

OHIO ASSOCIATION OF SECOND HARVEST FOODBANKS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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AT THANKSGIVING AND ALL YEAR LONG – FOODBANKS APPLAUD DEDICATION OF COOPER FARMS PARTNERSHIP

COLUMBUS – As Ohioans prepare for a Thanksgiving feast, thousands of Ohioans will wonder where their next meal is coming from. Thanks to Ohio-based Cooper Farms, the nation's 12th-largest turkey producer, two Ohio foodbanks in desperate need of food will have high-protein turkey products donated and delivered just in time for the holiday season.

Thanksgiving week, Cooper Farms will deliver more than 27,000 pounds of turkey products to two Ohio foodbanks – Shared Harvest in Fairfield and Second Harvest Foodbank of Southeast Ohio in Logan. The two foodbanks will share the donation, which will provide approximately 144,000 meals to foodbank clients.

Cooper Farms has been a longtime partner of the state's hunger relief providers. In 2011, Cooper Farms has donated nearly 343,000 pounds of turkey products to the West Ohio Foodbank in Lima. Through their partnership with the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks (the Association) and the Ohio Agricultural Clearance Program (OACP), Cooper Farms has provided an additional 318,000 pounds this year of turkey sausage, a product developed by Cooper Farms exclusively for the OACP.

“It is agriculture partners like Cooper Farms that make the difference in ensuring our foodbanks can get high-protein, nutritious Ohio foods to hungry families. Their commitment to giving is extraordinary,” said Lisa Hamler-Fugitt. “There is no question that this donation comes at a critical time for the pantries and faith-based organizations that are the link to putting meals on the table of people in need.”

High-protein food items are among the most sought-after by the state's hunger relief providers. Protein is one of the most costly food items for many families living on low incomes or fixed budgets. “It's a perfect storm of need right now,” said Hamler-Fugitt. “Rising food costs, job losses and an economy that has yet to recover has put extreme strain on many of Ohio's children, families and seniors.”

OACP was established in 1999 and is funded by the Ohio General Assembly, administered by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, and operated by the Association. To date, more than 250 million pounds of food have been provided to foodbanks from Ohio's farmers. More than 150 farms and Ohio food companies like Cooper Farms participate in the program.

“Our Cooper family has been blessed to farm in Ohio for three generations, and on behalf of our almost 1,500 employees, I am pleased to provide this donation,” said Gary Cooper, chief operating officer. “As a food producer, I believe every Ohioan should have access to safe, high-quality, wholesome food, and Ohio’s foodbanks are essential lifelines in making that happen.”

Dr. Tony Forshey, interim director of the Ohio Department of Agriculture, recognized the strength of the agriculture program. “The agriculture clearance program, which is funded by the state, is a win-win for everyone involved,” he said. “Ohio’s farmers are able to clear surplus foods, and foodbanks are able to provide hungry Ohioans with fresh, nutritious food produced here in Ohio.” He said the program is well-regarded and has been replicated in other states because of its success in bringing farmers and hunger relief providers together.

Ohio is the 10th largest turkey-producing state in the nation; raising 4.6 million turkeys in 2010.

About the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks

OASHF is Ohio’s largest charitable response to hunger, representing Ohio’s 12 Feeding America foodbanks and 3,300 member charities including food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters. In SFY 2011, OASHF and its member foodbanks were able to acquire and distribute more than 150 million pounds of food and grocery items. Follow @OASHF on Twitter and stay connected on Facebook at www.facebook.com/oashf.

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