



## Economic Impact Survey 2009: Food Bank Response

### *How current economic conditions are impacting the emergency food system served by FoodBank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties*

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 FoodBank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties has witnessed and reported over the past year in the community it serves.

<b>Estimated increase in demand or need for emergency food assistance:</b>	<b>We saw 30% increase in visits to pantries in the first quarter of FY09 compared with the first quarter of last year. This year we distributed 35% more food than last fiscal year.</b>
<b>Critical trends contributing to increased need for emergency food:</b>	<b>Unemployment Underemployment Cost of Food Mortgage/Rent Costs Cost of Fuel Inadequacy of SNAP (formerly Food Stamp) Benefits Cost of Health Care</b>



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<b>Client trends include:</b>	<b>More requests from existing clients</b> <b>More first-time users</b> <b>More children</b>
<b>The frequency with which the food bank or its agencies had to turn people away:</b>	<b>Rarely</b>
<b>The frequency with which the food bank or its agencies had to reduce the amount of food available per person or household:</b>	<b>Occasionally</b>

#### **Additional Comments:**

*This month 40,000 people in New Jersey will lose their extended unemployment benefits. We anticipate that they will be going to local food pantries to make ends meet. Also, public transportation (getting to jobs) is a real issue.*

*Four years ago Brian and Fran Hansen's lives were turned upside down when a small infection on Brian's toe permeated into his bone, leading to the amputation of his leg. After dipping into their retirement and daughter's college funds and paying \$1,500 a month for insurance alone, Brian, 52, and Fran, 51, had little money to pay for necessities, including food. Today the Hansens are rebuilding their lives, thanks to the help of their local food pantry. "The food is great help. We've learned to be very creative with food on a disposable income. Not only did we receive food but also compassion from the volunteers at the local pantry."*

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#### **For further information, please contact:**

Susan M. Kelly  
Executive Director  
FoodBank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties  
Neptune, NJ  
732 918 2600  
[skelly@foodbankmoc.org](mailto:skelly@foodbankmoc.org)

National Office  
35 E. Wacker Drive  
Suite 2000  
Chicago, IL 60601  
tel 312.263.2303  
fax 312.263.5626  
[feedingamerica.org](http://feedingamerica.org)