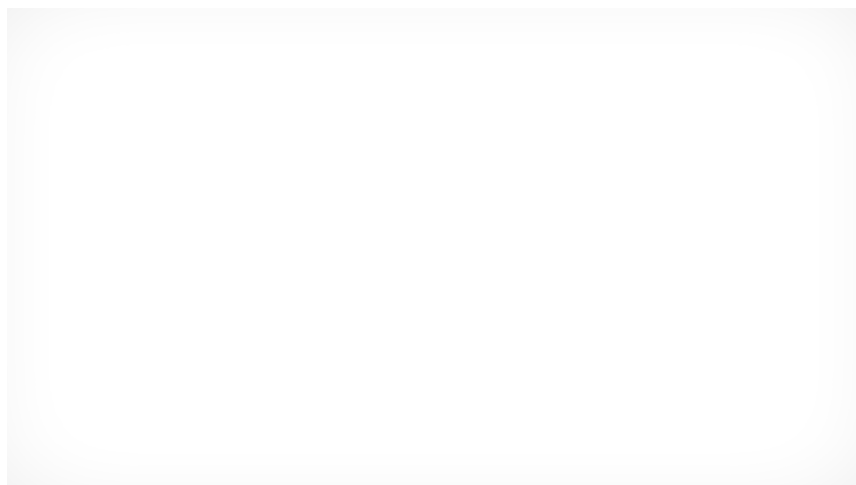
**roughly 130 workers without jobs.** (*Rick West / Staff Photographer*)

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The last vestige of Huntley's milk factories will shutter this fall, leaving roughly 130 workers without jobs, village officials confirmed Tuesday.

Dean Foods' (<http://www.deanfoods.com/>) dairy processing plant and offices at 11713 Mill St., east of Route 47 and south of Main Street, is among seven nationwide targeted for closure this year. Other plants are in Kentucky, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Michigan and Minnesota.

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Dean Foods' corporate officials did not return calls seeking comment Tuesday.

Village officials were notified last week of layoffs beginning in September, with operations ceasing by month end. Plans for the roughly 15-acre property in the heart of downtown are yet unclear, Huntley Village Manager David Johnson said.

"We are scheduled to meet with them later this week," Johnson said. "We don't know at this point what they are planning or not planning for the facility. It was a staple of the community. We do not have any (milk factories) left. This would be the last one."

Dean Milk Company began construction of the Huntley plant in fall 1945 along the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad tracks. The plant began processing and bottling raw milk in quart paper cartons and gallon glass jugs starting in June 1946, according to the Huntley Area Public Library archives.

Much of the milk was produced within a 15-mile radius of Huntley in 1951 when there were 170 local farms shipping milk to the Dean plant.

Dean Foods is the nation's number two processor of fluid milk behind Nestle. A 2017 annual investors report (<http://ir.deanfoods.com/static-files/dd634c59-b06c-4630-96d5-927bac748753>) cited a highly competitive industry and decreased dairy consumption hurting business -- a harbinger of future plant closures. The company seeks to "rescale and right-size" its supply chain while reducing spending, according to the report.

Dean Foods' biggest customer, Walmart, built its own milk processing plant in Fort Wayne, Indiana, in 2016, hurting the milk supplier's market base. It forced Dean Foods to end contracts in May with more than 100 farmers in eight states, according to news reports.

"Our understanding is just the change in consumer habits ... not as many consumers are consuming or purchasing milk products," Johnson said.

Johnson said the Huntley plant's closure will affect the village's water and sewer revenues.

"Property taxes really shouldn't change," he added.

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