Economic Impact Survey 2009: Food Bank Response

How current economic conditions are impacting the emergency food system served by
America's Second Harvest of Greater St. Joseph

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 America's Second Harvest of Greater St.Joseph has witnessed and reported over the past year in the community it serves.

Estimated increase in demand or need for emergency food assistance:	**We estimate an increase in service requests of 15%-20% and an Increase of 18% in clients served. Individual agencies may have increases ranging from 15-30%, depending upon the county.**
Critical trends contributing to increased need for emergency food:	**Unemployment** **Underemployment** **Cost of Health Care** **Generational Poverty**
Client trends include:	**More requests from existing clients** **More first-time users** **More employed persons**

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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:

We would like to see an increase in state supplemental funds so that seniors can get more food stamps. Also, trying to get the law repealed that says drug felons cannot receive food stamps. Interested in program implemented elsewhere that encourages deer hunters to donate meat.

For further information, please contact:

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