



**CALIFORNIA  
ASSOCIATION OF  
FOOD BANKS**

# EVERYONE TO THE TABLE

## IMPACT REPORT 2021

# Dear Friend,

If you're reading this, you likely know that food banks and their legions of huge-hearted staff, volunteers, and community partners have always been the frontline in hunger relief. In 2020, they began what has become a two-year surge response. We now know that through the pandemic, it was only through the heroic response of food banks and public assistance programs that a full-blown, widespread hunger crisis was averted. We also know that despite those relief programs, disparities that were there long before the pandemic deepened: Black and Latinx families with children continue to experience food insecurity at alarmingly high rates - exceeding one in three at the high water mark last year, and still higher than average today. We're working hard to change that, once and for all.

Our partners and anti-hunger allies have been asking us to speak to the economic downturn and recovery. We know that it took about 10 years to bounce back from the 2008 recession - but even with that recovery, about 5 million of our neighbors were living with food insecurity before the pandemic. The March 2022 consumer price index, which measures changes in the cost of food, housing, gasoline, utilities, and other goods, [rose by 8.5%](#) over the past 12 months - the largest inflation surge in 40 years. It's gut-wrenching to think of the hardship this is already causing, to say nothing of the impacts if it continues to worsen.

According to [public policy experts](#), in California today, slightly more than a third of our state's residents are living in or near poverty. **That's a staggering 13 million people - more than the entire state of Pennsylvania.**

I ask you to join me in refusing a return to a pre-pandemic "normal" we were never prepared to accept. I invite you to look back with us at the work we did in 2021 to build toward a future in which universal food security is the norm. You'll read about how some of our proudest accomplishments paved the way for some big new commitments the Association is making. We're exploring novel ways to help food banks meet elevated need and to diversify the field of food system problem-solvers as we forge new, sustainable pathways to expanding food access and variety.

Whether you're on the hunger relief frontline, an anti-poverty ally, a supporter of food banks and CAFB, or a community member impacted by food insecurity, we're glad that you're here with us in our shared mission to end hunger in our state. Come, grab a few chairs, invite some friends, and take a seat at California's big, big table. There's room for everyone.

In community,



Stacia Hill Levenfeld, CEO





“ We help restore these broken spirits, hearts, and families, in the best way we possibly can. Our services don’t take care of everything, but it definitely lessens their burdens. ”

–Darius Durham,  
Project Coordinator and Outreach Assistant, Orange County Food Bank



# Food banks are not just growing. They're evolving...

Over the year, 2021 made clear just how essential - and enlarged - a role food banks are playing beyond emergency hunger relief. Food banks feed people, providing a variety of nutritious foods, including lots of fresh produce, but they also nurture and strengthen a sense of community. They've long connected neighbors through volunteerism, and many now offer an array of services to foster a sense of belonging and support, connecting people to public benefits (CalFresh and P-EBT) through outreach and assistance; supporting food literacy and sharing healthy recipes; and providing essentials for living like personal care items and diapers. Many of our food banks are also establishing themselves as hubs for civic engagement and community power-building with GOTV (Get out the Vote) campaigns and free tax services.

## ... and so is CAFB.

In 2021, we doubled down on member engagement with an expanded menu of offerings to increase shared learning, support, and community-building amongst our members. Offerings included topical webinars, weekly updates, amplifying the voices of our member food banks, more intentional technical assistance, and, not least of all, a first-of-its-kind statewide awareness campaign you'll read about in these pages.

Our virtual annual member meeting hosted more than 70 food bank staff in early October. Guest Speaker Hilary Hoynes, Professor of Public Policy and Economics, Haas Distinguished Chair in Economic Disparities, UC Berkeley School of Public Policy, gave a fascinating presentation on reimagining the safety net and how food



banks can engage in opportunities to improve programs and their responsiveness for the communities they serve.

Terry Garner, our Member Services Director of 18 years, has seen a lot of changes in food banking over the years, yet none so transformative as we now see:

**“There is no going back to food banking as we knew it in 2019 and earlier. Old food distribution models have been upended; it’s no longer just about quantity, it’s about quality, it’s about culturally appropriate foods. This is the new normal.”**

We encourage you to visit your local food bank’s website and learn more about all that they are doing. You can also learn more by visiting [www.cafoodbanks.org/blog](http://www.cafoodbanks.org/blog) and following the #membermondays tag - and be sure to follow @cafoodbanks on social media.





“ People are hungry every day, for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. We provide a lot of food to hungry families. I give my heart to it. ”

–Milton Gonzalez,  
Westside Food Bank’s Warehouse Manager  
of more than 35 years

Westside Food Bank, one of our founding members, reported that in October 2021 they saw their highest distribution month in the organization’s 40 year history. About a third of their food is going to new programs that didn’t exist before COVID-19, or didn’t previously distribute food.

## HUNGER IS STILL HERE.

Too many working families are holding down multiple jobs and still struggling to afford groceries and other essentials; this was true before the pandemic, and it’s true today. According to [Northwestern University’s Institute for Policy Research](#), 20% of Californians are living with hunger and food insecurity today. That’s 8 million people.

The USDA reports that the CalFresh (SNAP) participation rate of 59% among the working poor in California is one of the lowest in the country and an indicator of more regular and widespread reliance on food banks. And as 2021 drew to a close, and continuing well into 2022, inflation, including gas and food price hikes, are causing ongoing hardship.

As you read this, food banks are bracing for more surges in need as they prepare to absorb multiple impacts landing at roughly the same time: expiration of child tax credits; the expiration of SNAP emergency allotments and other pandemic program flexibilities when the Public Health Emergency is lifted; and a sharp drop in federal funding for emergency food purchase. All of this is on top of the preparations many of our food banks must now make each year to stay resilient and responsive through historic drought and extended wildfire seasons.

## WE’RE STILL HERE, TOO.

Everyone at CAFB has been working extra hard to make sure our 41 member food banks have the resources they need to see communities through tough times – not just for today, but years and decades from now.



**212 million lbs**  
Produce distributed

**23 million lbs**  
Pantry staples  
& proteins



**50+**

CalFresh and  
P-EBT partners  
across the state

**84**  
thousand

households  
informed about  
CalFresh

**24**  
thousand

households  
assisted with  
applications

**7**  
thousand

households kept  
their benefits  
with our CalFresh  
Outreach network  
support

**\$120 million** in state funds for emergency food

**\$182 million** for climate resilience and  
capacity enhancements

**\$6.6 million** in grants, food subsidies, and essential resources





“ Thanks to CAFB, more than half of the food that leaves WSFB’s warehouse is fresh produce. ”

–Genevieve Riutort,  
Deputy Director, Westside Food Bank



# How did we get to 212 million pounds of produce?

**“CAFB’s Farm to Family team connects the growers, they do all the logistics, they put the puzzle together that gets the food to the consumer. It takes a village to accomplish this, but it’s done very efficiently and we’re really proud of the work we do.”**

–Gail Grey,  
Farm to Family Solicitor



Gail Gray is a produce solicitor who’s been with CAFB’s Farm to Family program for 15 years, working with 60 farmers and growers in the agricultural communities of the Central Valley: Fresno and Tulare counties, which supplies CAFB with about a third of the produce we distribute to our network.

Last summer, we sat down – actually, stood in a peach orchard – with Gail to learn more about the role she plays in moving mountains of fruits and vegetables from the fields and orchards of the Central Valley to the tables of people in need. Food chain dysfunctions were all over the headlines through the pandemic, but Gail’s eyes sparkled as she described the smooth-functioning ecosystem of a brilliant supply-chain solution.

“We pride ourselves in trying to turn every challenge into a win-win for people who are hungry, and for the growers who are passionate about their food going to people who are in

need,” Gail shared. That generous impulse makes sense in a state that produces more than a third of our country’s vegetables and two-thirds of our fruits and nuts.

This program started out as a way to rescue product not quite fit for the market “A List.” That first grower grew peaches and plums and realized too much of their product was not going to human consumption; it was entirely edible but not retail quality, and it was going to waste. So they approached food bankers with a question: “Isn’t there a way we can capture this food and get fresh product into the food banking system?”

That’s where it all began, explains Gail. “And now we [CAFB] have grown to be a major supplier to the food banks, to the point where now food banks actually distribute more fresh food than they do shelf-stable product.” It was a transformational moment for California food banking – and for CAFB.

**“We have a farm community that is very generous. They’re very proud of the products they produce and they’re very willing to share their excess.”**

*Thanks for pouring your heart into it, Gail. We appreciate you, and all of our food solicitors and donors.*



# Thinking **Inside** the Box

*When life gives you lemons ... and a pandemic.*

Of the 235 million pounds of food we shipped to food banks in 2021, 39 million pounds of it was delivered in boxes.

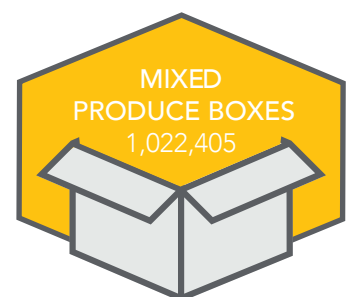
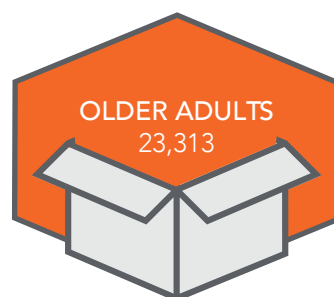
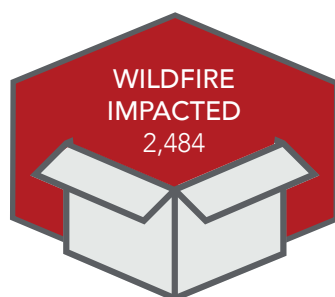
## Why is that important?

The pandemic created a perfect storm for the charitable food safety net, overwhelming each and every one of our food banks with an unprecedented surge in need for grocery assistance just as it pulled their core operating model out from under them. Gone overnight were the community volunteers and partner networks food banks relied on to sort and package bulk produce and other foods for pick up or distribution. In 2021, the drive-through pick-ups continued as the coronavirus surged through communities with unpredictable impact across all 58 counties and over 12 months. The boxes made it possible for food banks to keep up with demand despite inconsistent volunteer support as case rates ebbed and flowed.

CAFB forged new partnerships and carried forward programs we started in 2020 to help our food banks face yet another year of pivots, challenges, and model shifts.

In 2021, we were asked by the California Department of Food and Agriculture to manage the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program for the second year in a row. In partnership with four individual California farmers and seven aggregators representing 60 farmers, we distributed 23,313 fresh produce boxes to 10 member food banks throughout the state.

Beginning early in the year, with a generous gift from philanthropist Kat Taylor/TomKat Educational Ranch Foundation, followed by two grants from Feeding America, Farm to Family offered mixed produce box options, making it possible for CAFB to distribute more than 1 million mixed produce boxes to our food banks by the year's end, broken out below.



# ADVOCACY | 2021

Only public policies can address the root causes of hunger.

We've shown again and again that there is strength in numbers; when CAFB harnesses the expertise and perspectives of our network, our voices reach Sacramento and Capitol Hill loud and clear.

2021 brought the highly unusual confluence of a statewide food insecurity crisis and record state revenues. CAFB and our anti-hunger allies seized the moment and it paid off in the form of unprecedented investments in CAFB's food bank network and nation-leading policy wins for the food safety net.



## In California -



We secured unprecedented investments in the state budget for food banks, landing \$120 million for emergency food and \$182 million for **climate resilience and capacity enhancements**.



As the lead anti-hunger organization, with strong support from our member food banks and in collaboration with Center for Ecoliteracy, NextGen California, and the Office of Kat Taylor, CAFB drove the historic first-in-the-nation guarantee to **free school breakfast and lunch for all students**, also locking in access to healthy California-grown foods with \$30M for the Farm to School program and securing \$150M to support and enhance school nutrition workforce and kitchen infrastructure.



After seven years of persistent advocacy, we secured policy to reverse the Great Recession cuts to Supplemental Security Payment (SSP) grants that drove so many older adults and people with disabilities to food banks.









CAFB continued to play a key role in field-leading advocacy to improve public benefits access and adequacy, **working to narrow California's wide enrollment gap** by addressing systemic issues like language access and user-centered design.



In April, we organized a **virtual Capitol Action Day**, honoring legislative champions, raising public awareness of our 2021 state policy agenda, and supporting our member food banks in engaging their state policymakers - all of which fueled the momentum that led to our many victories.



## Federally -

-  We successfully advocated for key anti-hunger policies in the [American Rescue Plan Act](#), including a 15% increase in CalFresh benefits through September 30, 2021; Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) for any school year the public health emergency declaration is in place, including provisions to allow P-EBT to cover school-aged and young children in the summer months following that school year; \$3.6 billion for USDA to purchase and distribute food to those in need; \$1 billion for institutions that work with Black farmers and other farmers of color to address historic inequities in land access, financial training, and other systemic barriers.
-  We were selected to host a multisector roundtable discussion with House Rules Chairman Jim McGovern as part of his nationwide listening tour to End Hunger in America.
-  We led 209 groups across the country calling to **permanently improve college student access to CalFresh** in H.R. 1919 the EATS Act of 2021 (Gomez-CA).
-  We led on the Stop Child Hunger Act H.R. 3519 (Levin-CA) which provides low-income families with children an EBT card to purchase food when schools close during summer, for breaks, or unanticipated closures.
-  We led California's advocacy for the Universal School Meals Program Act H.R. 3115 (Omar-MN) to ensure every child in the nation has access to free meals.
-  Thanks to our advocacy efforts along with national partners, USDA made a long overdue 21% increase to SNAP's Thrifty Food Plan - the tool used to calculate SNAP benefit amounts.

Read about our [policy priorities for 2022](#).



# Campesinos to the Table

*We believe that those who put food on our tables should be able to feed their families.*

“Being a CAFB member affords us the opportunity to provide even more fantastic resources, such as the food boxes, that only serve to further strengthen our bond with our community. CAFB also provides necessary resources for our food bank to function at a high level, which has proved extremely beneficial, especially during these times.”

—Bryn Calderon,  
Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz County

Last year, we told you about the groundbreaking initiative CAFB developed in spring 2020 to address the extreme hardship California’s farmworkers were facing in accessing food, including from food banks. In July of 2020, CAFB kicked off the Food Access for Farmworker Initiative with 11 of our member food banks representing several of the major growing regions in our state.

We secured funding to make it easier for farmworkers to access food bank services by bringing food distributions to more convenient locations at more accessible times.

We evolved the initiative to be an even better fit for farmworkers and their families, gathering their input on the kinds of food they cook and eat, and creating a more culturally tailored food box. We also helped our member food banks build partnerships and capacity for adding field distributions and offering health resources. It was always our vision to seed these programs, providing our food banks the



resources they would need to sustain them locally.

We’re happy to report that this is exactly what’s happening. The success of the initial farmworker initiative helped two of our members, Food Share of Ventura County and the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County, secure a grant from Feeding America to carry the work forward collaboratively and support the estimated 140,000 farmworkers in their neighboring counties.

Another success story is FIND Food Bank in Indio. Due to high demand for their Mercado Campesinos, they doubled their distribution sites and expanded partnerships. By adjusting their food distribution model to meet unique geographical, occupational, and systemic obstacles, FIND Food Bank is ensuring that their farmworker population is adequately served. Today, Mercado Campesinos feeds 500-1,000 in the Coachella Valley every month.



# Everyone to the Table



In October, we launched [Everyone to the Table](#), a statewide campaign to bring public awareness of food banks' role in hunger relief, and to sustain focus on the ongoing hunger crisis throughout our state. This first-of-its-kind campaign focuses on the faces and stories of food banks' staff and partners, lifting them up as the heroes they are.

The campaign launched with more than 220 billboards/outdoor ads and more than 4 million weekly impressions through digital ads, and provided food banks with social media and other materials in English and Spanish to drive education and action locally.

Our kickoff event brought together food bank leaders, Assemblymember Buffy Wicks, and Kristin Schumacher from the California Budget & Policy Center.

**And this is just the beginning. The campaign will continue through 2022 – including a pivotal feature at our Food ACCESS Conference in October 2022 – with the goal of building support for California's anti-hunger movement.**

“ Access to food is a basic human right and hunger is a solvable problem. Since I arrived in the Assembly I've been proud to stand with food banks and ensure they get the resources they need to do what they do best, feed our communities – and that California is leading the nation by being the first state to enact school meals for all kids. While the hunger crisis is far from over, we must strive for a California better than before since the pre-pandemic 'normal' meant 4 million Californians faced hunger. We must keep this issue a top priority, harness our political will and our resources to truly build a hunger-free future for all. ”

–Assemblymember Buffy Wicks (AD-15)





HUNGER DOESN'T SLEEP.

Trey Hart,  
Grant Writer

SO WE DON'T REST.

Everyone to the Table.org  
You can help. Learn. Act. Give.



Allison Kenney,  
Food Bank Local Food Resources Coordinator



Janelle and M...  
Food Bank Food Distribution Ambassador



Michael Watson,  
Food Bank Partner Agency Worker



RENT OR FOOD.  
IT'S A CHOICE THAT NO ONE  
SHOULD HAVE TO MAKE.

Change comes when we come together.

Everyone to the Table.org



EL HAMBRE TIENE  
UN ROSTRO.  
LA AYUDA TAMBIÉN.

Everyone to the Table.org

Chelo Gonzalez,  
Director de la Programa de Servicios Directos del Banco de Alimentos



Duke,  
Food Bank Volunteer Manager



HUNGER IS HERE, EVEN WHEN  
THE HEADLINES AREN'T.

Everyone to the Table.org  
You can help. Learn. Act. Give.

Access to food is a basic human right and together, we can end hunger in California. How can you be part of the solution? Find your seat at the table at Everyone to the Table.org #EndHungerCA #Everyone to the Table

El acceso a comida es un derecho humano básico y juntos podemos acabar con el hambre en California. ¿Cómo puedes ser parte de la solución? Encuentra tu puesto en la mesa de Everyone to the Table.org



# THANK YOU

To our ever-growing community of friends, partners, and supporters -

CAFB is proud to be playing a key role in fortifying California's food safety net by securing critical resources for our 41 member food banks as we advocate for anti-hunger policies and equitable public benefits.

We couldn't do it without the support of our private philanthropic funders, public agency partners, local business communities, corporate partners, and the nearly 1,000 individuals who invested in our mission in 2021.

In joining our fight to end hunger, you're supporting groundbreaking solutions for a more equitable and healthy California. We're honored to have you with us, and we look forward to keeping you up to date on our progress.

On behalf of our entire CAFB family, thank you.



Laurie Loftus Galvagna  
Director of Development

## About Us

**California Association of Food Banks** is a 501c(3) proud to lead the collective effort to end hunger in our state. Founded in 1995, CAFB promotes a collaborative and cohesive response to the challenges affecting low-income, food insecure people throughout California. Today, we're a nationally recognized leader and ally in anti-hunger and anti-poverty advocacy and programs, drawing on and representing expert knowledge from our food banks and the local community advocates they work with. [LEARN MORE](#)

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### END HUNGER WITH US

[Support CAFB](#)

### QUESTIONS?

Reach out to Laurie Loftus Galvagna, Director of Development:  
[laurie@cafoodbanks.org](mailto:laurie@cafoodbanks.org)

### A huge thank you to our 41 [member food banks](#).

California Association of Food Banks is proud to be a Partner State Association of Feeding America. This partnership allows us to work closely with the Feeding America National Organization and other Partner State Associations across the country to ensure equitable access to nutritious food for all – by facilitating deep collaboration across our collective strategies and furthering best practices, particularly relating to policy, advocacy, and food sourcing. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Partner State Associations like ours played a critical role in unlocking additional resources for the Feeding America Network, from securing additional food and funding resources from state, regional, and the federal government, to unlocking additional volunteer support through the National Guard.

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FIND Food Bank, Food Bank of Contra Costa-Solano, Foodbank of Santa Barbara County, Redwood Empire Food Bank, San Francisco-Marín Food Bank, Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County/Harvest Solutions Farm, Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz County, Orange County Food Bank, Westside Food Bank





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“CAFB has supported us in ways that we cannot even begin to explain. Knowing we have support and have a platform to get the message out and the data... we are beyond grateful to be part of something so important.”

- Angela Dominguez,  
Office Manager, Fort Bragg Food Bank