

# Community Food Report

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Community Action Partnership of Kern

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## **I. Executive Summary**

This Community Food Report is intended to provide a wide variety of information on food systems and community food services within Kern County, California. The data contained in this report may be used by the public, elected officials, researchers, food service providers and community organizations to better understand food related issues in Kern County. This document was created in response to a request from the Kern Food Policy Council

The Kern Food Policy Council (KFPC) is a forum for individuals from many sectors of the community to share ideas, experiences, skills, and knowledge to alleviate hunger and develop a healthy, sustainable food system in Kern County. The KFPC aims to inform policy decisions impacting the food system in urban and rural Kern County. Council formation is sponsored by the United Way of Kern County, the California Endowment, and the Community Action Partnership of Kern.

The Kern Food Policy Council has a Steering Committee, with 20 members, who represent a wide range of entities from public agencies, community-based organizations, food justice advocates, the private sector, and local schools and colleges. The Steering Committee convenes on a monthly basis, and members also participate in Working Groups, which focus on special issues.

As a result of increased rates of diabetes, obesity and other negative health indicators in Kern County, the KFPC Steering Committee wanted to generate the first part of a Countywide Food Assessment. The resulting Kern Community Food Report sets the stage for additional evaluation of the food systems and consumer needs related to healthy eating within Kern County. The Food Report is also intended to provide key areas of research and references needed to complete a future Countywide Food Assessment. The Food Report, as you will see, contains study results, County facts and food related statistics.

## **II. Hunger and Food Insecurity in the Kern County**

California has been the largest food and agricultural producer in the United States for the last 50 years. The state is also the leading agricultural exporter in the country. In 2012, Kern County ranked second in total value of agricultural commodities among California counties. <sup>i</sup>

Despite the rich agricultural economy, many Kern County families struggle to meet their basic food needs. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has found that 15.6% of Californians report “food insecurity.”<sup>ii</sup> Food insecurity “occurs whenever the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe food, or the ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways, is limited or uncertain.” Despite our agricultural abundance, millions of Californians experience food insecurity and associated hunger.

The statewide contrast between agricultural excellence and nutritional vulnerability is just as striking at the county level. Counties like Fresno, Kern and Tulare, with the highest rates of agricultural production in California also have the highest rates of food insecurity.

Hunger is a problem with a clear solution: ensuring affordable access to sufficient nutritious food. It appears that California has the agricultural resources to address hunger in this state. The Bakersfield metropolitan statistical area ranks third among all metro areas for highest rate of

difficulty accessing affordable fresh fruits and vegetables (2008-2010).<sup>iii</sup> But as this section and other sections of the report indicate, all available resources are not being enlisted in the effort to reduce hunger.

According to the Food Research and Action Center's "Food Hardship in America 2012," Bakersfield is the #1 hungriest city in the United States, with Fresno ranking at fifth.<sup>iv</sup> According to the report, 26.7% of respondents in Bakersfield said they had experienced difficulties feeding themselves or their family.

The study was based on a survey of 352,789 people conducted during 2011 and 352,817 people conducted during 2012, when nationwide food hardship rates were a little over 18 percent. The study's authors blamed continued lack of attention by Congress to the problem of food hardship and 2013 cuts to the SNAP program.

Food inflation was another major factor identified by the authors as contributing to food hardship. The overall inflation rate stayed under control, but the government's cheapest hypothetical diet, the Thrifty Food Plan, was the basis for SNAP benefits before 2009 when the USDA's Low-Cost Food Plan would provide a more appropriate basis for SNAP allotments.<sup>v</sup>

The identification of solutions to these issues will be a complex process. The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) says economic growth and job creation are vital, along with better wages for lower-income workers. Another key solution is a stronger SNAP/food stamp program that strives to reach communities that are unaware of what is available to them. This is especially important in the quest to end childhood hunger, an issue that negatively impacts the single best path out of poverty and its viscous cycle—school achievement.

However, the prevalence of hunger and food insecurity in Kern County is documented by a 2009 UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, California Health Interview Survey (CHIS), which profiles hunger and food insecurity in California counties. The study found that 33.9% of Kern County adults with income <200% of the Federal Poverty Level were food insecure.<sup>vi</sup> The non-profit anti-hunger organization Feeding America estimates 17.1% of Kern County households experience food insecurity in a given year, which would indicate 143,000 food-insecure individuals.<sup>vii</sup>

A recent U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) study estimated low-income households with incomes below 185% of the poverty threshold are 34.3% food insecure; that is, they did not have access at all times to enough food for an active and healthy life, with no need for recourse to emergency food sources or other extraordinary coping behaviors to meet their basic food needs.<sup>viii</sup>

Such levels of food insecurity and hunger imply public health and economic costs to both communities and individuals through:

- Lower cognitive development and learning capacity in children,
- Impaired work performance and earnings potential in adults, and
- Lower intake of food energy and key nutrients leading to increased medical costs, disability, and premature death due to diet-related illnesses.

Socioeconomic and demographic factors, including **1) household size, 2) homeownership, 3) educational attainment, 4) savings rates, and 5) access to credit and 6) health insurance**, have been shown to be important determinants of food security, independent of household income. (need citation) For such households, food spending is often a very flexible item in the family budget and the most vulnerable to unexpected changes in income, such as job loss or medical expenses.

Broader social, economic, and institutional characteristics are also of particular concerns when assessing factors that affect the availability, accessibility, and affordability of food, such as the 1) size and proximity of retail food stores, the 2) variety, quality, and price of food available for purchase, the 3) availability and adequacy of public transportation systems that support food access, and the 4) The timing of income and number of visits to retail food stores during the month 5) The ability to prepare meals using fresh and healthy ingredients 6) Lack of time due to (multiple) work schedules to make meals at traditional times during the day.

Legislative changes associated with welfare reform and Federal farm supports have created a unfavorable policy environment for SNAP (CalFresh) by cutting \$8.6 Billion over 10 years. These cuts will translate into a loss of about \$90 per month for a qualifying family food budget. Funding for school food projects in the 2014 Farm Bill and school garden programs is included.

### **What is Household Food Security?**

**Food security**—Access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.

**Food insecurity**—Limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.

**Hunger**—The uneasy or painful sensation caused by a lack of food. The recurrent and involuntary lack of access to food. (Life Sciences Research Office)

### **What is Community Food Security?**

Communities may be considered to be food insecure if:

- There are inadequate resources from which people can purchase foods.
- The available food purchasing resources are not accessible to all community members.
- The food available through the resources is not sufficient in quantity or variety.
- The food available is not competitively priced and thus is not affordable to all households.
- There are inadequate food assistance resources to help low-income people purchase foods at retail markets.
- There are no local food production resources.
- Locally produced food is not available to community members.
- There is no support for local food production resources.
- There is any significant household food insecurity within the community.

Policies and programs implemented to improve community food security address a diverse range of issues, including participation in and access to Federal food assistance programs, economic opportunity and job security, community development and social cohesion, ecologically sustainable agricultural production, farmland preservation, economic viability of rural communities, direct food marketing, diet-related health problems, and emergency food assistance access.

Some examples include the following:

- **Food stamp outreach programs** that help increase the number of eligible households that participate in the Food Stamp Program.
- **Farmers' markets** that boost incomes of small, local farmers and increase consumers' access to fresh produce.
- **Community gardens** that help public housing residents and other low-income consumers supplement their diets with home-grown produce.

- **Asset development programs** that assist low-income families to accumulate funds for obtaining additional education, purchasing a home, or starting a business.
- **Food-buying cooperatives** that help families save money by pooling food purchases.
- **Community-supported agriculture programs** that can help provide small farmers with economic stability and consumers with high-quality produce, often at below retail prices.
- **Farm-to-school initiatives** that help local farmers sell fresh fruits and vegetables directly to school meals programs.
- **Community kitchens** that provide job training to the unemployed while converting surplus food to meals for the needy.

The current food security status of Bakersfield and other Kern County communities' has been depicted recently by the California Food Policy Advocates' 2012 Food Insecurity Profile. The profile reported 54% of adults in food insecure households totaling 141,000 people. Nearly 70% of adults are considered to be obese with only 50% of children within the healthy fitness zone for body composition.

### **III. Community Socioeconomic and Demographic Characteristics**

#### **A. Household Size**

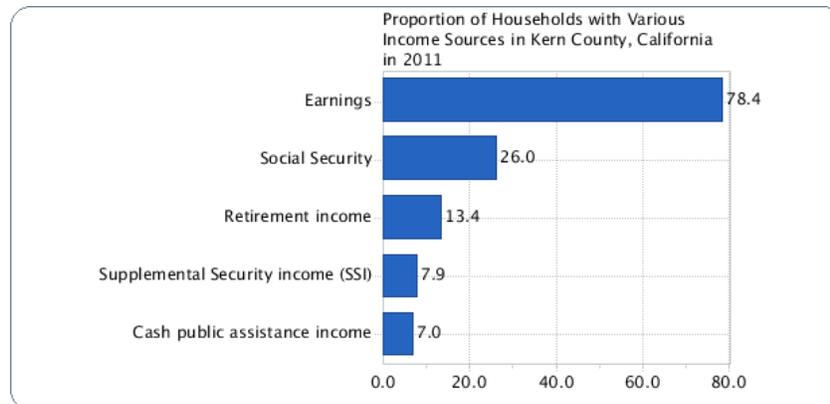
- According to the 2012 American Community Survey 5-year Estimate there were 283,810 households in Kern County.
- The average household size was 3.11 people. Compared to 3.27 for renter-occupied units. Families made up 75.3% of the households in Kern County; married-couple families 52.1% and other families 24.7%. (2010 Census)
- Of other families, 9.5% are female householder families with no husband present and own children under 18 years. (2010 Census)
- Nonfamily households made up 24.7% of all households in Kern County. Most of the nonfamily households were people living alone, but some were composed of people living in households in which no one was related to the householder.
- In Kern County, 45.9% of all households have one or more people under the age of 18; 21.7% of all households have one or more people 65 years and over.

#### **B. Household Income**

According to the 2012 American Community Survey 5-year Estimate:

- Median household income in Kern County was \$47,727.
- 14% of households had income below \$15,000 a year.
- 7% had income over \$150,000 or more.
- Women, on average, earn \$10,127 less than men in Kern County.

- 13% received retirement income other than Social Security compared to 16% for California.
- 26% of the households received Social Security compared to 25% for California.
- 7% received cash/public assistance income compared to 4.1% for California.
- 8% received SSI compared to 6.2 for California.
- The average income from Social Security was \$15,832. These income sources are not mutually exclusive; that is, some households received income from more than one source.



### C. Homeownership

According to the 2012 American Community Survey 5-year Estimate, Kern County had 253,178 occupied housing units:

- 59.1% (149,657) of homes are owner occupied and 40.9% (103,521) renter.
- The median monthly housing costs for mortgaged owners was \$1,546, nonmortgaged owners \$382, and renters \$869. Seventy-two percent (73.2%) of the owner occupied units had a mortgage.
- 7.4% had no vehicles available and another 22.8 percent had three or more.
- 56.2% of renters in Kern County spent 30% or more of household income on housing compared to 42.5% of owners with mortgages and 14.1% of owners without mortgages.

### D. Educational Attainment

According to the 2012 American Community Survey 5-year Estimate:

- 78.1% of people 25 years and over in Kern County did not possess a college degree.
- 28.4% of people 25 years and over in Kern County were school dropouts; they were not enrolled in school and had not graduated from high school.
- 14.9% had a bachelor's degree or higher.

- The total school enrollment in Kern County was 246,750. Nursery school and kindergarten enrollment was 26,144 and elementary or high school enrollment was 169,343 children. College or graduate school enrollment was 51,263.

## **E. Poverty and Participation in Government Programs**

According to the 2012 American Community Survey 5-year Estimate:

- 22.5% of population for whom poverty status is determined in poverty.
- 26.5% of families with related children under 18 were below the poverty level, compared with 7.6% of people 65 years old and over.
- 18.5% of all families and 51.3% of families with a female householder and no husband present with children had incomes below the poverty level.

## **F. Population**

- In 2013, Kern County, California had a total population of 864,124.
- The median age was 30.7 years. 33.5% of the population was under 18 years and 9.1 percent was 65 years and older. (2012 ACS 5 Year)
- For people reporting one race alone, 71.5% were White; 5.6% were Black or African American; 1.2% were American Indian and Alaska Native; 4.1% were Asian; 0.1% were Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and 13.9% were Some other race. (2012 ACS 5 Year)
- 3.7% reported two or more races.
- 49.2% of the people in Kern County were Hispanic. 38.6% of the people in Kern County were White non-Hispanic (people of Hispanic origin may be of any race.)
- Among the civilian noninstitutionalized population in 2012, 12 percent reported a disability. The likelihood of having a disability varied by age - from 3.1 percent of people under 18 years old, to 12.1 percent of people 18 to 64 years old, and to 41.5 percent of those 65 and over.

## **G. Language**

According to the 2012 American Community Survey 5-year Estimate:

- Among people at least five years old living in Kern County, California in 2012, 41.6 percent spoke a language other than English at home. Of those speaking a language other than English at home, 37 percent spoke Spanish and 4.7 percent spoke some other language; 17.9 percent reported that they did not speak English "very well."

## H. Access to Credit

“Low-Income and Minority Families Face More Credit Constraints and Higher Borrowing Costs.”  
*Christian E. Weller. Senior Fellow, Center for American Progress, August 2007.*

Few families in the United States today could pay cash for a home, their children’s college education, a new car, or a major family medical emergency. Most families need to borrow money to create economic opportunities for themselves or protect their financial security. Access to credit helps families get ahead in life, to start a new business or pursue an education and ensure that unforeseen setbacks, such as a temporary decline in income, do not result in unpaid bills or sharp cuts in living standards.

For many families, especially minorities and those with low incomes, access to credit opens doors that were previously closed, literally so in the case of homeownership. In the wake of the recent subprime home lending crisis, however, access to credit is becoming more restrictive across all credit products, from credit cards to home mortgages, car loans to consumer installment lines of credit, even while persistent differences in access to credit and in the cost of that credit are still based on race, ethnicity and income.

Specifically, African-American and Hispanic families are still denied credit more often than white families with the same income, and low-income families are more often denied access to credit than middle-income and higher-income families—even when low-income families apply for credit in line with their income and creditworthiness. This type of discrimination in the credit marketplace remains pervasive despite a number of regulatory efforts to make access to credit non-discriminatory and to make access to credit for low-income families on par with that for wealthier families.

To analyze access to credit and the quality of credit, this report relies on a household survey conducted periodically by the Federal Reserve Board. This data set, known as the Survey of Consumer Finances, includes comprehensive information on household debt and assets. The SCF surveys a cross-section of the U.S. population every three years. The survey covers all forms of financial and non-financial assets as well as many forms of credit, such as credit card debt, mortgages, margin debt, loans against pension plans, and life insurances, among others.

The last available survey year is 2004. Consistent data are available since 1989. Although the interest of the survey is to compile an accurate picture of financial assets and debt in the United States, the SCF tends to over-sample high-income families. This means the SCF may miss less formal financial interactions—such as those with pawnbrokers or check cashing outlets, which may be more prevalent among lower income families—but capture those families’ interactions with formal financial markets.

## I. Unemployment

According to California Employment Development Department, Bakersfield and Kern County unemployment rates have doubled those of 2006, going from an annual average of 5.2% and 7.5% respectively to monthly averages of 13.1% and 13.1% during March 2014. That translates to over 50,700 people unemployed.<sup>ix</sup>

## **IV. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) aka Cal-Fresh in California**

CalFresh (formerly the Food Stamp Program) is a critical defense against poor nutrition. Unfortunately, the program is severely underutilized: half of all eligible Californians miss out on the benefits of CalFresh. This dismal participation rate means California loses out on an estimated \$4.9 billion in federal nutrition benefits each year, which would go directly to low-income California families and help bolster the state's economy.

The new report by California Food Policy Advocates articulates a county-level Program Access Index (PAI), estimating CalFresh utilization among low-income individuals.

Kern County has fallen from 19<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> out of 58 counties for CalFresh utilization in the last several years. The number one ranked county has the highest CalFresh utilization relative to the total number of income-eligible individuals. If all income-eligible individuals in Kern County participated in CalFresh, county residents would receive additional federal nutrition benefits of about \$114,000,000.

The Food Policy Advocates report 142,323 participants in the Cal-Fresh program as of September 2013, with an additional 66,013 eligible for, but not obtaining Cal-Fresh benefits. This places Kern County 25<sup>th</sup> in Cal-Fresh participation for all counties. <sup>x</sup>

### **Number and location of Food Stamp Program application sites**

Only an estimated 68.3% of the eligible populations in Kern are receiving SNAP/Cal-Fresh (food stamp) assistance. With relatively far less outside resources, there continues to be considerable efforts and resources dedicated to combating hunger and food insecurity in Bakersfield and throughout Kern County. Current and past data make loud and clear, the urgency of a more coordinated, collaborative and responsive approach. It also tells us that 1) there is an entirely new population experiencing hunger and food insecurity and 2) there remains, a significant number of children, families and individuals in our community that still don't have access to enough food.

## **V. National School Lunch Program (NSLP)**

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) provides nutritious lunches to about 31 million children in over 100,000 schools each school day in 2012. These lunches must meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and other nutrition standards. The program includes snacks served to children in afterschool educational and enrichment programs through the age of 18.

The NSLP provides cash and commodity support for meals served by public and private nonprofit elementary and secondary schools and residential child care institutions (RCCIs) that opt to enroll and guarantee to offer free or reduced-price meals to eligible low-income children.

The NSLP operates as a three-tiered system. For children whose family incomes are below 130 percent of the Federal poverty guidelines, the meals are free. For children whose family income is between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty guidelines, the program restricts lunch costs to no more than 40 cents. The NSLP provides a small per meal subsidy for "full-price" meals for children who do not receive free or reduced-price meals. More than half of the lunches served in the NSLP are free or at reduced price. Meal services are operated as non-profit programs.<sup>xi</sup>

## **VI. School Breakfast Program (SBP)**

The School Breakfast Program (SBP) is similar to the NSLP in that it provides for Federal cash and commodity support for meals served by public and private nonprofit elementary and secondary schools residential child care institutions (RCCIs) that opt to enroll and guarantee to offer free or reduced-price meals to eligible low-income children. The program uses the three-tiered approach (described above) to ensuring that low-income children receive a free or reduced-cost breakfast as they arrive at school in the morning.

Unlike the NSLP, the great majority (84 percent in FY 2000) of children enrolled in the program receive free or reduced-price meals. More than half of the children in the United States attend schools that offer the SBP. In fiscal year 2012, over 12.9 million children participated every day and 10.1 million received their meals free or at a reduced price.<sup>xii</sup>

It has been estimated that a 10% increase in School Breakfast participation by students would increase the state general fund by \$2.7 million and generate \$42.7 million in indirect economic activity.<sup>xiii</sup>

### **School Meal Analysis, Kern County 2011-13**

- Low-Income Student Participation: 111,141
- School Breakfast Participation by low-Income Students: 47,366
- % of Low-Income Students Who Participate in School Lunch: 93%
- % of Low-Income Students Who Participate in School Breakfast: 39.7%
- % of Low-Income Lunch Participants Who Also Eat School Breakfast: 43%
- Additional Federal Meal Reimbursements with 10% Increased Breakfast Participation: \$40,200,000<sup>xiv</sup>
- Summer meal program participation among low-income children during 2012 was 11,642.<sup>xv</sup>

## **VII. Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)**

The Child and Adult Care Food Program is the only program that provides funding for meals served in a childcare settings to children up to age 12 and impaired adults. The program provides reimbursements for meals and snacks.

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides healthful meals and snacks for children and adults enrolled in a variety of day-care settings. The program reimburses participating day-care providers for serving meals that meet Federal guidelines. It operates in family or group day-care homes, child care centers, adult day-care centers for elderly and impaired adults, emergency shelters that provide meals to homeless children, and after-school programs that provide educational or enrichment activities. In 2010 Kern County had 1,115 licensed childcare facilities with 21,872 childcare spaces and 7,776 children participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).<sup>xvi</sup>

## **VIII. Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children**

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program (SFSP) for Women, Infants, and Children (the WIC program) provides food assistance, nutrition risk screening, and related services (e.g., nutrition education and breastfeeding support) to low-income pregnant and postpartum women and their

infants, as well as low-income children up to age 5. Participants in the program must have a family income at or below 185 percent of the Federal poverty guidelines and must be judged to be nutritionally at risk. Nutritional risk is defined as detectable abnormal nutritional conditions, documented nutrition-related medical conditions, health-impairing dietary deficiencies, or conditions that predispose people to inadequate nutrition or nutrition-related medical problems. More information about the WIC program is available at [[www.fns.usda.gov/wic](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic)].

Breastfeeding promotion and support is a priority in the WIC Program and is a core component of the nutrition services that the WIC Program provides to meet its mission of safeguarding the health of low-income women, infants and children. Research continues to reinforce breastfeeding as the best source of nutrition for infants as it provides numerous health, nutritional, economical and emotional benefits to both mother and infant. The WIC Program has achieved many accomplishments in promoting and supporting breastfeeding and continues to build upon these successes through its various breastfeeding efforts. Breastfeeding rates are steadily improving among WIC participants nationwide thanks to the efforts of WIC staff who provide the education and support mothers need to successfully breastfeed. This is the second year that State and local WIC agency breastfeeding performance measurements have been collected and published. This year's report is a compilation of fiscal year (FY) 2011 breastfeeding performance measurements based on program participant data of the number of partially and fully breastfed infants for each WIC State and local agency. The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (the Act), Public Law 111-296, requires The Department of Agriculture to annually compile and publish breastfeeding performance measurements.

The collection and publication of breastfeeding performance measurements is one of several provisions in the Act that strengthens the WIC Program's emphasis on breastfeeding promotion and support and underscores the importance of exclusive, continued breastfeeding to the health of WIC participants. This reporting requirement provides an exciting opportunity to help further the efforts of WIC State and local agencies by highlighting agencies that demonstrate success in breastfeeding through high breastfeeding rates and by motivating other agencies to strengthen their breastfeeding promotion and support services with the goal of increasing their breastfeeding rates. The breastfeeding performance measurements will be used in the process to determine awardees for initiatives that recognize the exemplary performance of WIC State and local agencies in breastfeeding such as the Loving Support Awards for Excellence. Additionally, the collection of these data allows WIC to track breastfeeding data trends in the WIC Program.

The data indicate a 1.5% increase in the number of WIC infants reported as breastfed (0.8% increase in fully breastfed and 0.6% increase in partially breastfed) from FY 2010 to FY 2011. This increase in breastfeeding rates represents the successful efforts of WIC State and local agencies in continuing to provide quality breastfeeding services, including peer counseling, to WIC participants. Other highlights from the FY 2011 WIC Breastfeeding Data Report include:<sup>xvii</sup>

- An average of 2.1 million infants participated in the WIC Program nationally.
- Approximately 28.2 % of infants were reported as breastfed nationally (11.2 % were fully breastfed and 17.0 % were partially breastfed).
- The Northeast, Western and Southwest Region's performance measurements were above the national average with 36.4%, 36.2%, and 32.3% of infants reported as breastfed respectively.
- Western Region had the greatest percentage of infants reported as fully breastfed – 19.7%.

## IX. Summer Food Service Program

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides free meals to children during school vacations in areas where at least half of the children are from households with incomes at or below 185 percent of the poverty guidelines. Any child in the operating area may participate without needing to pass an eligibility test. Local sponsors, who are reimbursed by USDA, operate the program.<sup>xviii</sup> Sponsors may be schools, units of local government, public or nonprofit private residential camps, other nonprofit private organizations, and colleges or universities participating in the National Youth Sports Program.

“Press Release on June, 21, 2012 Fewer Summer Meals Served Across California, New Strategies Needed”

Kern Ties for the 8th Lowest Summer Meal Participation Rate Among 58 Counties According to a new report released today, over 2 million (84 percent) of the children in California who benefitted from federally funded school meals during the academic year were not served by the federal summer meal programs in 2011. The report, *School’s Out...Who Ate?*, authored by California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA), ties the elimination of summer school to the loss of affordable, nutritious meals for low-income children.

CFPA’s analysis of data provided by the California Department of Education shows that participation in federal summer meal programs has decreased by over 50 percent in just under a decade. That downward trend is driven largely by a decline in meals served by summer schools. George Manalo- LeClair, CFPA’s executive director, notes, “The widespread loss of summer school programs in California undermines student enrichment and academic achievement. That harm is intensified by the loss of summer school meals. Children need year-round access to nutritious meals that combat hunger, support learning, and help prevent obesity.”

Beyond children’s health and development, the loss of summer meals also impacts the bottom line. As reported by the Food Research and Action Center, in *Hunger Doesn’t Take a Vacation*, California missed out on an estimated \$34 million in federal funding due to low participation in summer nutrition programs during July of 2011. *School’s Out... Who Ate?*<sup>xix</sup> includes an analysis of county-level data. In July 2011, 7 percent of the low-income children in Kern County who participated in free or reduced-price school meal programs during the academic year were served by summer meal programs. This means Kern ties for the 8th lowest summer meal participation rate among California’s 58 counties.

*School’s Out... Who Ate?* also offers federal, state, and local policy recommendations aimed at closing the summer nutrition gap, such as:

- A state convening to address deficits in summer nutrition and summer learning
- Required collection and tracking of basic data on summer school and summer programs
- Rigorous outreach to inform families of available summer meal sites
- Research to better understand the availability and impact of summer nutrition resources on children’s diets.

Across the state, the federal summer meal programs reach fewer children each year and many families continue to struggle in this tough economy. Policymakers at all levels should take action to mend the widening summer nutrition gap faced by millions of low-income children in California.

74 summer meal sites are shown in Kern County as of June 25, 2013, including both Summer Food Service Programs (SFSP) and Seamless Summer Feeding Options (SSFO).<sup>xx</sup>

## **X. The Emergency Food Assistance Program**

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) provides commodity foods to States for distribution to households, soup kitchens, and food banks. First initiated in 1981 as the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program, TEFAP was designed to reduce inventories and storage costs of surplus commodities through distribution to needy households. Although some surplus food is still distributed through TEFAP, Congress since 1989 has appropriated funds to purchase additional commodities for households. The Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, Emergency Food Assistance Act of 1983 and Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 govern the resources available from this program.<sup>xxi</sup>

### **Number and location of TEFAP and CSFP distribution sites**

Currently, 58% of residents served by the Community Action Partnership of Kern (CAPK) Food Bank are children. In 2009, the CAPK Food Bank distributed approximately 4 million lbs. of food, a 60% increase from the 2.5 million lbs in 2008. From January 1, 2010- August 1, 2010, the CAPK food Bank has distributed 3.9 million pounds of food. In just eight months, virtually the same amount as all of 2009. The CAPK Food Bank distributed 6.3 million pounds of food in 2013, a 152% increase since 2008.<sup>xxii</sup>

## **XI. Commodity Supplemental Food Program**

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) is a direct food distribution program that serves the elderly and low-income women and children. Similar to WIC, this program distributes food packages tailored to the nutritional needs of participants.

## **XII. Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations**

The Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) is a Federal program that provides commodity foods to low-income households, including the elderly living on Indian reservations, and to Native American families residing in designated areas near reservations. Many Native Americans participate in the FDPIR as an alternative to the Food Stamp Program, usually because they do not have easy access to food stores. More information about the FDPIR is available at. Kern County does not include Native American reservation or tribal areas.

## **XIII. The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program**

The Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) was established in 1992 to provide WIC participants with increased access to fresh produce. WIC participants are given coupons to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at authorized local farmers' markets. The program is funded through a legislatively mandated set-aside in the WIC program appropriation. As of April 29, 2014, California continues to authorize farmers to accept WIC Cash Value Vouchers.<sup>xxiii</sup> There are 17 Farmers Market locations in Kern County operating at various times of the year.

## XIV. Nutrition Services Incentives Program (NSIP)

The Nutrition Services Incentives Program provides cash and commodities to States for meals for senior citizens. The food is delivered through senior citizen centers or Meals On Wheels programs located throughout the country. NSIP is authorized under Section 311 of the Older American's Act. There are 19 Senior Nutrition Sites located in Kern County.<sup>xxiv</sup>

## XV. Guide to Measuring Household Food Security<sup>xxv</sup>

The purpose of this assessment is to determine the effectiveness of existing programs designed to help such households, and identify population subgroups with unusually severe levels of food insecurity.

Is household food insecurity a problem that is directly or personally experienced for a significant number of people in the community?

The measurement tool itself consists of a standard set of 18 questions (or a reliable subset of 6 questions) (Bickel, et. al., 2000) about several general types of household food conditions, events, and behaviors:

- Anxiety that the household food budget or food supply may be insufficient to meet basic needs.
- Perceptions that the food eaten by household members is inadequate in quality or quantity.
- Reported instances of reduced food intake, or consequences of reduced food intake (such as the physical sensation of hunger or reported weight loss) for adults in the household (omitted in the 6 question subset).
- Reported instances of reduced food intake or its consequences for children in the household.

The assessment gauges food insecurity in three broad ranges or levels of severity:

- **Food secure:** households with no or minimal indication of food insecurity.
- **Food insecure without hunger:** households concerned about inadequate resources to buy enough food who have adjusted by decreasing the quality of their family diet with little or no reduction in household food intake.
- **Food insecure with hunger:** food insecure households in which one or more members (mainly adults) have decreased the amount of food they consume to the extent that they have repeatedly experienced the physical sensation of hunger.

As the terms are defined here, household food insecurity and hunger are conditions resulting from financial resource constraints. Hunger, for example, can occur in many situations, including dieting and being too busy to eat. The Federal Food Security Measure, however, is concerned only with food insecurity and hunger that occur because the household does not have enough money or other resources to buy food. (See box 11.) Hunger, in this sense, may be seen as a severe stage of food insecurity, rather than as a distinct or separate condition from the more general experience of food insecurity. Moreover, while this condition is usually associated with poverty, it is not the same thing as general income inadequacy. Rather, it is the condition of deprivation in this one area of basic need.

## **XVI. Assessment of Food Resource Accessibility<sup>xxvi</sup>**

Ensuring access for low-income households to food retailers and other food resources in the community depends on both the existence of food stores and other food resources at reasonable distances from low-income households and the ability of such households to physically get to these resources using a private vehicle or public transportation.

These resources include retail food stores, farmers' markets, food cooperatives, and food assistance programs.

### **Four key questions frame this assessment:**

- Are food resources located near low-income neighborhoods?
- Is public and/or private transportation available between the resources and low-income neighborhoods?
- What barriers influence people's use of community food resources?
- Does the community have the infrastructure necessary to deliver Federal food assistance benefits effectively?

### **Geographically Accessible Resources**

The purpose of this question is to determine how accessible food resources are to low-income households.

### **Neighborhood Characteristics**

Total number of persons by ZIP Code

Number of persons living below the poverty line by ZIP Code

Number of total occupied housing units by ZIP Code

### **Transportation Characteristics**

Number of vehicles per occupied housing unit by ZIP Code

Number, type, routes, frequency, and per ride cost of public transportation resources (buses, trains, subways)

Number, type, routes, frequency, and per ride cost of paratransit resources (store shuttles, taxis, etc.)

Transportation available for food shopping B Focus Group on Food Shopping Patterns

### **Shopping Patterns and Barriers**

Food shopping patterns/sources B Focus Group on Food Shopping Patterns

Obstacles to food shopping (travel, time, cost, distance) B Focus Group on Food Shopping Patterns

Barriers to use of food assistance programs

Focus Group on Household Food Assistance

The National Nutrition Safety Net toolkit

### **Food Availability and Affordability**

In addition to food resource accessibility, community food security also depends on the availability and affordability of a variety of food items sold through retail and other food resources. Households participating in the Federal Food Stamp Program receive benefits that are used to purchase food from food retailers authorized by USDA to accept food stamps. Maximizing the effectiveness of

Federal food assistance programs requires that sufficient quantities of healthful foods are available in the marketplace at prices low-income households can afford.

**The key questions for this assessment include:**

- Is a variety of food available in retail stores?
- Are the available foods affordable to low-income households?
- Can the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) market basket be purchased from these retailers at or below the TFP cost threshold set by USDA?

## **XVII. Food Availability and Affordability**

To determine whether an adequate variety of food is available in your community, you will need to calculate the number and share of missing items in each store and across all stores. For each store type (e.g., supermarkets, convenience stores), you will learn how to calculate the following indicators:

- Total number of missing items per store
- Average number of missing items per store
- Percentage of items missing per store
- Items most frequently missing
- Percentage of items missing per store in each food category (fresh vegetables, fresh meats, canned and frozen vegetables, condiments, etc.)
- Percentage of missing items compared with the national average

### **Comparisons With National Data**

Comparing your results with national data allows you to determine whether food availability is more or less of a problem in your community than in the United States as a whole. The best source of national data on food availability is the *Authorized Food Retailer's Characteristics and Access Study*, published by USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) in February 1997.

### **Food Prices**

Along with availability, the Food Store Survey can also be used to determine whether the foods available for sale are affordable to low-income households and to look at differences in food prices in different parts of your community. For each store type, you will learn how to answer the following questions:

- What is the average price of individual food items across all stores?
- What is the average price per unit of each food category across all stores?
- How does the average price for an individual food item differ across stores?
- How does the average price for an entire food category differ across stores?
- What is the cost of the entire toolkit market basket?
- How does the cost of the toolkit market basket vary across individual stores and store types?
- How does the cost of the toolkit market basket cost vary across different food categories?
- How does the cost of the toolkit market basket compare with the TFP reference price?
- How does the gap between the toolkit market basket price and the TFP reference price differ across stores?

## **XVIII. Community Food Production Resources**

Local agricultural and food production resources can play an important role in community food security. When implemented together with a strong Federal nutrition safety net and emergency food assistance programs that alleviate food insecurity and hunger over the short term, strengthening your community's agricultural system can, over the long term, boost the effectiveness of Federal food assistance and education programs. This goal can be accomplished by increasing the availability of high-quality, affordable food within a community, offering small farmers an opportunity to maintain economic viability by supplying the local market with fresh foods, strengthening economic and social ties between farms and urban residents, and channeling a larger share of residents' food spending back to the local economy.

### **Key questions include:**

- Does the community have food production, value-added processing, or food distribution resources?
- Do low-income households have the opportunity to participate in community gardens or other food production activities?
- Are there any school-based gardening programs?
- Are locally produced foods sold through local food retailers and restaurants?
- Does the local school district purchase foods from local producers?
- Are locally produced foods used by other institutional food service outlets, such as colleges, prisons, and hospitals?

## **XIX. Community gardens**

A community garden is any shared space where people come together to grow vegetables, flowers, or any plants. Through community gardening, individuals can produce fresh vegetables, beautify their neighborhoods, and make changes in their own communities in tangible, effective ways. Community gardens have a long history of success in all sorts of areas, even in the most dense cities. Whether planting a few seeds in a window box or organizing the transformation of a trash-filled vacant lot into a space for an entire neighborhood to grow food, community gardening can be a worthwhile and plausible project for many people. The most direct benefit of community gardening is the production of fresh, nutritious produce; however, many gardens become centers for education, food assistance programs, local marketing, and small business development.

## **XX. Community-Supported Agriculture**

Community supported agriculture (CSA) is a partnership of mutual commitment between a farm and a community of supporters, which provides a direct link between the production and consumption of food. Supporters cover a farm's yearly operating budget by purchasing a share of the season's harvest. CSA members make a commitment to support the farm throughout the season and assume the costs, risks, and bounty of growing food along with the farmer or grower. Members help pay for seeds, fertilizer, water, equipment maintenance, and labor. In return, the farm provides, to the best of its ability, a healthy supply of seasonal fresh produce throughout the growing season.

Exhibit 3 presents the framework for this assessment. It introduces key questions, possible response paths, answers, and the implications of various answers. The highlighted elements indicate the presence of a specific type of problem and alert community leaders to the possibility of

a potential food insecurity problem. For this assessment, there is one potential problem—the viability of local food production, which includes local food producers, community gardens, community-supported agriculture, farmers, dairies, and fisheries. After determining whether such resources exist in your community, you will want to explore further to find out whether they are supported by the community (politically and financially) and whether the locally produced food is available and affordable to all community members, including low-income residents. Negative answers to any of these key questions indicate a potential food production problem.

The assessment of community food production will begin with a profile of existing local food production resources. It then progresses to ask whether local food producers are supported and used by the community. The political and economic support of community members and organizations plays a large role in the success of local food producers. To assess the community's commitment to local food producers, you can conduct focus groups with community household members, key representatives from community organizations, and food retailers.

The analysis also can use mapping techniques to identify the location of food production resources and to compare this information with food markets and other community retailing sites (farmers' markets, co-ops, etc.) as well as to community transportation resources, to determine whether all residents have access to community-produced foods.

## XXI. Indicators

The majority of the data on local food production resources can be found from existing data resources. Data on local food production and marketing infrastructures (i.e., the linkages between local food producers, food processors, food retailers, and other marketing outlets like local schools, prisons, and hospitals) will be most easily explored through conversations with farmers and others involved with the local food system in the focus group on community food production.

You also can interview food service managers with the local school district, prisons, and hospitals.

A basic **description of your community and its food system**, including a summary of any existing assessment research.

### Collection Tools

#### Food Production Resources

- Number and location of community gardens
- Number and location of school-based gardens
- Number and location of community-supported agriculture programs
- Number and location of farms
- Number and location of dairies and fisheries
- Number and location of food manufacturers and distributors

#### Political and Community Support

- Linkages between local food producers, food processors, food retailers, and other marketing outlets
- Political support for local food producers
- Economic support for local food producers
- Frequency of use by individuals
- Frequency of use by community organizations

Frequency of use by food retailers

This could include:

- Population and household demographics and socio-economic characteristics (number of people and households, income, race and ethnicity, age structure, etc.)
- Major food system activities, including types, amounts, and value of foods produced, processed, and sold in the community
- Number of people involved in food-related economic activities, including agriculture and fisheries, manufacturing, and distribution
- Number and characteristics of households that depend on government programs such as food stamps, free and reduced school lunches
- Rates of food insecurity in your community as defined in the US Census of Population and Households<sup>1</sup>

### **Sample List of Basic Community Indicators That May be Addressed by Your Assessment**

- Community and household demographics
- Labor statistics (unemployment and under-employment, wage-levels, types of jobs)
- Local/regional agriculture (amounts and value of crops, sustainability, farmland loss)
- Community food assets/resources (grocery stores, food-processing facilities, community gardens)
- Local employment and sales, in food retail, manufacture, and wholesale
- Community-based organizations involved in food issues
- Food and nutrition resources and services
- Incidence of hunger and food insecurity
- Incidence of diet-related illnesses, and resulting mortality and costs
- Local policies related to food issues (preserving agricultural land, promoting small businesses, attracting supermarkets)

### **ANTI-HUNGER RESOURCES**

Emergency food assistance

Government food assistance

Other anti-hunger services and outreach programs

### **Public Health and Nutrition**

Diet-related diseases

Community public health

Quality of diets / nutritional status

Exercise, lifestyle habits

### **Conventional Food Systems**

Broad food system characteristics

Retail food sector data

Wholesale, other food system data

Restaurants/institutional food service data

### **Community Based and Local Food Systems**

Local/regional agriculture—status

Local/regional agriculture links to community (e.g. CSA's, farm mkts)

Community-based food production (e.g. gardens)

## **Infrastructure and Transportation**

Public transportation access

Vehicle access

Comprehensive transportation access

## **Community Organizations**

Community institutional resources (broad)

Community leadership and power

Labor issues, roles

## **Community Food and Nutrition Resources**

Health/nutrition outreach/referral services

Food / nutrition related projects

## **Community Development and Economic Development**

Food system related (business, job training)

## **Environmental (Food Systems Related)**

Waste disposal, recycling, composting

Water quality

Land contamination, hazardous waste

Open space, land use or access

## **Policy**

Legislation, funding, regulations

Coverage of issues, food ads, etc.

## **Any Other Data**

Hunting, fishing and trapping licenses / game deer take

## **XXII. Endnotes**

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<sup>ii</sup> Coleman-Jensen, A., Nord, M., & Singh, A., Household Food Security in the United States in 2012; Economic Research Report No. (ERR-155) 41 pp, September 2013; <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/err-economic-research-report/err155.aspx#.U3D4t6IjQrh>

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[http://frac.org/pdf/half\\_empty\\_plate\\_dec2011.pdf](http://frac.org/pdf/half_empty_plate_dec2011.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> Michael Burke, Heather Hartline-Grafton, Jim Weil, Food Research and Action Center, Food Hardship in America 2012, Data for the Nation, States, 100 MSA's, and Every Congressional District, February 2013;  
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<sup>viii</sup> Coleman-Jensen et al., 2013

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<sup>ix</sup> Report 400M and Report 400C, Employment Development Department, State of California, March 2014 Preliminary Labor Force for Metropolitan Statistical Areas and Counties, April 18, 2014; <http://www.calmis.ca.gov/file/lfmonth/msaur-400m.pdf> & <http://www.calmis.ca.gov/file/lfmonth/countyur-400c.pdf>

<sup>x</sup> Nutrition and Food Insecurity Profile, Kern County, California Food Policy Advocates, February 17, 2014; <http://cfpa.net/county-profiles>

<sup>xi</sup> National School Lunch Program, USDA Fact Sheet, September 2013; [www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/nslpffactsheet.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/nslpffactsheet.pdf)

<sup>xii</sup> The School Breakfast Program, USDA Fact Sheet, September 2013; <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SBPfactsheet.pdf>

<sup>xiii</sup> The Economic and Fiscal Impact of Increasing Participation in the School Breakfast Program, Handout, Blue Sky Consulting Group, May 2, 2014; <http://cfpa.net/ChildNutrition/SBP/ExternalPublications/FiscalEconomicAnalysisSchoolBreakfast-Handout-2014.pdf>

<sup>xiv</sup> Ibid

<sup>xv</sup> Nutrition and Food Insecurity Profile, Kern County, California Food Policy Advocates, February 17, 2014; <http://cfpa.net/county-profiles>

<sup>xvi</sup> Ibid

<sup>xvii</sup> WIC Breastfeeding Data Local Agency Report, USDA/FNS Supplemental Food Programs Division 2011; <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/FY2011-BFdata-localagencyreport.pdf>

<sup>xviii</sup> <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-food-service-program-sfsp>

<sup>xix</sup> Sharp, M. & Shimada, T., School's Out... Who Ate?, A Report on Summer Nutrition In California, California Food Policy Advocates, June 2013; <http://cfpa.net/ChildNutrition/Summer/CFPAPublications/SOWA-FullReport-2013.pdf>

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<sup>xxii</sup> 2013 Community Action Partnership of Kern Annual Report, Community Action Partnership of Kern, January 2014;

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