

NEWS

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FOOD SHORTAGE HITS FOODBANK OF SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

Santa Barbara, CA – Food Banks across America are facing a potential crisis this holiday season and millions of Americans seek help feeding their families. The Foodbank of Santa Barbara County is seeing an immediate food shortage because of a 30 to 40% decline since last year in the U.S. Department of Agriculture commodities coming to food banks, a loss of essential products used as core pieces for emergency food distribution.

This has occurred because a healthy farm economy has required less intervention in order to support prices. The Farm Bill, which recently passed the Senate and is now waiting to pass through the appropriations process, authorizes funding for nutrition and food assistance programs for low-income families. Enacting a new Farm Bill would strengthen a long-term successful partnership between food banks and USDA, and provide much needed food for those most in need throughout the nation.

“Food banks need a strong nutrition title in the Farm Bill enacted as soon as possible to begin replenishing dwindling inventories,” said Executive Director Jim Mangis. “And additional help is greatly needed from corporate and individual donors to help us replenish empty food banks shelves.”

The Foodbank of Santa Barbara County is urgently calling for county wide support to raise funds to help millions of American’s at risk of hunger during this holiday season and into the New Year.

“There is usually an increased demand for food at this time of the year, as fall turns into winter and the holidays begin,” said Mangis. “This year, however, demand is unusually high and will not disappear after the holidays.”

America’s Second Harvest member food banks across the country are reporting significant increases in the number of people seeking emergency food assistance. This concern is prompting America’s Second Harvest to launch a national effort to fill this gap in donations.

“We will turn to the food and grocery industry, which already generously supports our work, to ask for more donations of food to help fill this gap,” said Vicki Escarra, President and CEO of America’s Second Harvest.

The demand for food assistance is high across the United States. The ailing economy and rising food and fuel prices are taking a toll on struggling families' budgets. Families often face tough choices, such as whether to pay to heat their homes or buy groceries.

“If we cannot fill this gap, people may go hungry. While Americans across the country celebrate the holiday season, more than 35 million men, women, and children worry about the source of their next meal,” Escarra said. “Support is urgently needed to stock our food banks and get food and groceries to those in desperate need.”

What you can do:

The best way to assist in this campaign is to make a financial donation to the foodbank of Santa Barbara County by visiting www.foodbanksbc.org or by calling 805-967-5741 ext. 104. Your donation will help secure and distribute food for our agencies in need. Help give struggling families a reason to be hopeful this holiday season.

You can also solve the underlying issue—the need for a strong Farm Bill—by visiting the Hunger Action Center at www.hungeractioncenter.org. At that site, you can contact your senators and urge them to push for the quick passage of the Farm Bill; please urge them to also support increased resources for federal nutrition programs, including \$250 million with indexing for TEFAP food purchases for distribution to food banks.

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America's Second Harvest — The Nation's Food Bank Network is the largest charitable domestic hunger-relief organization in the United States. Through its network of more than 200 member food banks, America's Second Harvest annually provides assistance to more than 25 million people in need, including more than 9 million children and nearly 3 million seniors in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Each year, America's Second Harvest secures and distributes more than 2 billion pounds of food and grocery products to support feeding programs at approximately 50,000 local charitable agencies, including food pantries, soup kitchens, emergency shelters, after-school programs, and Kids Cafes. To learn more, please visit www.secondharvest.org.