

**STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 2:00 pm EST March 24, 2011**



## **Unprecedented New Study Paints a Detailed Portrait of Food Insecurity in Connecticut**

**East Haven, CT – March 24, 2011** --- Connecticut Food Bank and Feeding America, the nation’s largest domestic hunger-relief organization, today released a landmark study, “Map the Meal Gap,” providing the first detailed look at the food budget needed by families struggling with hunger here in Connecticut each year – an estimated \$199 million.

The study takes a look at ‘meals’ in a whole new way, using county-level data on food costs from The Nielsen Company to break down the food budget shortfall of our residents into an approximation of the meals missing from the tables of people at risk of hunger in Connecticut each year.

“Map the Meal Gap” also compares food costs across counties, showing Fairfield County to have among the highest food costs in Connecticut,” said Nancy L. Carrington, Connecticut Food Bank’s President & CEO. “In Connecticut Food Bank’s service area, 53 percent of the food insecure population does not qualify for food stamps or other government programs, so they often must rely on other sources such as Connecticut Food Bank and others to help feed themselves and their families,” she said.

Map the Meal Gap provides the following data by state and county in an [interactive map format](#):

- ✓ The percentage of the population who is **food insecure**.
- ✓ The percentage of the food insecure population who qualify based on income for **SNAP (Foods Stamps)** and other federal nutrition programs.
- ✓ The percentage of the food insecure population who **do NOT qualify for federal nutrition programs** and often must rely on charitable food assistance programs and who also need better wages and employment opportunities to help them meet their basic needs.
- ✓ The average price per meal based on new research by The Nielsen Company.

“The interactive map will, for the first time, allow policy makers, state agencies, corporate partners and individual advocates to develop integrated strategies to fight hunger on a community by community level,” said Carrington.

According to Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey data analyzed as part of “Map the Meal Gap,” people struggling with hunger estimate they would need about \$56 more each month on average during the months that they are food insecure to address the shortages in their food budget. On a county by county level, “Map the Meal Gap” shows that this shortfall represents more than 49 million meals in Connecticut Food Bank’s service area on an annual basis.

“Map the Meal Gap” also provides critical information that has never been previously available -- food insecurity rates for Congressional District. Previously, food insecurity data was only available at the state level in the USDA’s annual report. The study further analyzes each district’s food insecure population to determine their income eligibility for federal nutrition assistance. This data has the potential to redefine the way service providers and policy makers address areas of need.

The findings of “Map the Meal Gap” are based on statistics collected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Census Bureau, and food price data from The Nielsen Company. The study was supported by [The Howard G. Buffett Foundation](#) and [Nielsen](#).

“Map the Meal Gap” was conducted using well-established, transparent [methods](#). Data were analyzed by Feeding America in partnership with [Dr. Craig Gundersen](#), Associate Professor of Agricultural and Consumer Economics at the University of Illinois, Executive Director of the National Soybean Research Laboratory and member of Feeding America’s Technical Advisory Group.

A summary of the findings, an interactive map of the United States, and the full report are available on Feeding America’s web site at [www.feedingamerica.org](http://www.feedingamerica.org)

Join the national conversation on hunger and learn more about Feeding America:

<http://blog.feedingamerica.org/>

For more information on Connecticut Food Bank’s response to hunger in the state, visit [www.ctfoodbank.org](http://www.ctfoodbank.org).

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**Connecticut Food Bank** serves 650 local emergency food assistance programs in six of Connecticut’s eight counties: Fairfield, Litchfield, Middlesex, New Haven, New London and Windham. Connecticut Food Bank distributes 30 tons of food every business day.

**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 37 million Americans each year, including nearly 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 <http://www.feedingamerica.org>. Find us on Facebook at [facebook.com/FeedingAmerica](https://www.facebook.com/FeedingAmerica) or follow our news on Twitter at [twitter.com/FeedingAmerica](https://twitter.com/FeedingAmerica).*