



Economic Impact Survey 2009: Food Bank Response

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

Estimated increase in demand or need for emergency food assistance:	Estimates at about 15-20% increase in new faces from agencies. About 16-17% increase in product, so we are able to stay up with increased demand.
Local factors impacting changes in demand:	<i>Natural disasters like hurricanes and floods will threaten the distribution closures of a large retailer's distribution centers, losing product and increasing unemployment in the area. Chicken manufacturing plants in the area are shutting down, and other agricultural establishments are closing down, which has a major impact in rural areas.</i>



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Critical trends contributing to increased need for emergency food:	Unemployment Cost of Fuel Underutilization of the food stamp program. People are not applying.
Client trends include:	More first-time users More children More employed persons
The frequency with which the food bank or its agencies had to turn people away:	Never
The frequency with which the food bank or its agencies had to reduce the amount of food available per person or household:	Never

Additional Comments:

In our area there is a 15-20% in demand for food. In talking with media, I give them my take on the increased in distribution, calls, and general feedback from agencies. When needed, I will give the national data info which says demand up 30%. I have witnessed volunteerism up, individual donations are up, individual gifts unsolicited are up 25%, local food drives are up from church groups, private companies are all up. It's the best it's ever been, the time for food banking is up and people are answering the call. Georgia has reached double digit unemployment for the first time ever.



For further information, please contact:

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