



Economic Impact Survey 2009: Food Bank Response

How current economic conditions are impacting the emergency food system served by San Francisco 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 San Francisco Food Bank has witnessed and reported over the past year in the community it serves.

<p>Estimated increase in demand or need for emergency food assistance:</p>	<p>July 08 = 67,642 Pantry Households July 09= 83,386 Pantry Households 23% increase in service requests From FY07/08 (132,997) to FY08/09 (147,923) there was an 11% increase in clients served</p>
<p>Local factors impacting changes in demand:</p>	<p>Overall, we have seen a 19% increase in demand over last year. This is the year end average in June 2009 over June 2008. Many of our new clients have never needed food aid before and we are doing our best to do outreach as well as reduce stigma. Our clients are not just the newly unemployed, they include people who have had their hours reduced and are no longer able to make ends meet.</p>



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Critical trends contributing to increased need for emergency food:	Unemployment Underemployment Cost of Food
Client trends include:	More requests from existing clients More first-time users More employed persons
The frequency with which the food bank or its agencies had to turn people away:	Rarely
The frequency with which the food bank or its agencies had to reduce the amount of food available per person or household:	Occasionally

Additional Comments:

Unemployment has increased from 5.3% in 2008 to 8.3% in 2009. Even with the increase in funding, the government doesn't come close to fully funding the amount needed to run the TEFAP program. While the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act commodities have been nice, they have not increased our total poundage significantly.

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