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Illinois foodbanks to receive donated chickens

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EDWARDSVILLE - Tyson Foods will donate about 1.7 million pounds of chicken worth \$2.3 million to food banks throughout Illinois as part of a settlement of a class action lawsuit in Madison County.

Plaintiffs represented by St. Louis-based Korein Tillery alleged the company artificially inflated the weight of poultry products sold between 1997 and 2003. The settlement was approved today by Associate Judge Ralph Mendelsohn. Distribution will be coordinated by Feeding Illinois, formerly called the Illinois Food Bank Association.

"It is a great day for the food banks, whose coffers are depleted, and for our neediest citizens during these tough economic times," said John Hoffman of Korein Tillery, one of the lawyers who worked on the case. "Tyson is to be commended for stepping up to the plate." Hoffman said lawyers reduced fees to facilitate the settlement.

Tyson spokesman Gary Mickelson said, "While we deny the plaintiffs' claims and settled to avoid further costly litigation, we're pleased the outcome will help feed thousands of people in need. Tyson Foods is a leader in the fight against hunger and has voluntarily donated more than 54 million pounds of protein to hunger relief agencies since 2000."

Plaintiffs alleged Springdale, Ark.-based Tyson inflated the weight of poultry products through a cold-water immersion chilling process that resulted in absorption and retention of water.

Hoffman said Tyson agreed to settle claims of Illinois consumers for \$2 million but, anticipating that few consumers of the products could be identified or would file proofs of purchase, agreed to donate fresh food products to the food banks. He said federal regulations now require poultry processors to disclose

retained water on product labels.

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