



## Economic Impact Survey 2009: Food Bank Response

### *How current economic conditions are impacting the emergency food system served by Community Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Indiana, Inc.*

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 Community Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Indiana, Inc. has witnessed and reported over the past year in the community it serves.



Formerly named  
America's Second Harvest\*

<p><b>Local factors impacting changes in demand:</b></p>	<p>The average unemployment rate for our service area is 13.4%. Jobs are still leaving though, thankfully, some are coming back. People who have never dreamt of needing to ask for help are doing so for the first time. We even have Amish in our area applying for SNAP benefits (formerly food stamps) and unemployment benefits. Once employment is back to last year's level (4%) and has been that way for 6+ months, we will see the need for our services decrease. Many of our agencies are seeing 100% increase in requests for assistance from last year. Parents are glad kids will be going back to school so they can get on the lunch program that helps their family food budget. The meats, dairy, fresh fruits and vegetables coming through the retail donation program are a godsend as are the produce and livestock donations coming in from the local farmers and 4-H kids. The increase of TEFAP has been deeply appreciated as well.</p>
<p><b>Critical trends contributing to increased need for emergency food:</b></p>	<p>Unemployment Underemployment Cost of Food Mortgage/Rent Costs</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:**

*Lots of unemployment in RV manufacturing and sales, steel manufacturing, foundries, and auto related businesses. A first time client from a high value zip code emailed to ask about getting help. She's been unemployed since January and her husband since March. She gets unemployment, he doesn't. They are late with all their bills including their mortgage.*



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**For further information, please contact:**

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