



NEWS RELEASE

STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

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For more information contact:
[Jennifer Holton](#)
517-284-5724

Food and Ag Industry Continues to Donate to Michigan's Food Banks *Michigan potatoes, beans, dairy products and other foods headed to families in need across the state*

LANSING, MICH. Michigan potatoes, dry beans, dairy products and more are headed to struggling families across the state, thanks to the continued generosity of our state's food and agriculture businesses. Gov. Gretchen Whitmer today recognized several Michigan food and agriculture businesses for their donations to the Food Bank Council of Michigan (FBCM) and other non-profits as part of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Initiative launched earlier this month. The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) has partnered with the Governor's Office and the FBCM seeking donations of food and funds as part of the initiative.

"At a time when everyone is facing challenges, and the need for food assistance is so great, our food and agriculture businesses continue to answer the call for help," said Governor Whitmer. "We are also fortunate to have such a wonderful network of food bank staff and volunteers who know how to stretch a dollar and provide nutritious, wholesome food to people across the state."

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more and more people are facing economic hardship and food insecurity, and are turning to food banks for assistance. Through its network of regional food banks and distribution centers, FBCM provides food to more than 3,000 local food banks, soup kitchens and food pantries across the state.

Food banks are currently operating at four times their normal capacity and are experiencing significant trouble securing food to meet demand. Although the federal stimulus package will provide future relief, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has told FBCM they will not receive food through the federal program until July, well beyond the expected food gap food banks are facing right now.

"I am continuously humbled by the generosity of Michigan's food and agriculture community," said Gary McDowell, MDARD director. "These donations will keep food on the tables of countless Michigan families who are struggling right now."

The following food and agriculture businesses have made donations of food and funds to the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Initiative to support food banks in our state:

- Michigan Bean Commission and its Michigan dry bean farmers, processors and shippers donated seven tons of dry beans to the FBCM for distribution to food banks across the state. The beans were delivered to FBCM's seven food bank partners in 7,000 two-pound packages for ease of

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distribution to families. The beans were packaged by Howard City-based Carlson-Arbogast Farm and Pigeon-based Cooperative Elevator Co.

- Michigan Turkey Producers, of Grand Rapids, a cooperative of family farms, donated 9,160 pounds of turkey, valued at \$25,373.20, to Feeding America West Michigan.
- Eden Foods, located in Clinton, donated 7,868 pounds of soy milk, valued at \$9,756.32, to the South Michigan Food Bank.
- Little Diablo Salsa, of Brighton, donated 125 pounds of salsa, valued at \$232.50 to Gleaners Community Food Bank.

The following have made recent donations of food and funds directly to food banks in our state:

- Michigan Potato Industry Commission donated \$5,000 toward the purchase of a truckload of Michigan potatoes. A GoFundMe site established by MPIC raised another \$5,000 from Michigan potato growers and other potato industry partners, toward the purchase of a second truckload of potatoes, for a total donation of \$10,000.
- Michigan Farm Bureau Family of Companies, through its one-week Million Meal Challenge, raised \$187,405, or more than 1.1 million meals. All funds raised were donated to the Food Bank Council of Michigan to be distributed to each of the seven regional food banks across the state. Farm Bureau Insurance and the Agent Charitable Fund each donated \$50,000 to the challenge, and matched additional donations from members, clients and supporters.
- Dairy Farmers of America, a farmer-owned dairy cooperative, partnered with the Country Fresh Grand Rapids dairy processing plant to provide milk to Michigan food banks. DFA is donating the milk and Country Fresh Grand Rapids is providing the milk to the food banks for the cost of processing. More than 56,000 gallons of 2% milk was donated between April 15 and May 15. DFA also partnered with Farm Country Cheese in Lakeview to provide 20,000 pounds of cheese to Michigan food banks for 50 cents a pound to cover a portion of the processing and packaging.

Food and agriculture businesses who would like to arrange for a donation should contact MDARD at MDARD-COVID19@michigan.gov. If transportation assistance is needed for donations, the state has secured trucks and can assist in donation pick-up and delivery. For other businesses and individuals interested in donating to the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Initiative, a secure online donation with the Michigan Department of Treasury can be made by visiting www.michigan.gov/fightcovid19 and clicking on "donations." Donations of any size can be made by credit or debit card.

Information around the COVID-19 outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at Michigan.gov/Coronavirus and CDC.gov/Coronavirus.

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