



## Economic Impact Survey 2009: Food Bank Response

### How current economic conditions are impacting the emergency food system served by Connecticut 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 Connecticut 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>Programs that indicate increased service demand are contacted to discuss how we can support their efforts to supply more food or serve more people. Our response varies depending on the location. We have had a 7.5% decrease in the number of unduplicated clients in the past year. We attribute this to our efforts over the past year to train programs to more accurately report their unduplicated counts. Secondly, the price of fuel and food is way down.</p>
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Formerly named  
America's Second Harvest®

<p><b>Local factors impacting changes in demand:</b></p>	<p>The change in need and demand that is most evident is in our suburban communities where the recession has hit hardest. Households where one or more earner who has become unemployed this year would be the most prevalent type of "new" family seeking assistance. Increased food insecurity is also reflected in the rising number of applications for free and reduced lunch in our public school systems. Our most recent newsletter focused on the issue of unemployment and underemployment as the primary change that is driving the demand we are seeing in our service areas.</p>
<p><b>Critical trends contributing to increased need for emergency food:</b></p>	<p>Unemployment Underemployment Mortgage/Rent Costs Inadequacy of Food Stamp (formerly SNAP) Benefits Cost of Health Care</p>
<p><b>Client trends include:</b></p>	<p>More requests from existing clients More first-time users More children</p>
<p><b>The frequency with which the food bank or its agencies had to turn people away:</b></p>	<p>Occasionally</p>
<p><b>The frequency with which the food bank or its agencies had to reduce the amount of food available per person or household:</b></p>	<p>Occasionally</p>

**Additional Comments:**

*In Eastern Connecticut, the loss of high-tech industrial jobs related to military contracts and the shift to low-paying casino/entertainment-related jobs has had a significant negative impact on our local economy.*

*The trend toward more prepared and perishable foods continues to be a challenge for our agencies, many of whom lack adequate equipment to handle and distribute these types of food.*

**For further information, please contact:**

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