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DEMAND FOR FOOD ASSISTANCE OUTSTRIPS SUPPLY
Decrease in USDA commodity volume impacts Food Bank as need increases

LOS ANGELES, Calif. – (November 22, 2011) As the demand for food assistance throughout Los Angeles County continues to increase, inventory levels at the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank have decreased by 20 percent due to a decrease in commodities received from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The 640 charitable agencies that rely on the Food Bank to supply food are struggling to meet the growing demand for food assistance based on a new *Policy Brief* released by the Food Bank today.

The report cites high unemployment and a struggling economy as the primary causes for the surge in food assistance.

“While the Food Bank’s volume of food distributed has increased by 80 percent over the past three years, the weak economy has pushed a record number of people into food lines at food pantries and other agencies,” said Michael Flood, President and CEO of the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank. “It’s a case where the demand is now exceeding the supply of food.”

According to the policy brief, while food industry donations remain strong, a 50 percent decrease in USDA commodities has hit the Food Bank at the worst possible time. The Food Bank distributes more than 1 million pounds of food every week, the equivalent of 770,000 meals, to agencies throughout Los Angeles County reaching one million people annually. However, the need is higher as an estimated 1.7 million LA County residents struggle with hunger.

According to the policy brief, the Food Bank has expanded its CalFresh Outreach efforts to provide families and individuals with all available options to feed themselves. CalFresh, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, has also experienced a huge increase in applications with 1,050,000 county residents receiving benefits as of September 2011.

“We appeal to people to do everything they can to help their neighbors this holiday season,” stated Flood. “We need to come together to make this Thanksgiving and holiday season a bright one for as many adults, children and seniors as possible.”

To view the Policy Brief or find more information on food pantries and agencies, visit www.lafoodbank.org. For information about the CalFresh Program, call 877-597-4777 or visit www.dpssbenefits.lacounty.gov.

The Los Angeles Regional Food Bank is a non-profit, charitable organization established in 1973 and is one of the largest food banks in the United States. Through a network of 640 charitable agencies providing service from more than 1,000 agency and program sites, the Food Bank supplies enough food for 770,000 meals each week throughout Los Angeles County. For more information, visit www.lafoodbank.org.

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