



Economic Impact Survey 2009: Food Bank Response

How current economic conditions are impacting the emergency food system served by Food Bank of South Central Michigan

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 South Central Michigan has witnessed and reported over the past year in the community it serves.

Local factors impacting changes in demand:	The Food Bank of South Central Michigan has distributed 24% more food so far this year than compared to 2008. Requests for emergency food have been the number one request logged by 211 operators in two of our biggest counties consistently for the past 1.5 years.
Critical trends contributing to increased need for emergency food:	Unemployment Underemployment
Client trends include:	More requests from existing clients More first-time users More children



Additional Comments:

Michigan has led the nation in unemployment for the past three years. We have been particularly hard hit in this regard and the recent turbulence in the automotive industry has had ramifications across the board.

For further information, please contact:

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