



Economic Impact Survey 2009: Food Bank Response

How current economic conditions are impacting the emergency food system served by Southeast Missouri 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 Southeast Missouri 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:	July 31 2008- July 31 2009 7.9%
Local factors impacting changes in demand:	In our region unemployment statistics in July 2008 were 6.1% compared to a current end of July 2009 rate of 9.3%. Many firms in the area (particularly those tied to the auto industry) have closed leaving many without jobs. This has contributed to the increased demand for supplemental food in additional households.
Critical trends contributing to increased need for emergency food:	Unemployment Cost of Health Care



Formerly named
America's Second Harvest®

Client trends include:

**More first-time users
More children**

Additional Comments:

Five of the 16 counties in our service area are particularly underserved due to lack of agencies in that county and because our the rural region we serve has remote pockets of poverty to address. People are crowding to the available food even though they must go a great distance to access it. As a result our agencies are stretched to provide for the need outside the defined area they intended to help.

Agencies are delighted in the addition of food choices and amounts available through TEFAP.

For further information, please contact:

Karen Green
Executive Director
Southeast Missouri Food Bank
Cape Girardeau, MO
573-651-0400
kgreen@feedingamerica.org