

Durable, easy-to-use apparel can improve efficiency, control costs

PECO FOODS IS A FULLY INTEGRATED POULTRY PROCESSING and packaging company — the 13th-largest poultry processor in the United States — headquartered in Tuscaloosa, Ala., with additional facilities spread throughout Mississippi and Alabama.

The company, which started as a small hatchery and feed mill in 1937, prides itself on being a specialist in boneless breast products for the retail and foodservice markets, shipping national and internationally as well.

Peco Foods' Brooksville, Miss., plant exemplifies the commitment the company has made to maintaining and improving product quality and value, customer service, and food safety.

Kirk Rushing, Brooksville plant manager, and his employees constantly look for ways to improve process efficiency and keep products and employees safe. Like any business, keeping costs under control is imperative to success — particularly at a plant the size of Brooksville, which employs approximately 250 workers from management on down.

In the past, Rushing says, employee apparel consisted of disposable smocks, sleeves and rain suits that simply weren't very durable or cost-effective. About two years ago, Rushing discovered the VR line of products from PolyConversions Inc. (PolyCo) and decided to switch his employees to this apparel line. Today, Brooksville uses a one-piece, medium-grade gown-and-sleeves garment and heavy-duty three-piece VR Rainwear.

Before Brooksville made the change, Rushing says some of his sanitation employees were going through two to three of the old rain suits per week, driving up costs. After testing a variety of apparel offerings, including PolyCo's VR line, extensively, Rushing was sold on making the change, and it



has paid off.

"Now, with the VR [apparel], I replace them as needed, and that's about once a month," he explains. "The cost-savings have been unbelievable, and they're much easier to clean."

In addition to the improved durability, Rushing cites the ease of use and better elasticity — easier donning and doffing, and improved freedom of movement for employees for workers — as benefits his employees have

experienced.

"This change has reduced my donning and doffing time 60 percent," he says. "Where it was taking two to three minutes to put the old apparel on, now donning or doffing is within a minute and a half."

With that problem solved, employees can work comfortably and rest assured that the facility meets its own quality and safety standards, all while keeping costs under control.