

California's Food Banks See Drop in Emergency Food From USDA

Summary

People turning to food banks for help are finding that food banks are receiving less food in 2007 from USDA than in 2002 --- dropping from nearly 100 million pounds to less than 40 million pounds — a 59% drop. The loss translates into 44.7 million fewer meals provided statewide in 2007 than in 2002.

This loss of food directly impacts local communities' ability to serve people in need. For more information on the specific drop in USDA food in your county, contact your local food bank serving as the EFAP provider under contract with the state Department of Social Services, listed by county at www.efap.net. Use the right hand link, "food banks."

A list of California Association of Food Banks (CAFB) member food banks can be found at www.cafoodbanks.org.

Decline in Emergency Food in California

Program Year	Base (lbs.)	Bonus (lbs.)	Total (lbs.)	Total Meals
2002	33,553,160	63,314,105	96,867,265	75,677,551
2003	39,190,903	31,874,325	71,065,228	55,519,709
2004	36,897,329	39,207,201	76,104,530	59,456,664
2005	38,320,627	35,831,186	74,151,813	57,931,104
2006	36,348,453	20,855,254	57,203,707	44,690,396
2007	31,290,577	8,286,492	39,577,069	30,919,585

Decline in Pounds (2002-2007)	57,290,196
Lost Meals (2002-2007)	44,757,966

Source: California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Emergency Food Assistance Program.: 1.28 lbs = 1 meal

Background:

- On EFAP: People in need receive food from USDA's Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) through their local food bank and its network of charities and congregations. The USDA food is a major source of emergency food and typically includes a range of healthy staples, such as canned fruit and vegetables, beans, and rice.
- On the Decline: The USDA food supply has been declining because much of the food provided is purchased by USDA in order to provide price support to agricultural markets ("bonus"). Because farm prices have been relatively high in recent years, USDA has purchased less food and therefore has had less food to supply to food banks and people in need.
- On the Impact: Food banks have reported record-low supplies of food in recent articles in the New York Times, Orange County Register, San Gabriel Valley Tribune, and other media outlets.

Other Pressures on the Emergency Food Network:

- Donated Food: A front page article in the Wall Street Journal this spring reported that food industry changes are reducing food waste and thus inadvertently decreasing donations to food banks.
- Purchased Food: Food prices rose in 2007 at their fastest rate in years, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, both increasing families' need for emergency food and making it more expensive for food banks to purchase supplemental foods.
- Disasters: In 2007, the added challenge of the January citrus freeze, which destroyed crops and reduced jobs for farm workers in 19 counties centered on the Central Valley, stretched emergency food resources even further. What's more, the freeze resulted in the cancellation of expected donations of oranges, grapefruits, and avocados for low-income families served by food banks statewide.

Recommendations to Strengthen Emergency Food Network:

All Californians need a strong emergency food network to meet our needs for food and nutrition:

- National: The Senate is now debating the 2007 Farm Bill. Federal policymakers should increase the USDA EFAP spending on food purchases from \$140 million annually to \$250 million, indexed annually, as proposed by the House bill passed in July and as under consideration in the Senate.
- State: The time has come for the State to commit funding to food banks to provide food to people in need. Despite a difficult budget climate, investments in nutrition help ensure that California's children learn, adults work, and seniors stay healthy.

California Association of Food Banks

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The California Association of Food Banks (CAFB) is a membership association of 40 community food banks united to build a well-nourished California.