



Economic Impact Survey 2009: Food Bank Response

How current economic conditions are impacting the emergency food system served by FeedMore (formerly named Central Virginia 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 FeedMore (used to be named Central Virginia FB) has witnessed and reported over the past year in the community it serves.



Formerly named
America's Second Harvest®

<p>Local factors impacting changes in demand:</p>	<p>•Our first “economic indicator” is probably our Food Referral/Hunger Hotline. That’s the phone line that people in our region use to call when they need to find food. Over the past year, contacts from those needing help have jumped by 50%. In addition, we made 84% more referrals for the Food Stamp (S.N.A.P.) program. •Notably, as summer was just beginning to heat up, the numbers skyrocketed in just one month--from 290 in May to 425 referrals in June. Overall, the total number of pounds distributed through the various programs was up 4% over last year. If we had been able to procure enough food to meet the actual demand, the pounds distributed would be much higher over last year than our output shows. •We expect the trends in client demands to continue in the next fiscal year as well. •Both the governor and the legislature recognized the emergency status of the increased need for food distribution services and impact of the current economic situation. For the first time, they offered a onetime budget appropriation to the Federation of Virginia Food Banks to help meet the current demand. That will provide CVFB with over 270,000 pounds of food—enough to feed people for about a week.</p>
<p>Critical trends contributing to increased need for emergency food:</p>	<p>Unemployment Underemployment Inadequacy of SNAP (formerly Food Stamp) Benefits</p>
<p>Client trends include:</p>	<p>More requests from existing clients More first-time users More children More employed persons More seniors</p>

Additional Comments:

Recent layoffs in Richmond as well as St. Louis, have impacted the increased demand for Foodbank services over and above the general economy woes. Even some of our own staff members were affected by these layoffs.





For further information, please contact:

Colleen Keller
VP of Programs
FeedMore (used to be named Central Virginia FB)
Richmond, VA
804-549-5661
ckeller@feedmore.org