An interesting phenomenon happened over the course of the pandemic: while the demand for food and food assistance skyrocketed, food insecurity rates initially spiked and then began to decline in 2021.

That’s because state and federal governments bolstered our social safety net by boosting CalFresh benefits, expanding child tax credits, and bolstering housing subsidies and protections. Coupled with historic support from the public, the philanthropic community, and dozens of food banks and food bankers across the state stepping up to meet our community needs, we held the line on hunger.

As we enter 2024, pandemic-era safety net enhancements have ended, food insecurity rates are on the rise, and food banks are stretched thin. Today more than one in five Californian households overall are food insecure, which is comparable to the height of the pandemic, while food banks are serving more people with less resources.

We know how to increase food security. Together we did it just a few years back.

Join us as we strive to win back critical anti-hunger resources through advocacy, outreach, and ensuring that all of California’s communities can access fresh, healthy foods.

Together, we can turn the curve again!

STACIA LEVENFELD

From Our CEO

We can end hunger in California if we:
• Build a diverse & sustainable charitable food system,
• Create robust & equitable pathways that connect food-insecure neighbors to food, &
• Prevent hunger from happening in the first place
Building a diverse, charitable, & sustainable food system

From Farms to Families

The Farm to Family program has increased its volume by 65% over the past four years, distributing more than 271 million pounds of food — 265 million pounds of fresh produce and about 6 million pounds of proteins and pantry staples — this past year. Farm to Family has continued to forge essential partnerships with farms across California, recovering high-quality produce for donation to food banks that would be tilled under or otherwise lost.

“Thanks to our partnership with CAFB’s Farm to Family program, we’ve received tangerines, oranges, garlic, celery, and more. It’s so amazing for us to be able to offer this kind of variety. It means everything to us.”

— Beth Stanton
Executive Director,
Interfaith Food Bank of Amador County

What’s Next

Many small and remotely located food banks lack funds or space to purchase and store large amounts of produce at once. In 2023, CAFB began a $1 million pilot program to better understand these barriers in order to help food banks distribute more fresh foods. CAFB will continue to evaluate the success of a “mixing center” for repacking and delivering mixed-produce loads, allowing 15 of our food banks — who had previously been unable — to receive fresh, regular produce shipments for their communities.
Building robust & equitable pathways that connect food-insecure neighbors to food

Suporting CalFresh Access

This year, CAFB played a key role supporting 28 Disaster CalFresh implementations across the state. By hosting timely trainings, distributing key information, and collaborating on outreach strategies, we were able to quickly activate our network of partners. Additionally, we maintained support for our extensive network of over 50 outreach partners, who assisted eligible Californians in both applying for and retaining their CalFresh benefits. As a result, Californians were successfully connected to an essential nutrition program when they needed it the most.

- Nearly 140 THOUSAND households prescreened for potential CalFresh eligibility
- Nearly 30 THOUSAND households assisted in applying for CalFresh
- More than 7 THOUSAND households helped in keeping their CalFresh
- Through the work of more than 50 partner organizations throughout the state of California

What’s Next

We remain steadfast in our advocacy to expand benefits eligibility and adequacy so that all Californians can access foods aligned with their dietary, cultural, and nutritional preferences and needs. Simultaneously, we will continue supporting our outreach partners in their invaluable work connecting Californians to the benefits they are eligible for. In May 2024, the Food ACCESS Conference, hosted biennially by CAFB, will gather individuals in Sacramento to address hunger, emphasizing the exploration of the root causes of food insecurity and strategies for a hunger-free California.

“By raising awareness and providing guidance, our outreach efforts ensured that vulnerable individuals and families received timely support to address their immediate nutritional needs in the wake of disasters.”

– Rigoberto Morales Mendoza
Food Connections Resource Center Supervisor, Redwood Empire Food Bank
Addressing Hunger Directly

With the ending of CalFresh Emergency Allotments (EAs) and many other COVID-era public supports like the Child Tax Credit, hunger is again on the rise. CAFB successfully secured $60 million in the State budget for CalFood funding this year so food banks can purchase California-grown and produced food, helping maintain well-stocked warehouses with valuable items like eggs and culturally relevant products.

In addition to our work to expand CalFresh benefits, we secured $15 million in the State budget for a pilot program to increase the CalFresh minimum benefit from $23 to $50. We will continue to advocate to make $50 the permanent minimum for all CalFresh households.

Published in 2023:

End of EAs: Policy Brief
CA Food Insecurity: Data Dashboard
2024 State Policy Agenda

“CAFB makes participating in advocacy events easy — with detailed information sheets and talking points about bills and relevant issues — so that we can speak with confidence on our visits with legislators.”

– Genevieve Riutort
President & CEO,
Westside Food Bank

What’s Next

Looking ahead, we are advocating for the permanent establishment of CalFood funding at a minimum of $60 million annually and the reinstatement of the State Disaster Food Assistance Program as a critical resource for food banks during emergencies. Proactive solutions are crucial to ending hunger in California. In fall 2022, CAFB launched a Research & Strategic Initiatives department to enhance data-driven decision-making and advocacy. More studies and reports will be emerging from this department in the coming year on hunger in California and the impact of food banks on addressing food access needs.
2023 CAFB Revenue Sources

Did you know your generosity doesn’t just fill plates but also fuels innovation? Your contributions empower us to pioneer innovative ideas and swiftly support our network in times of need. Your gift, large or small, launches us towards a future where no Californian goes hungry.

With 41 food banks spanning from Humboldt County to the Imperial Valley, our collective strength empowers effective learning, best practice sharing, and advocacy — reinforcing California’s food safety net.

CAFB Member Food Banks:
- Distributed Nearly 900 Million Pounds of Food
- Serving An Estimated 735 Million Meals
- Or Around 7.2 Million People

2023 CAFB Revenue Sources:
- Farm to Family Net Revenue (29%)
- Grants (31%)
- Government Contracts (13%)
- Member Dues (8%)
- Pass Through/Subsidy (13%)
- Interest Income (2%)
- Contributions (4%)

*2022 Data

With 41 food banks spanning from Humboldt County to the Imperial Valley, our collective strength empowers effective learning, best practice sharing, and advocacy — reinforcing California’s food safety net.
Ways to Give
Thank you for your support! Supporting CAFB and your local food bank fortifies our commitment to ending hunger in California.

Give today at caffoodbanks.org/give

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- Feeding America
- Food Research & Action Center - Wellspring
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- Kaiser Foundation Hospital Fund for Community Benefits Programs at The East Bay Community Foundation
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Through the generous support and hard work of California’s farmers, packing houses, and shippers, the California Association of Food Banks was able to deliver more than 265 million pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables to our network of 41 food banks and to those who need it most.

Thank you for your support! Supporting CAFB and your local food bank fortifies our commitment to ending hunger in California.

Get today at caffoodbanks.org/give

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Contact Emme Buczko at emme.buczko@caffoodbanks.org for more information.
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