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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ohio Agriculture Day Highlights Ohio Neighborhood Harvest Initiative

Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank Serves as Model for State and Local Food Policy Advocates

REYNOLDSBURG, Ohio (March 17, 2010) – Ohio Agriculture Director Robert Boggs gathered today with legislators, community leaders and food policy advocates at the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank to celebrate Ohio Agriculture Day and highlight the cooperative relationship between Ohio’s food producers and distributors.

This year’s celebration focused on Gov. Ted Strickland’s Ohio Neighborhood Harvest initiative, a statewide effort to ensure Ohioans in every neighborhood have access to locally-grown, affordable and healthy food. The governor’s Ohio Food Policy Advisory Council laid the groundwork toward establishing a network of resources that will make the connection between agricultural producers and communities that currently do not have access to fresh, nutritious food.

“The Ohio Neighborhood Harvest initiative will capitalize on the Ohio Food Policy Advisory Council’s work to help bridge the gap between the state’s agricultural producers and those who do not have access to healthy, nutritious food,” said Boggs. “On this Agriculture Day as we celebrate those farmers and processors who produce food, let us also give thanks to those places such as the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank that are working just as hard to get that fresh, local food to people who need it.”

The Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank is a model for the Ohio Neighborhood Harvest initiative. The foodbank has formed a unique partnership with the Crown Point Ecology Center farm, which grows and provides fresh food to the foodbank for distribution to area hunger agencies. Last year, the local farm donated 20,000 pounds of fresh, organic produce, including potatoes, cabbage, beets, tomatoes and squash.

In the coming months, the Ohio Food Policy Advisory Council and the Ohio Department of Agriculture, with assistance from other state agencies, will move forward with Ohio Neighborhood Harvest work to identify statewide areas that lack fresh food, analyze information, propose solutions to gaps in our statewide food system and provide tools that local communities can use to improve access to Ohio-grown products.

Every March, Ohio Agriculture Day is celebrated to help educate citizens about the state’s agriculture industry and the large role it plays in our everyday lives. Ohio’s food and agriculture industries provide \$98 billion to the economy each year and employ one in seven Ohioans.

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Note to Editors: Photos available upon request.

