



## Economic Impact Survey 2009: Food Bank Response

### *How current economic conditions are impacting the emergency food system served by Bay Area Food Bank*

Feeding America is the nation’s largest domestic hunger-relief organization, serving an estimated 25 million low-income Americans each year through its network of 205 food banks and their 63,000 charitable feeding agencies, including food pantries, soup kitchens, and homeless shelters.

The current recession and the rise in unemployment are having a profound effect on the nation’s food banks. In early September 2009, Feeding America conducted a brief survey of food bank members to learn more about the challenges faced by food banks, their member agencies, and clients served. A total of 176 food banks participated in the survey. What we found was that 99% of all participating food banks reported increases in demand for emergency food assistance over the last year. The average increase in demand across the network from Summer 2008 to Summer 2009 was 30%. However, the increase in need for services over the last year varies across the nation, ranging from 5% in some areas to more than 150% in others. Local economic circumstances, such as plant closings, can have a significant impact on need but it is also clear that high unemployment across the nation – which reached 9.7% in August – is a critical factor in the rising need for emergency food.

It’s becoming increasingly more difficult for many food banks and their agencies to meet the needs of their clients, especially when new clients arrive all the time. Despite the fact that the nation’s food banks delivered 2.63 billion pounds of food between July 2008 and June 2009 – an increase of 21.4% over the prior year --many are struggling to meet this increase in demand.

Here is a snapshot of what Bay Area Food Bank has witnessed and reported over the past year in the community it serves.

<b>Estimated increase in demand or need for emergency food assistance:</b>	<b>We have seen increased interest in rural churches related to starting pantries, approximately 20%, overall approximately 15% but two rural counties have seen in excess of 50% increases.</b>
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<b>Local factors impacting changes in demand:</b>	<b>Our agencies report significant increases in request for food. One area that comes up in discussions is the need among first time visitors who are in families above the TEFAP guidelines. This group often involves people in families that lost one of two workers, make too much for government support, yet are behind on bills.</b>
<b>Critical trends contributing to increased need for emergency food:</b>	<b>Unemployment Underemployment Mortgage/Rent Costs</b>
<b>Client trends include:</b>	<b>More requests from existing clients More first-time users More employed persons</b>
<b>The frequency with which the food bank or its agencies had to turn people away:</b>	<b>Information from our agencies indicates that as much as 20% of the time they were unable to serve all of their clients due to lack of resources.</b>
<b>The frequency with which the food bank or its agencies had to reduce the amount of food available per person or household:</b>	<b>Our agencies report that 60%-70% of the time household distribution must be reduced to accommodate more households.</b>

**Additional Comments:**

*Unemployment rates well above national average (12-17%) in rural communities involved in the lumber industry and apparel factories that already experienced poverty rates above the national average. This combined with a reduction in community access to programs due to reduced tax revenue to attack issues makes need high and solutions hard to identify. For example, Monroe County with approximately 21% poverty and 17% unemployment was forced to cancel school based summer programs due to lack of funds which resulted in elimination of our summer lunch support in support of the county's children.*

*Any State initiative that involves funds appears hopeless so we have to concentrate on reduction of paperwork and easing of restrictions. I am concerned that in seeking ways to reduce costs, federal government entities will increase oversight and paperwork.*



Formerly named  
America's Second Harvest\*

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