



For release on November 21, 2011

Contact: Tia Shimada (510) 407-2868, CFPA

Contact: Lisa Sherrill (925) 408-7655, Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano

## More Low-Income Californians Struggle to Put Food on the Table 96,000 Low-Income Adults in Contra Costa County are Food Insecure

*County ranks among the highest in the state for percentage of low-income residents struggling*

**Oakland, CA.** According to data from the California Health Interview Survey ([CHIS](#)), more than 3.7 million California adults experienced food insecurity in 2009. The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines food insecurity as "limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods." The number of struggling is up from 2.8 million low-income adults in 2007 – a thirty percent increase.

"These findings provide evidence of what many suspected has been happening since the economic collapse began – households throughout the state are struggling to afford enough food," said Ken Hecht, executive director of California Food Policy Advocates. "While these data were collected in 2009, we don't see anything to indicate that things have improved much since then."

Locally, 96,000 low-income adults in Contra Costa County are estimated to be food insecure. This means that within the county, 58% of all adults with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level (less than \$36,000 a year for family of three in 2009) struggle to afford adequate, nutritious food. This high percentage ranks 1st in the state.

Some relief for households in need has been provided by [CalFresh](#), formerly the Food Stamp Program. Throughout Contra Costa County, 65,888 people received CalFresh in September 2011, a 109% increase since September 2006. Currently, the average monthly CalFresh benefit is \$146 per person.

"Residents of Contra Costa County have been unable to escape the negative impacts of the national and global economic crisis. While our economy recovers, as jobs are created, we must be sure that basic needs like food are being met," said Larry Sly, executive director of the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano.

While assistance like CalFresh is helping vulnerable individuals and families meet basic needs, more should be done. California ranks among the worst states for participation in federal nutrition assistance. According to USDA, only 50% of eligible households are served by CalFresh. In an important step in improving participation, the Governor recently [signed legislation](#) that removes barriers to CalFresh for eligible Californians. At the federal level, advocates are urging Congress to spare nutrition programs from budget cuts. "Given the extent of food insecurity in Contra Costa County and across the country, we must not undermine critical efforts to protect families against hunger, and improve health through good nutrition," said Hecht.

For more details on the new food insecurity statistics and the increase in CalFresh participation, visit <http://cfpa.net/publications>.

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