



**KATRINA AND RITA AFTERMATH:  
THE IMPACT ON EMERGENCY FOOD DISTRIBUTION AND CLIENTS  
DECEMBER 15, 2005  
EMBARGOED UNTIL 1:00 PM EST**

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Introduction

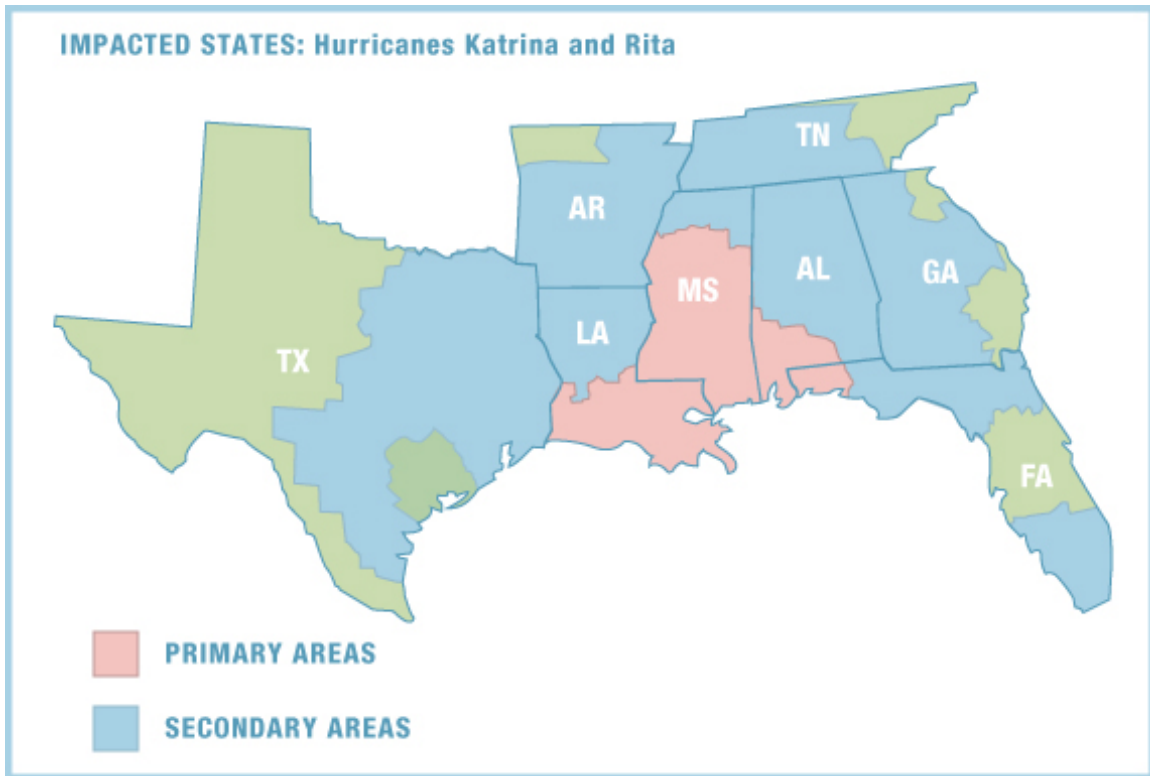
The destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina, followed closely by Hurricane Rita, is unlike anything this country has seen. More than one thousand people lost their lives and thousands of people lost their homes, their possessions, and their livelihoods. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), 45 States and the District of Columbia received Presidential emergency declarations, the most declarations made for a single disaster in FEMA history. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that 900,000 people ages 16 and older were forced to relocate immediately following Katrina. Hundreds of billions of dollars of damage ensued. Even following pending reconstruction and rebuilding efforts, New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin expects that the city may never again achieve its pre-Hurricane population.

Amid the devastation, however, came an unprecedented outpouring of assistance from many levels. Americans gave money and volunteer time to recovery efforts. Private relief charities supplied clothing, shelter and medical care. Government agencies provided rescue efforts and funds.

America's Second Harvest – The Nation's Food Bank Network, the nation's largest hunger-relief charity, was there to supply the basic necessities: food and water. With more than 200 food banks and food-rescue organizations serving all fifty states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, which in turn serve more than 50,000 charitable agencies, the America's Second Harvest Network provides emergency food assistance to more than 23 million Americans each year. Because the America's Second Harvest Network is so expansive and experienced, when disaster strikes, we are ready to respond quickly and efficiently.

Within hours of Hurricane Katrina making landfall in the Gulf Coast, truckloads of food and water were moving to the impacted areas, volunteers were being dispatched to assist in relief efforts and provide support to the food banks and food-rescue organizations along the Gulf Coast, incremental dollars were being raised and additional warehouse space was being secured to ensure the America's Second Harvest Network could meet the dramatic increase in anticipated demands for emergency food assistance.

The America's Second Harvest Network has provided an unprecedented response to Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma with more than 62 million pounds of food, accounting for 46 million meals and valued at an estimated \$84 million. To put this in perspective, in 2004, one of the most disastrous years on record with four hurricanes making landfall in Florida, the America's Second Harvest Network distributed just 7 million pounds of food to seven states and Puerto Rico.



### About the Study

Knowing that the hurricanes had significantly altered the landscape of the Network as well as the face of demand for food assistance, America's Second Harvest – The Nation's Food Bank Network sought to quantify such changes. Contracting with noted Chicago-based research firm Leo J. Shapiro & Associates, America's Second Harvest devised a plan to interview clients at food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters to learn more about the circumstances that led them to seek emergency food assistance and better understand their needs, and to survey provider agencies and food bank representatives to assess how the hurricanes affected service delivery. The end result is an assessment of the impact of Katrina and Rita on charitable food assistance delivery that will enable the America's Second Harvest network to be even more effective in responding to future disasters.

The primary data sources from which this report draws include<sup>i</sup>:

- Face-to-face interviews with 702 clients of pantries, kitchens, and shelters served by the A2H network of food banks in Tier 1 and Tier 2<sup>ii</sup> conducted in November and early December.
- Interviews with directors of 28 of the 39 America's Second Harvest Network food banks serving Tier 1 and Tier 2 areas. All four food banks in Tier 1 participated in the survey. (See Table 1 for the names of all 39 food banks in Tiers 1 and 2.)

## Hunger, Poverty, and Demand for Emergency Food Assistance

Many of those affected by the hurricanes were already the country's most vulnerable citizens. More than 1 million people, or nearly one fifth of the population directly affected by the hurricane lived in poverty<sup>iii</sup>. In New Orleans, nearly 50,000 residents lived in neighborhoods where the poverty rate exceeded 40 percent<sup>iv</sup>.

**Clients:** Poor families are vulnerable to disaster, whether it be natural or otherwise. Our study confirmed the statement and found that emergency food supplicants were in fact often the poorest of the poor. Households receiving food assistance after Katrina were much needier than households living in Tiers 1-2 as a whole--and were therefore not reflective of the population. Those seeking emergency food assistance had median incomes of \$26,000 compared to \$42,000 for the total area. Among households receiving food assistance, 21% report having household income below \$10,000 – more than twice the percentage found throughout the area (9%).

While many people who sought emergency food assistance were already seasoned clients, surprisingly, many were not. In fact, newcomers account for a healthy percentage of the overall service delivery. Of those receiving food assistance after the hurricanes, about 28% were already receiving food assistance prior to the hurricanes. This indicates that the number of food recipients more than tripled as a result of the hurricanes throughout the affected area.

Because so many people were forced to turn to new means to meet their nutritional needs, overall demand was shockingly high. In areas affected by the hurricanes (Tiers 1 and 2 combined), one of every nine households received food assistance. In total, about 2.3 million households, or 6.4 million people, received food assistance from pantries, kitchens, and shelters<sup>v</sup>.

The increase in demand for emergency food resulting from the hurricanes was much sharper in Tier 1 than Tier 2. In Tier 1, about 13% of post-Katrina food recipients were already receiving food pre-Katrina, indicating a seven-fold increase in food recipients. In Tier 2, 37% received food pre- and post-Katrina, suggesting that food recipients more than doubled.

The drastic spike in demand lasted approximately two months. At the end of October when interviewing began, more than three-fourths (77%) of the new food recipients no longer needed the help. At the same time, nearly as many "new" (post-Katrina) food recipients were receiving food assistance at the end of November as at the end of October.

Many clients still turn to charity to make ends meet. Of those still reliant upon pantries, kitchens, and shelters, two-thirds (65%) were already receiving food assistance prior to Hurricane Katrina.

Children were disproportionately represented in food lines. Households receiving food assistance were more likely to have a child age 12 or younger than all area households (31% vs. 26%).

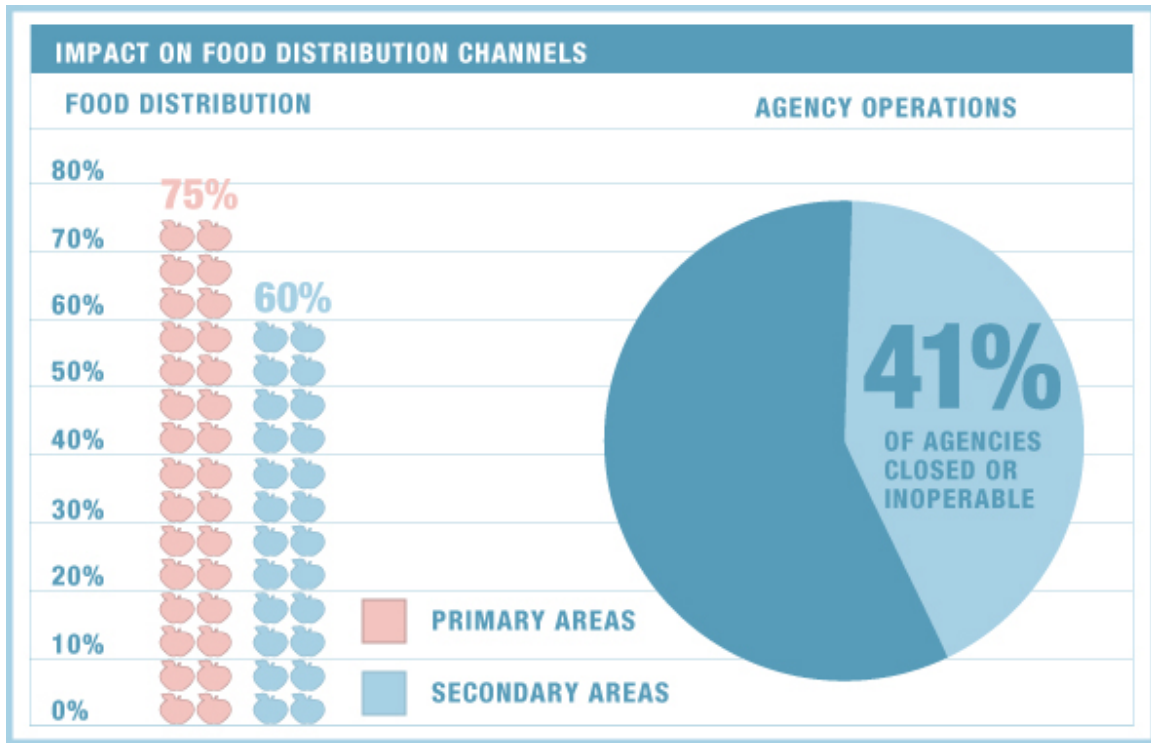
Additionally, African Americans, already disproportionately affected by poverty, were also disproportionately affected by the hurricanes. At emergency food sites, nearly two in five households (39%) that received food assistance are African American, compared to one in five (20%) living in the Tier 1-2 area overall. This partly reflects the high percentage of African Americans (33%) living in the Tier 1 area, which was hardest hit by the hurricanes.

**Service Providers:** While the consumer surveys measure the number of unique households and individuals who received food assistance since Katrina, interviews with food bank directors provide a sense of how much the demand for food assistance increased in terms of volume. Half of the food banks interviewed had an estimate of the percentage increase in the volume of food they distributed after Katrina.

In Tier 1, three of the four food banks provided percentage increase estimates. Two reported a three-fold increase in pounds distributed since Katrina. The other Tier 1 food bank reported a

ten-fold increase at the peak of the relief effort, tapering off to a 75% increase currently. While recovery efforts continue, many things have not yet returned to normal, including emergency food distribution services.

In Tier 2, eleven food banks estimated the percentage increase in food distribution following Katrina. In Texas, Alabama and Arkansas, estimates ranged between a 40% increase and a 100% increase in food distributed, with an average increase of about 60%. In Florida, Georgia, and Tennessee, estimates ranged between no change and a ten percent increase in pounds distributed, with an average between 4% and 5%.



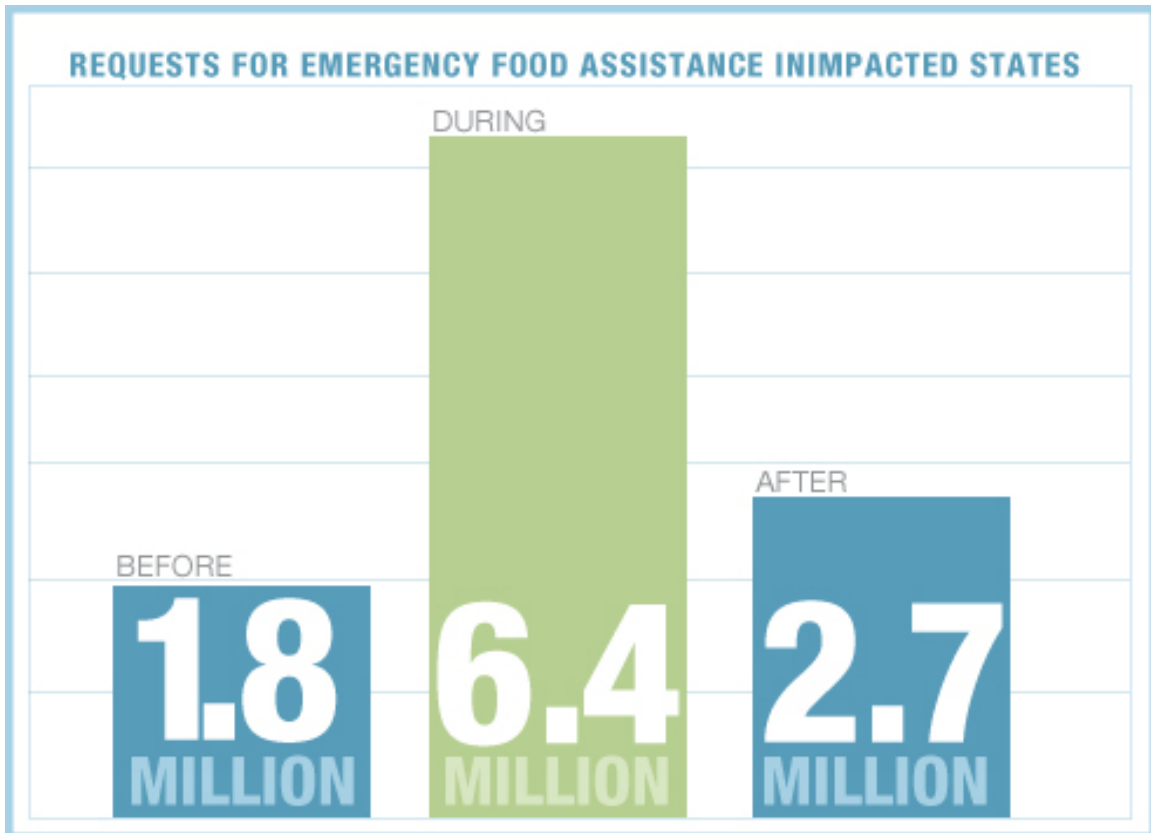
Entering December, the number of America’s Second Harvest Network food recipients in Tiers 1 and 2 remained about 50% above the pre-Katrina level. Clearly, although demand may have decreased in recent weeks, charitable feeding agencies are continuing to see higher than usual levels of demand for service.

The hurricanes truly impacted many agencies’ strength and viability. Among pantries, kitchens, and shelters served by America’s Second Harvest Network food banks, 8% to 12% were found to be no longer in operation following the hurricanes. Most of these were in Tier 1, where 34% to 44% of these programs were closed. 4% to 6% were deemed closed in Tier 2<sup>vi</sup>.

Among people who reported receiving food assistance prior to Katrina, 41% reported that the place where they received food was no longer in operation (66% in Tier 1, 36% in Tier 2).

Food banks and agencies, however, adapted as best as possible with new agencies and sites, both temporary and permanent. Interviews with food bank directors in Tiers 1 and 2 indicate the extent to which they began supplying food to new agencies and how many are temporary as opposed to permanent food providers. The four Tier 1 food banks reported serving a total of 280 new agencies of which 240 (86%) were temporary disaster-relief programs. The 40 new agencies expected to continue in operation are in the service areas of two of these four Tier 1 food banks and represent a 5% increase in agencies served, prior to subtracting agencies that have closed due to hurricane damage and other problems.

**Service Delivery:** In spite of insurmountable odds, including physical damage, evacuation of personnel and lost resources, food banks and agencies did a remarkable job in meeting need. At pantries, kitchens and shelters served by America's Second Harvest Network food banks, most clients who had received food there both before and after Katrina reported that the amount of food available to them there continued without change (73%); 16% reported a decrease and 7% an increase in food availability, with 4% unsure whether there had been a change. Declines in food availability were reported by 33% in Tier 1 and 14% in Tier 2.



## Public Opinion<sup>vii</sup>

### **Americans care about hunger.**

According to public opinion polling of adults in 500 U.S. households (including 429 registered voters), 92% of all respondents are “very concerned” or “somewhat/little concerned” about hunger in this country. 63% of respondents believe hunger to be a “major problem” in our country. 83% believe reducing hunger is a moral value.

### **Americans contribute to hunger-relief.**

Of all individuals polled, 71% state that in the past year, a household member has contributed food; 86% report that a household member has donated food in the past.

### **The government has a role in ending hunger.**

83% would be in favor of the U.S. government making it a priority to end hunger in the U.S. within ten years. 66% believe that the U.S. government spends too little to reduce hunger.

### **Hunger is solvable.**

56% of respondents agreed that it is possible to end hunger within the next ten years.

## Policy Recommendations

As expansive and far-reaching as the work of the America's Second Harvest Network is, we strongly support a strong public-private partnership in the battle against hunger—and in disaster relief. Food donations from manufacturers and retailers as well as the federal government helped meet Hurricane-related demand together. While food banks in the affected areas did a tremendous job meeting immediate need, emergency food stamps issued by the USDA helped address more ongoing need.

Additionally, based on evidence from the polling data, Americans view food banks favorably, but still believe that the federal government has a role in ending hunger.

## *Tax Legislation*

Public opinion polling shows that 85% of the respondents favored allowing more small businesses and farmers to take tax deductions when they donate food to charities<sup>viii</sup>; America's Second Harvest agrees and advocates on behalf of equitable tax deductions for all business taxpayers.

Under current tax law, when a company donates an in-kind good such as food to a food bank, they are eligible to receive a “special rule tax deduction” under Sec. 170(e)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Congress created the “special rule deduction” in the Tax Reform Act of 1976 to provide a special incentive for the donation of food and other in-kind goods to charities that serve the ill, the needy, or infants. The “special rule deduction” allows a company to deduct the cost (or basis) of the donated product and up to ½ the mark-up of the product's fair market value, not to exceed twice the cost. The “special rule deduction” is nonetheless subject to the company's corporate rate of tax, usually the 35% corporate tax rate for most companies. When applied to most donations, companies have found that they do not even recoup their actual production costs when they donate food to feed the needy. Moreover, current tax law limits the “special rule deduction” to C corporations, thus disallowing farmers, ranchers, small businesses and restaurant owners from receiving the same tax benefits afforded to corporate donors.

On September 23, Congress passed the Katrina Emergency Tax Relief Act of 2005 (H.R. 3768). This legislation provided additional assistance to taxpayers affected by the storms and additional tax incentives for individuals and corporations to make charitable financial and product donations. It extended the “special rule tax deduction” beyond C-level corporations to all business taxpayers

thereby allowing, for the first time, farmers, ranchers, small businesses, restaurants and others to reap the benefits of the tax relief. While this action enables America's Second Harvest's Network to secure additional food and grocery products for Hurricanes Katrina/Rita evacuees, it expires on December 31, 2005. While America's Second Harvest applauds passage of this provision, it is extremely important for this emergency legislation to become a permanent part of tax reform as well as to expand the deduction to fair market value of the product. These tax incentives would greatly expand the donation potential of food banks nationwide as they continue to provide hunger relief and reach out to those displaced by the hurricanes.

### *Katrina/Rita Supplemental Relief Legislation*

In order to continue to assist evacuees and to provide further assistance in the recovery effort, America's Second Harvest continues to work with our Gulf Coast region food banks to promote Congressional support for our Network needs in upcoming Katrina/Rita Disaster Supplemental Legislation. Given the enormous amount of resources Network Members expended to meet burgeoning need, it is imperative that the federal government work to repair the damage done so that already stretched food banks and agencies can continue to operate as usual while also meeting the new, changing need.

Within the Supplemental Legislation, we urge Congress to consider our request for an additional \$200 million for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) funding and an additional \$23 million in Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). With the USDA's commitment to meeting emergency need during the hurricanes, commodity deliveries to food banks went a long way, but many food banks still exhausted their inventories. Federal commodities are critical to food bank operations, whether in disaster mode or not.

We also ask Congress to include \$6 million for transportation costs. According to our assessment, Member food banks in the region handled a record volume of product to meet disaster-related demand. Handling such a high volume, of course, meant increased transportation costs, some of which may come at the expense of other operations.

Finally, we will work for financial recompense for food banks that sustained physical damage due to the hurricane. Several food banks lost key resources, including functioning warehouses, equipment, food and storage. Therefore, we ask that Congress include in the Katrina/Rita Supplemental Relief Legislation about \$10 million in specific food bank appropriations for structural repair and equipment purchase.

It is still uncertain as to whether or not such a relief package will be passed before the Christmas recess, but we are committed to working with the Gulf Coast congressional delegation to ensure the inclusion of our requests in the package.

### *Hunger-Free Communities Act*

America's Second Harvest strongly supports the passage of the Hunger-Free Communities Act of 2005, which would increase federal funding available to local organizations working to reduce hunger in communities nationwide and establishing an ambitious commitment to end hunger in the United States by 2015. This critical legislation will enable our Member food banks and food-rescue organizations to better meet the needs of low-income Americans, particularly through enhanced facilities.

The Hunger-Free Communities Act preserves current funding levels for federal food programs and protects nutrition and hunger-relief initiatives. It enables Congress to establish a first of its kind grant program authorizing up to \$50 million a year for five years to help hunger-relief organizations reduce hunger locally through efforts such as infrastructure improvements, training and technical assistance, and expanding access to more nutritious food including protein and produce. Additionally, it directs the Census Bureau to collect annual data on food insecurity in

the United States and the United States Department of Agriculture to prepare annual reports on the status of efforts to eliminate domestic hunger and recommendations for reducing hunger.

This public-private partnership focuses on addressing hunger at the local level while promoting collaboration among groups with mutual visions.

### *Support for Food Stamps*

No other government program can match the important role that food stamps play in helping make America a hunger-free nation and they are especially crucial in times of crisis. As Gulf Coast residents continue to rebuild their lives in the aftermath of Katrina and Rita, America's Second Harvest remains committed to seeing that this crucial program is expanded and improved so that all low-income Americans receive the food and nutrition they need to lead healthy, productive lives.

During the disaster, food stamps provided integral support to individuals and families affected by the hurricanes. The USDA quickly responded to increased need by issuing a national food stamp policy, thereby enabling evacuees to have expedited access to food stamps without needless red tape, and dispatched intake workers to affected states to help meet rising demand. In Louisiana and Texas alone, more than 428,000 displaced households have been signed up for over \$151 million in food stamp benefits.

We encourage Congress to take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that food stamp funding entitlement status remain unthreatened, thereby protecting the most vulnerable of our citizens.

### *Preparedness for the Future*

America's Second Harvest Food Bank Network recognizes the critical importance of maintaining food supplies at a level at which we can quickly respond to future emergency relief needs. We are committed to achieving this goal and challenge both the private and public sectors and the federal government to work together with us to ensure a national emergency food supply at all times.

Table 1: Food Bank by Tier

Tier 1

- Bay Area Food Bank, Theodore, AL
- Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana, New Orleans, LA
- Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank, Baton Rouge, LA
- Mississippi Food Network, Jackson, MS

Tier 2

- The United Way Community Food Bank, Inc., Birmingham, AL
- West Alabama Food Bank, Tuscaloosa, AL
- Montgomery Area Food Bank, Inc., Montgomery, AL
- Food Bank of North Alabama, Huntsville, AL
- Arkansas Food Bank Network, Little Rock, AR
- Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas, Jonesboro, AR
- Northwest Arkansas Food Bank, Ft. Smith, AR
- Lutheran Social Services Second Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Florida, Jacksonville, FL
- Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida, Orlando, FL
- Harry Chapin Food Bank of Northeast Florida, Ft. Myers, FL
- America's Second Harvest of the Big Bend, Inc., Tallahassee, FL
- Daily Bread Food Bank, Miami, FL
- Food Bank of Southwest Georgia, Albany, GA
- America's Second Harvest of South Georgia, Valdosta, GA
- Middle Georgia Community Food Bank, Macon, GA
- Golden Harvest Food Bank, Augusta, GA
- Second Harvest Food Bank of the Chattahoochee Valley, Columbus, GA; Atlanta Community Food Bank, Atlanta, GA
- Northwest Louisiana Food Bank, Shreveport, LA
- Food Bank of Central Louisiana, Alexandria, LA
- Food Bank of Northeast Louisiana, Monroe, LA
- South Central Mississippi Food Bank, Brookhaven, MS
- Memphis Food Bank, Memphis, TN
- Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee, Nashville, TN
- Chattanooga Area Food Bank, Chattanooga, TN
- End Hunger Network, Houston, TX
- Houston Food Bank, Houston, TX
- North Texas Food Bank, Dallas, TX
- Capital Area Food Bank of Texas, Austin, TX
- Tarrant Area Food Bank, Ft. Worth, TX
- San Antonio Food Bank, San Antonio, TX
- Brazos Food Bank, Bryan, TX
- Southeast Texas Food Bank, Beaumont, TX
- Food Bank of Corpus Christi, Corpus Christi, TX
- East Texas Food Bank, Tyler, TX

<sup>i</sup> Agency survey data is still being collected and is therefore not reflected in this report.

<sup>ii</sup> America's Second Harvest has designated the area hardest hit by Hurricane Katrina as "Tier 1." This area consists of central and southern Louisiana and a strip of the Gulf Coast encompassing parts of Alabama, Mississippi, and the tip of the Florida panhandle. This area contains approximately 5.6 million people in 2.1 million households. The New Orleans Metropolitan Area accounts for nearly one-fourth of the Tier 1 population. "Tier 2" refers to areas affected less directly, but still significantly, by Katrina with some parts affected by Rita or Wilma as well. The Tier 2 area includes the portions of Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi not included in Tier 1 plus substantial portions of Texas, Arkansas, Tennessee, Georgia, and Florida, and a bit of South Carolina. The Tier 2 area contains about 49.3 million people in 18.6 million households.

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<sup>iii</sup> Essential Facts about the Victims of Hurricane Katrina,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, September 2005.

<sup>iv</sup> “Katrina’s Window: Confronting Concentrated Poverty Across America,” Brookings Institute, October 2005.

<sup>v</sup> The incidence of receiving food assistance was much higher in Tier 1 than Tier 2 (35% vs. 8%). Because the population in Tier 2 is much larger than in Tier 1, the majority – about two-thirds – of those who received food assistance are in Tier 2 (68%).

<sup>vi</sup> The low end of the range reflects programs confirmed as closed, while the high end includes programs that could not be reached after numerous attempts.

<sup>vii</sup> “America’s Second Harvest: Survey of National Public Opinion on Hunger,” Leo J. Shapiro & Associates, November 2005.

<sup>viii</sup> “America’s Second Harvest: Survey of National Public Opinion on Hunger,” Leo J. Shapiro & Associates, November 2005.