

Farmers donate food for the needy

BREAKING BREAD:

Foodlink gets a boost to feed needy families.

SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL-REGISTER

ALBANY — When New York Farm Bureau members traveled to Rochester on Tuesday for the state annual meeting, they didn't come empty-handed. Members and supporting food companies kicked off the meeting with donations to Foodlink.

The donations bring the yearlong total of food donated by farmers across the state to more than 3.3 million pounds. With a few weeks left in the year, it is expected that farmer donations will exceed 3.5 million pounds.

Food is collected through the "Harvest For All" donation program. This is a

nationwide annual farm donation partnership linking the Farm Bureau and Feeding America (formerly America's Second Harvest) in each state.

In New York, the NYFB's Young Farmers and Ranchers and the Food Bank Association of New York State administered the statewide donation partnership. Under the project, NYFB members donated excess farm products to the 10 New York State Feeding America food banks located across the state.

The USDA annual report on Household Food Security says 17 million households — or 14.6 percent — had difficulty putting enough food on the table in 2008. Local food pantries and soup kitchens have seen increases ranging from 10 percent to 12 percent, if not higher.

"With the amount of food

donations dwindling, a national economic downturn, and unemployment at near double digits, the generosity of New York's farmers and the Farm Bureau couldn't come at a better time," said John Evers, executive director of the Food Bank Association of New York. "The incredible amount of produce and farm products donated by local farms provided millions of wholesome, nutritious meals to hungry New York state residents," he said.

"At a time of severe economic downturn in the farm economy, it is truly remarkable that New York farmers were still able to donate more than 3.5 million pounds of food to those in need," said Dean Norton, president of New York Farm Bureau.

