



Economic Impact Survey 2009: Food Bank Response

How current economic conditions are impacting the emergency food system served by Cleveland Foodbank

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 Cleveland Foodbank has witnessed and reported over the past year in the community it serves.

Estimated increase in demand or need for emergency food assistance:	We track the number served at each agency on a monthly basis. Pantries are reporting a 35% increase in numbers served in 2009 compared with 2008.
Local factors impacting changes in demand:	Pounds of food distributed: Between October 2007 and August 2008, we distributed 19,578,385 lbs. From October 2008 through August 2009, we distributed 24,463,362 lbs., a 25% increase.
Critical trends contributing to increased need for emergency food:	Unemployment



Client trends include:	More requests from existing clients More first-time users anecdotally, more seniors
The frequency with which the food bank or its agencies had to turn people away:	Rarely
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:

The unemployment rate in Ohio is 11.1%, and there have been many layoffs. The state is in a terrible budget crunch, and many social services have been cut, as well as staff at Department of Job and Family services offices.

For further information, please contact:

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