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**DEMAND FOR FOOD ASSISTANCE HITS RECORD IN LA COUNTY,
ORANGE COUNTY ALSO IMPACTED**

***Food Pantry Service increases by 73% since the beginning of the recession as
hundreds of thousands of residents seek food assistance***

LOS ANGELES, Calif. – The Los Angeles Regional Food Bank, which supplies food to local food pantries and other agencies throughout Los Angeles County, is currently distributing 1.25 million pounds of food per week, the equivalent of nearly 1 million meals, in an effort to keep up with the growing demand for food assistance. The latest policy brief released today by the Food Bank shows that local food pantries collectively serve 330,000 residents on a monthly basis, a 73 percent increase from three years ago.

“Just when we think that demand has reached its peak, food assistance has continued to increase and has reached a record level in Los Angeles County,” said Michael Flood, President and CEO of the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank. “Factors such as the high unemployment rate and government cutbacks have led to hunger becoming a more critical problem.”

The increase in demand for food assistance is not just an issue for Los Angeles County. Surrounding areas, like Orange County, are experiencing similar difficulties. “This is the largest increase in demand for food assistance ever,” said Joe Schoeningh, Director of Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County. “We continue to try to get as much food out to our local food agencies as we can, but it’s not enough, so we’re asking everyone to help us get more food to those in need.”

Given that the demand for food continues to outstrip supply, the CalFresh Program (formerly known as the federal Food Stamp Program) is another critical aspect of food assistance. In May 2011, one million residents of Los Angeles County received CalFresh benefits, a significant increase from December 2007 when the recession began.

Flood states that is uncertain whether the charitable food network can absorb continued increases in demand as some food pantries have closed and other agencies have reduced services due to constraints, “The challenges to local charities are significant, and I urge the philanthropic, business and government sectors to do everything they can to continue their support.”

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Both food banks run summer campaigns to appeal for support during a time when child hunger is a critical issue. The Los Angeles Regional Food Bank launched its *Skip a Lunch, Feed a Bunch* summer campaign with celebrity spokesperson Vanna White in June (see www.lafoodbank.org) while the Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County is hosting two food drives with the Angels and the Orange County Fair this month (see www.feedoc.org). Both food banks are also focused on increasing children's feeding programs during the summer months.

*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 1,000 program sites, the Food Bank distributed more than 62 million pounds of food in 2010 throughout Los Angeles County. The Food Bank is a partner with Feeding America. For more information, visit <http://www.lafoodbank.org>.*

***Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County** provides surplus food to 400 charitable non-profit organizations throughout Orange County. During its 27-year history in Orange County, Second Harvest has distributed more than 260 million pounds of food to those in need. Second Harvest is an affiliate member of Feeding America. For more information, visit www.feedoc.org*

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