

OHIO ASSOCIATION OF SECOND HARVEST FOODBANKS

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OHIO'S EGG FARMERS DONATION TO FOODBANKS MAKES IMPACT WHEN NEEDED MOST *One million egg contribution continues long partnership between foodbanks and egg industry*

COLUMBUS – The Ohio Poultry Association (OPA) and Ohio's egg farmers are filling the tables of 99,000 Ohio families, located in all 88 counties, at a time when the state's foodbanks are facing unprecedented demand and the state economy is struggling to recover. The donation continues an eight-year partnership between the state's egg industry and hunger relief providers and repeats the 2008 first-time donation of one million eggs.

Nine Ohio egg farmers again will donate nearly 1.2 million eggs, to be provided to local hunger charities via the Second Harvest network of 12 foodbanks, just in time for Easter. Eggs will start being delivered the week of April 6. The contribution of 99,000 dozen eggs has an estimated retail value of more than \$120,000.

"Ohio eggs are a critical item for Ohio's hunger relief providers, because they are a versatile, high-protein item that is a staple among Ohio's needy families," said Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, executive director of the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks (OASHF). "This generous contribution from Ohio's egg farmers is an extraordinary opportunity for our foodbanks and pantries to make a difference when many of our clients are struggling to keep food on their tables."

Challenging economic times have created a crisis in the hunger relief network – demand for emergency food is increasing because of high prices for home utilities, health care and food; wage stagnation; and dramatic increases in unemployment rates. The situation for foodbanks is so challenging that many agencies are reducing the amount of food they distribute to the needy in an effort to ration the modest supplies they have. Others are reducing their hours of operation and some have temporarily closed their doors until they get sufficient food on the shelves to meet demand.

"Having food on the table should be an expectation, not a luxury, for Ohio's families," said Jim Chakeres, OPA executive vice president. "Ohio's egg farmers are committed to supporting our local communities and that means helping out when needed, in addition to producing safe affordable food for consumers and caring for our flocks and the environment." Chakeres said Ohio ranks second in the nation for egg production, and produces eight billion eggs each year with a value of more than \$600 million.

Ohio's egg producers participating in the donation program include: Hillendale Farms of Akron and Croton, OH/Ohio Fresh Eggs; Ft. Recovery Equity of Fort Recovery, OH; Cal-Maine Farms of Rossburg, OH; Hemmelgarn & Sons, Inc. of Coldwater, OH; Hertzfeld Poultry Farms of Grand Rapids, OH; Weaver Brothers, Inc. of Versailles, OH; Rindler Poultry of St. Henry, OH; Stoller Farms of Van Wert, OH; and Sauder Eggs of Winesburg, OH.

The Ohio contribution complements a national initiative being conducted by the United Egg Producers and Feeding America (formerly Second Harvest) that will provide more than 12 million eggs to foodbanks nationwide through a donation from America's egg farmers located across the country.

Hamler-Fugitt said that OASHF has a long-standing partnership with Ohio's agriculture industry through the Ohio Agricultural Clearance Program (OACP). OACP is a statewide effort to direct Ohio's surplus of agricultural products through the network of foodbanks in the state to ensure that Ohio families have a source of nutritious, Ohio-grown and raised, and produced food products. The program works with Ohio farmers and commodity groups to provide foodbanks with surplus and unmarketable agricultural products at production cost. In addition to the egg donation, Ohio egg farmers have worked through OACP to provide more than three million eggs.

OASHF's 12 member foodbanks provide hunger relief in all 88 Ohio counties. From July 1, 2007, to September 30, 2008, OASHF served more than 1.6 million Ohioans, distributing more than 27 million pounds of food and grocery items. Of those clients served, more than 213,000 are seniors and nearly 617,000 are children.

For more information regarding Ohio foodbanks and Ohio's hunger relief programs, please visit OASHF online at www.oashf.org or call 614/221-4336.

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*** PHOTO AND INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE WHEN EGGS ARE DELIVERED TO LOCAL FOODBANKS**