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Pierre Foods adding 500 jobs in western NC

RALEIGH, N.C.

A food products maker plans to expand its operations in western North Carolina, adding 500 jobs.

State officials said on Friday that Cincinnati-based Pierre Foods Inc. plans to invest \$16.8 million during the next three years in Claremont in Catawba County. The company already has 700 workers at its facility there.

The new jobs will pay an average annual salary of \$26,467. State officials promised \$600,000 in incentives for the expansion.

Pierre Foods makes a variety of products for schools, food service, retail, vending and convenience store markets. CEO Bill Toler said the expansion will support growth in the company's business.

Catawba County had a 14.4 percent unemployment rate in December.