The pandemic has caused demand to increase by 60 percent on average at food banks across the country. Food from USDA is critical to meet this need – but those purchases are expected to drop by 50 percent by the end of 2020.

Food banks are facing a food supply crisis. They need your help to prevent families from going hungry.

**Impacts of Covid-19 on Families Across the United States**

Before the onset of the pandemic, national food insecurity levels were the lowest they had been in 20 years, yet 35.2 million individuals, including 10.7 million children, lived in food-insecure households. Because of COVID-19, progress since the last recession in reducing food insecurity in the U.S. will likely be wiped out. Feeding America projects that food insecurity rates may return to almost 50 million, levels not seen since the Great Recession.

COVID-19 has caused record unemployment, with millions of families struggling to pay bills and not knowing where they will find their next meal. Unemployment is projected to continue, and grocery prices are at a nearly 50-year record high. This makes it harder for people and families dealing with job and income losses to afford food. Food banks can’t do it alone – we need a strong government response to help make up the large food gap as hunger continues to persist in communities across the country.

**The Impact of USDA Foods on Food Banks**

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is the cornerstone of the food supply for Feeding America’s network of 200 food banks and 60,000 partner agencies and feeding programs. Last year, the Feeding America network of food banks relied on TEFAP as well as the donations of surplus nutritious food from donors in the agriculture, food manufacturing, retail, and food service fields to provide 5 billion meals.

![Graph showing the distribution of food sources for Feeding America in FY2020.](Feeding America Food Sources, FY2020)
Feeding America’s network receives USDA foods through TEFAP funding set by the Farm Bill, and from USDA Section 32 food purchases and USDA’s Food Purchase & Distribution Program. Section 32 food purchases provide market support to growers and producers when there is excess food, and the food is distributed through USDA food distribution programs like TEFAP nationwide.

USDA is ending the trade-related Food Purchase and Distribution Program that provided additional food purchases of $1.1 billion in FY2020 and $1.4 billion in FY2019. This will leave food banks with an estimated 50% cut in food for 2021 despite the dramatic increase in demand. That is a loss of 850 million meals.

Feeding America estimates the total need for charitable food over the next year will continue at unprecedented levels.

- Demand for assistance is an average of 60% higher than before the start of the pandemic in March 2020.
- Feeding America distributed 5 billion meals last year and anticipates need could remain double in 2021.
- Food banks will have a food shortfall in 2021 due to fewer USDA food purchases.

**Immediate Actions USDA & Congress Can Take to Help Food Banks & Families Facing Hunger**

Ending hunger in the United States requires a strong public-private partnership, with proven and effective federal programs working in tandem with food banks.

- We ask USDA to use its authority to stabilize domestic commodity markets to make additional USDA food purchases and distribute the food through USDA food distribution programs like TEFAP. Doing so will help give our nation’s food banks the steady supply of nutritious food needed to help people get back on their feet.
- We ask Congress to pass COVID-19 relief legislation that increases SNAP benefit levels and funding for TEFAP to meet the high demand for food assistance.
- We also ask Congress to contact USDA and urge USDA to act swiftly to make additional food purchases.