

Louisiana's rural communities are vital to the food, industry, and culture that define Louisiana. However, despite playing a key role in the food and agriculture industries, rural communities face significantly high rates of food insecurity. Rural communities face unique challenges to food security including the lack of public transportation, high rates of un- and under-employment, poor access to healthcare, and to healthy, affordable food. For many rural communities in our state, the nearest grocery store, food pantry, or food bank could be hours away. It is critical to increasing food security and address food access with solutions that meet the unique challenges of Louisiana's rural communities.

THE SITUATION

Rural Louisiana has faced some of the highest rates of poverty and food insecurity in the country for decades, but as we begin to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, job growth in rural areas remains limited and these individuals continue to experience persistent poverty and significant barriers to food access.

29

of Louisiana's 64 parishes
are classified as rural.

meaning
approximately

45.3%

of the state is
classified as rural.

**EAST CARROLL
PARISH**

is home to the highest
rate of child hunger in
the country.

878,394

people in Louisiana live
below the federal
poverty line.

15.4%

of all households in
Louisiana utilize
SNAP.

**INDIVIDUALS WHO RECEIVED SNAP BENEFITS WERE LESS LIKELY TO
EXPERIENCE POOR HEALTH OUTCOMES THAN THOSE WHO DID NOT.**

OUR RESPONSE

The five major Louisiana food banks provide millions of meals to Louisianans in need through a network of more than 900 community- and faith-based partners. As unprecedented levels of food insecurity persist in our communities, so does the need for assistance. In 2019, the five food banks provided approximately 58.5 million meals. In 2020, in response to the pandemic, Louisiana food banks grew to provide more than 95.8 million meals.



POLICY SOLUTIONS

The emergency food system and anti-hunger advocates across the country have been working for years to alleviate food insecurity. However, advocacy and charitable food alone are not enough to serve this overwhelming need for assistance. Federal programs such as SNAP, WIC, and TEFAP, are proven to be the most effective methods in combating food insecurity for millions.

STATE ACTIONS

- Utilize Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility flexibilities to raise the gross income limit for SNAP applicants to 185% of the Federal Poverty Line.
- Raise the state-level income eligibility to participate in TEFAP to 200% of the Federal Poverty Line.
- Establish a permanent Louisiana Hunger Task Force within the state legislature with representation from legislators, state agencies, the Governor's office, and community partners.

FEDERAL ACTIONS

- Extend the temporary 15% increase to SNAP benefits for the full duration of the economic downturn.
- Increase the minimum benefit from \$16 to \$30 for all SNAP households.
- Allocate additional funding for TEFAP food purchase and storage/distribution for the duration of the economic downturn.
- Waive TEFAP program requirements to collect client names, addresses, and verify income eligibility for clients receiving USDA Foods through TEFAP for the duration of the public health crisis.