

January XX, 2009

The Honorable Senator Herb Kohl  
Chairman, Senate Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Agriculture  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rep. Rosa L. DeLauro  
Chairwoman, House Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Agriculture  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D .C. 20515

The Honorable Senator Sam Brownback  
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Agriculture  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rep. Jack Kingston  
Ranking Member, House Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Agriculture  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D .C. 20515

Dear Senator Kohl, Representative DeLauro, Senator Brownback, and Representative Kingston:

The number of Americans facing hunger has increased dramatically as economic conditions have worsened and millions have lost their jobs. Food banks and emergency feeding organizations are seeing more unemployed individuals and families coming to them for help, many of them for the first time. While the Congress and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in FY 2009 generously provided significant levels of supplemental foods and funds for emergency food assistance, more federal funding is critically needed to help our nation's food banks replenish their rapidly depleting inventories and be able to serve this increasing demand. As a result, we call upon Congress to take immediate action to shore up the emergency food supply by providing an additional \$250 million in funding for the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP).

According to data released In November 2009 by the USDA, there are now 49.1 million people in this nation who live in a food insecure household. That number reflects a 36% increase over 2007. Of those 49.1 million people, 16.7 million of them are children. These numbers, from 2008, reflect the most recent information we have available. And, with nationwide unemployment having reached 10%, we can only assume that these numbers have continued to grow over the past year as more and more people across this nation struggle to make ends meet.

In September 2009, Feeding America released the results of a survey conducted to learn more about the challenges being faced by food banks, their member agencies, and the clients they serve. Comparing demand in the summer of 2008 to the summer of 2009, Feeding America found that 99% of all food banks surveyed had seen an increase in demand. Nationwide, the average increase in demand was 30%. Not surprisingly, nearly all surveyed food banks reported a rise in the number of first-time users, with 91% citing unemployment as the key contributing factor. This influx of new users coupled with the growing need of existing clients has made it increasingly difficult for food banks to adequately serve those in need.

These shortfalls in emergency food resources are not occurring due to government inaction. In addition to the mandatory \$253 million in TEFAP funds in FY 2009, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act generously provided \$100 million worth of emergency food assistance. In addition, the USDA in FY 2009 provided nearly \$400 million worth of bonus food commodities to emergency feeding programs. But,

despite this influx of food and funds over the past year, the demand continues to outpace available resources leaving the outlook for emergency food looking bleak in 2010.

While in FY 2010 TEFAP will receive \$248 million in mandatory funding for food commodities and \$60 million worth of cheese and other dairy products as a result of FY2010 appropriations, TEFAP is not projected to see much in the way of any additional supplemental food commodities. The last remaining commodities purchased using the funds provided by ARRA are expected to be delivered to food banks by March 2010. Meanwhile, restrictions on the use of Section 32 carry-over funds will severely hamper the ability of the USDA to intervene in struggling agricultural markets to purchase surplus food commodities for donation to emergency feeding agencies. According to estimated projections, USDA bonus commodity donations to food assistance programs are expected to decline by more than \$200 million in FY 2010. These shortfalls will have a detrimental effect both on the agricultural markets that are struggling to recover and on the emergency food assistance network.

In light of such startling statistics and worsening trends, we urge the Congress to take immediate action to help mitigate the effects this economy is having on the agricultural industry and the ever growing numbers of Americans in need of food-relief by providing an additional \$250 million in emergency funding for TEFAP. We strongly believe that prompt enactment of this proposal is critical to ensuring that USDA can intervene in struggling agricultural markets while also ensuring that emergency food assistance continues to be available to hungry Americans in these difficult economic times.

We thank you for your continued strong leadership and your consideration of this important matter; and look forward to working with you and the Congress to find solutions to provide relief to the more than 49 million Americans who face the prospect of hunger each day.

Sincerely,

Alliance to End Hunger

American Commodities Distribution Association

American Sheep Industry Association

Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs

Bread for the World

Cape Cod Cranberry Growers' Association

Coalition on Human Needs

Congressional Hunger Center

End Hunger Network

Feeding America

First Focus

Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)

Half in Ten Campaign

International Dairy Foods Association

Land O' Lakes

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger

Meals On Wheels Association of America

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth

National Consumers League

National Farmers Union

National Meat Association

National Milk Producers Federation

National Turkey Federation

NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

Share Our Strength

Society of St. Andrew

Syngenta

United Fresh Produce Association

Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregation