



## Media Release

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### **Missouri has fifth highest rate of child food insecurity in nation** *Feeding America® report reveals new state-level data on child hunger*

**SPRINGFIELD**—More than 23 percent of children in Missouri are experiencing food insecurity, according to new research released last week by Ozarks Food Harvest and Feeding America®, funded by the ConAgra Foods Foundation—Feeding America’s® Leadership Partner in the Fight to End Child Hunger.

*Child Food Insecurity in the United States: 2006–2008* reveals 23.2 percent of Missouri children suffer from food insecurity—a 3.2 percent increase.

“This new report illustrates the crisis that southwest Missouri continues to face,” said Bart Brown, president/CEO of Ozarks Food Harvest. “We are committed to putting an end to child hunger in communities across the Ozarks.”

According to Brown, Ozarks Food Harvest forecasts doubling its Summer Food Service Program this year—an estimated 69,000 meals served to the most at-risk kids, who he says he knows would otherwise go to bed hungry. The Food Bank reports distributing a record 8.5 million pounds during its fiscal year 2010 (July 1, 2009–June 30, 2010)—a value of \$14,280,000 distributed to its Network of more than 300 charitable member organizations. Brown says of the 8.5 million pounds distributed, more than three million included perishable foods such as meat, fresh produce, milk, cheese, eggs and fruit, thanks to the new freezer and cooler storage space, which increased by 700 percent in the new warehouse Ozarks Food Harvest has been in for one year since July 1.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) releases an annual report on the state of food insecurity in the United States, which focuses on the general population in each state. This new report delves deeper into the data in order to bring the child hunger statistics to the forefront.

While the recent 2009 USDA food insecurity report revealed that nationally, nearly one in four children is food insecure, determining detailed, state-level estimates on child food insecurity requires looking at a three-year average to increase accuracy and reliability. Though high, these estimates are expected to rise over the coming years as the full impact of the economic downturn is taken into account.

—More—

Transform Hunger into Hope™ at [ozarksfoodharvest.org](http://ozarksfoodharvest.org)

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Through the support of the ConAgra Foods Foundation, Feeding America® contracted nationally-recognized researcher John Cook, Ph.D. to analyze the USDA’s food insecurity raw data in order to provide state-level child food insecurity estimates.

“Research over the past 12 years shows conclusively that food insecurity and hunger are serious threats to children’s health, growth and development, and may even harm young children’s brain architecture,” Cook said.

“We thank our longtime partners at the ConAgra Foods Foundation for their ongoing support in the fight against child hunger and their commitment to funding critical research, such as this study by Dr. Cook,” said Vicki Escarra, President and CEO of Feeding America. “The data underscores the critical importance of passing the new Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act.”

The ConAgra Foods Foundation has been a dedicated partner of Feeding America for more than 15 years, providing both food and funds in the fight against hunger. ConAgra Foods recently committed \$10 million over five years to fight child hunger with Feeding America. This is the largest donation in Feeding America’s history specifically designated to support the fight against child hunger.

“We’re dedicated to helping solve childhood hunger, but to do so we must first understand the need. That’s why the ConAgra Foods Foundation funded this study with Feeding America® and Dr. Cook,” said Kori Reed, Executive Director, ConAgra Foods Foundation. “Knowing where children are most in need of our support will allow us to better direct our funding and resources to provide the most relief. It will also bring all of us one step closer to ending child hunger in America.”

The states with the **highest rates** of child food insecurity for children under the age of 18 include:

State	Rate	State	Rate
Arkansas	24.4%	Georgia	22.5%
Texas	24.3%	Maine	21.1%
Arizona	24.2%	South Carolina	21.1%
District of Columbia	23.7%	Florida	20.8%
Missouri	23.2%	Oregon	20.8%
Mississippi	22.7%		

The states with the **highest increases** in the rates of child food insecurity since last year for children under the age of 18 include:

State	Rate	State	Rate
Arkansas	+6.1%	Georgia	+3.4%
Florida	+4.9%	Wisconsin	+3.4%
Arizona	+4.0%	Missouri	+3.2%
Montana	+3.9%	Indiana	+3.1%
Hawaii	+3.7%	Connecticut	+2.9%

The full report, including a complete list of all 50 states, is available at <http://feedingamerica.org/our-network/the-studies/child-food-insecurity.aspx>.

–More–

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### **About Ozarks Food Harvest**

Ozarks Food Harvest is the only food bank in southwest Missouri, serving more than 300 hunger relief organizations across 28 Ozarks counties. The Food Bank reaches more than 155,000 individuals and distributes 8.5 million pounds of food annually—made possible due to its network of charities and direct-relief programs such as the Weekend Backpack Program™, Kids Cafe® and the Mobile Food Pantry™ program. Learn more at [ozarksfoodharvest.org](http://ozarksfoodharvest.org) and at [facebook.com/ozarksfoodharvest](https://facebook.com/ozarksfoodharvest).

### **About Feeding America®**

Feeding America® provides low-income individuals and families with the fuel to survive and even thrive. As the nation's leading domestic hunger-relief charity, our network members supply food to more than 37 million Americans each year, including 14 million children and 3 million seniors. Serving the entire United States, more than 200 member food banks support 61,000 agencies that address hunger in all of its forms. For more information on how you can fight hunger in your community and across the country, visit. Find us on Facebook at [facebook.com/FeedingAmerica](https://facebook.com/FeedingAmerica) or follow our news on Twitter at [twitter.com/FeedingAmerica](https://twitter.com/FeedingAmerica).

### **About ConAgra Foods Foundation**

The ConAgra Foods Foundation, through its Nourish Today, Flourish Tomorrow platform, is dedicated to raising awareness of the nearly 17 million children in America who are at risk of hunger and don't have enough food to live active, healthful lives. It aggressively pursues sustainable solutions in the fight against child hunger. And the Foundation is committed to building a community of people who are passionate about ensuring that all kids have access to the food and facts they need to eat nutritiously while living balanced lifestyles and succeeding in school and life. ConAgra Foods Foundation invests in national and local partnerships with high-impact, not-for-profit organizations, such as Feeding America, that take an innovative approach to addressing needs in the core areas of hunger and nutrition education. For more information, please visit [www.conagrafoodsfoundation.org](http://www.conagrafoodsfoundation.org) or [www.facebook.com/ConAgraFoodsFoundation](https://www.facebook.com/ConAgraFoodsFoundation). The ConAgra Foods Foundation is funded solely by ConAgra Foods.

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