



KEY INDUSTRY

Food Processing & Agriculture

Food processing in Southwest Michigan dates back to the early 1800s when the region was first settled by European inhabitants.

The area’s rich, fertile soil earned it the nickname “The Celery City” when Dutchman Cornelius de Bruin began growing celery in the black muck along the banks of the Kalamazoo River and his family began peddling the vegetable door to door.

With the invention of the corn flake in Battle Creek by W.K. Kellogg in 1906, the region’s ability to take a product from raw material and process it into another desirable edible form was established. Today, many of your family’s favorite brand name cereals, beverages and potato chips all hail from Southwest Michigan!

The area’s microclimates and rich soil also contribute to its ranking as the “Bedding Plant Capital of the World.” Home to the largest plant growers’ cooperative in Michigan and Northern Ohio, over 8.5 million square feet of growing area is coordinated from the region.

From food to medicines, the region’s expertise is fully committed to making things taste great. In the early 20th century, 90% of the world’s supply of peppermint was grown in the region. Today, its extracts and flavors enhance many products, from toothpaste and medicines to condiments and spices.

Southwest Michigan’s various microclimates and soil combination support over 200 commodities on a commercial basis making Michigan the second most agriculturally diverse state in the nation.

DID YOU KNOW?



Kalamazoo ranks in the top three places in the U.S. with the **lowest cost of living.**



LinkedIn’s Economic Graphic Research Team named **Kalamazoo** second on its list of **top-12 cities with thriving job markets.**



Personal finance website ranked **Kalamazoo** first on its list of **10 best cities for high salaries and low cost of living.**

THE REGION IS HOME TO

- Southwest Michigan produces almost one-third of Michigan’s total agriculture sales
- Over 19,000 employed in food processing with \$423 million in labor income
- Over 60 food processors serve the nation from our Region
- Major brands include Abbott Laboratories, ConAgra Foods, Kellogg Company, Minute Maid, Monsanto, Post Foods and Welch’s
- Home to the **International Food Protection Training Institute**
- Major regional contributor to Michigan’s Overall #2 ranking in agricultural diversity which includes:
 - #1 in blueberries
 - #1 in tart cherries
 - #1 in pickling cucumbers
 - #1 in squash
 - #2 in dry beans, carrots, celery and plums
 - #3 in apples with over 590 million pounds produced in 2010

- West Michigan is #4 in the nation for wine production
- Southwest Michigan microbreweries, Bell's Brewery and Arcadia Brewing Company, are ranked among best in the nation
 - #3 in asparagus
 - #8 in milk cow production with 8,327 million pounds of milk produced in 2010
- Bedding Plant Capital of the World
 - Kalamazoo Valley Plant Grower's Cooperative serves a 33-state region and contributes to Michigan's #2 ranking in the nation for bedding and garden plants
 - #2 in nation for bedding and garden plant production
 - #3 nationally in value of wholesale floriculture products
 - #1 in geranium and petunia flats
 - #1 in begonia and geranium hanging baskets
 - #1 in potted geraniums
 - #2 in sales of propagative floriculture materials for bedding and garden plants

Source: ¹Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor (2017)