



20 Percent of Arkansas Households Struggling with Hunger

Little Rock, ARK- (September 4, 2013) — One in 5 households in Arkansas struggled with hunger on average in the years 2010-2012, according to new data released today by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Economic Research Service in its annual report on food insecurity. Nationally, more than 48.9 million people lived in households that were food insecure in 2012 - 14.1 percent of all adults and 21.6 percent of all children lived in food insecure households.

These new food insecurity numbers come as Members of Congress are preparing to return next week from their August recess. The Farm Bill remains on Congress' agenda, and the House majority leadership - which passed earlier this summer a partial Farm Bill that did not include a nutrition title - is expected to introduce a bill that would strip \$40 billion in funding from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps), throwing millions of people out of the program.

"Given the level of food insecurity that continues to persist in this state, Congress needs to stop asking how much to cut from SNAP and other low-income programs and start acting on what is going to help struggling families," said Kathy Webb, Executive Director of the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance. "Far too many people in our state continue to struggle with hunger, and we urge our Members of Congress to pass a Farm Bill that doesn't cut SNAP."

Among the 19.7 percent of households in Arkansas considered to be food insecure during the 2010-2012 period, 8.1 percent were households with "very low food security." Households that fall into this USDA category had more severe problems, experiencing deeper hunger and cutting back or skipping meals on a more frequent basis for both adults and children. Arkansas ranked number 1 (worst) nationally for food insecurity and number 2 for severe food insecurity.

The Alliance member food banks and agencies are seeing an increasing need for emergency food assistance. The Feeding America food banks serving Arkansas distributed over 34 million pounds of food last year, an increase over 2011. Additional programs of the Alliance include the No Kid Hungry campaign, matching hungry kids with food at breakfast, after school, and in the summer, the Arkansas Gleaning Project, with the Society of Saint Andrew, and SNAP outreach.

The public also rejects proposals to cut SNAP. Recent polling by Hart Research Associates for FRAC shows that Americans of all types oppose cuts to SNAP, and they believe the government should - and must - do more to address hunger

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About the USDA Report

Since 1995, the United States Department of Agriculture, using data from surveys conducted annually by the Census Bureau, has released national and state estimates of the number of people in households that are food insecure. Food insecure households are those that are not able to afford an adequate diet at all times in the past 12 months. For states, USDA uses three-year averages to give a better estimate (with a smaller margin of error) of the number of households experiencing food insecurity. Experts agree that the Census/USDA measure of food insecurity is a conservative one, with the result that only households experiencing substantial food insecurity are so classified.