



Economic Impact Survey 2009: Food Bank Response

How current economic conditions are impacting the emergency food system served by Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania

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 Second Harvest Food Bank of NW PA has witnessed and reported over the past year in the community it serves.

Local factors impacting changes in demand:	Local television stations and newspapers have conducted news stories. We are currently sending letters from our Food Bank included with letters from member agencies to all state representatives asking them to pass a state budget. We are reminding them of the increase in demand for emergency food assistance that our network is experiencing.
Critical trends contributing to increased need for emergency food:	Unemployment Underemployment



Client trends include:	More first-time users
The frequency with which the food bank or its agencies had to turn people away:	Never
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:

Our state has yet to pass an annual budget.

For further information, please contact:

Karen S. Seggi
Executive Director
Second Harvest Food Bank of NW PA
Erie, PA
814-459-3663
kseggi@eriefoodbank.org



Formerly named
America's Second Harvest®

National Office
35 E. Wacker Drive
Suite 2000
Chicago, IL 60601

tel 312.263.2303
fax 312.263.5626
feedingamerica.org