

## Economic Impact Survey 2009: Food Bank Response

### *How current economic conditions are impacting the emergency food system served by the Food Bank of Southwest Georgia*

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 Food Bank of Southwest Georgia has witnessed and reported over the past year in the community it serves.

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| <b>Local factors impacting changes in demand:</b>                         | <b>With a poverty rate of almost 23% before the economic decline, the recent plant closings and numerous layoffs throughout SW Georgia has significantly increased the number of families who are seeking food assistance over the past year.</b> |
| <b>Critical trends contributing to increased need for emergency food:</b> | <b>Unemployment</b>   |
| <b>Client trends include:</b>   | <b>More first-time users<br/>More children</b>  |

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| The frequency with which the food bank or its agencies had to turn people away:  | Occasionally |
| 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:**

*Over the past year, we have had a [ tire plant] close (impacting over 2,000 families), a [food company] plant close (impacting over 1,000 families), [food service plant] (impacting over 800 employees), [peanut plant] (impacting over 200 families), [aluminum plant] (impacting about 100 families), and numerous mobile home manufacturers.*

**For further information, please contact:**

Brett A. Kirkland  
 President & CEO  
 Food Bank of Southwest Georgia  
 Albany, GA  
 229-883-5959 x17  
 bkirkland@foodbank-swga.org