OHIO ASSOCIATION OF SECOND HARVEST FOODBANKS

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STATE FOODBANKS TO RECEIVE ONE MILLION EGGS FROM OHIO FARMERS
Contribution continues long partnership between foodbanks and egg industry

COLUMBUS – This Easter, the Ohio Poultry Association (OPA) and Ohio's egg farmers continue to play an active role in their local communities by once again teaming up with the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks (OASHF) for the third year to donate more than one million eggs statewide.

Nine Ohio egg farmers again will donate more than 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 were delivered starting the week of March 22. The contribution of 101,000 dozen eggs has an estimated retail value of more than $101,000.

"Eggs are a critical item for our foodbanks because they are a protein-rich product, however, they are also one of the hardest sources to acquire," said Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, executive director of the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks (OASHF). "We commend Ohio's egg farmers for once again stepping up to help their neighbors especially at a time when hundreds of thousands of Ohioans, many for the first time, are seeking food assistance."

Every week, more than 225,000 Ohioans receive emergency food assistance. Of those, 27 percent are 17 years old or younger.

"We place great value on the relationship with our consumers, and ensuring their trust requires us to help those who are less fortunate or who are struggling in this economy," 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 Ohioans and caring for our flocks and the environment." Chakeres said Ohio ranks second in the nation for egg production, and produces seven billion eggs each year with a value of more than $585 million.

Ohio's egg farmers participating in the donation program include: Hillandale Farms of Akron and Croton, OH; Ohio Fresh Eggs of Croton, OH; Ft. Recovery Equity of Fort Recovery, 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; Cal-Maine Farms of Rossburg, OH; and Sauder Eggs of Winesburg, OH.

The Ohio contribution complements a national initiative being conducted by the United Egg Producers and Feeding America that will provide more than 11 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 since 2005.

OASHF's 12 member foodbanks provide hunger relief in all 88 Ohio counties. In 2009, OASHF distributed more than 113.7 million pounds of food and grocery items to nearly 3,000 member charities, food pantries, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and other food assistance organizations.

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