



NEWS RELEASE

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For more information, contact:
Jim Carnes at (334) 832-9060

One in Six Alabama Households Lacked Food Security in 2010

USDA Report Finds Low-Income Alabamians Struggling to Feed Families in Slow Economy

The number of Alabama households uncertain of having enough food every day is on the rise, according to a report released this week by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The annual report, *Household Food Security in the United States in 2010*, finds that 17.3 percent, or one in six, of Alabama's 1.8 million households experienced limited access to adequate food because of a lack of money or other resources between 2008 and 2010, a condition the agency describes as "food insecurity."

According to the report, Alabama ranks fourth highest among states in its percentage of food-insecure households, up from a tie for seventh place in 2009. Nationwide, 14.6 percent of households were food-insecure during the three-year period. This year's Alabama data show an increase of 45 percent over the most recent three-year period, 2005-07, as compared with a 33 percent increase nationally. The Alabama surge parallels an unprecedented increase in the number of families whose income dropped low enough to qualify for food stamps. According to the state Department of Human Resources, the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) saw its total monthly distributions more than double from \$50 million in June 2007 to \$113 million in June 2011.

"For too many Alabama households, the family dinner table is a snapshot of the bleak economy," ACPP executive director Kimble Forrister said. "Making ends meet is a persistent challenge for many families, and the Great Recession has put more Alabamians in the bind of cutting corners at meal time. One way to loosen that bind would be to remove the 4 percent state sales tax on groceries and save every Alabama family the cost of two weeks' groceries every year."

The report classifies more than one-third of Alabama's food-insecure households (7 percent) as having very low food security, meaning members had to reduce their food consumption or disrupt their normal eating patterns for lack of resources. Nationally, 5.6 percent of households were classified as having very low food security.

Households with children experience food insecurity at a higher rate than the national average, the report finds, with some 20.2 percent of such households nationwide affected. Significantly higher rates also were found for households with incomes below the federal poverty level, single-parent households, and Black and Hispanic households.

Among the strategies food-insecure households reported using to avoid substantial reductions or disruptions in their food intake were reducing variety in their diets and relying on a few basic foods. For those in the category of very low food security, the reported adjustments included reducing adult portions and skipping meals.

"Getting breadwinners back to work is an urgent priority," ACPP's Forrister said. "But there are policy changes we could make to increase food security for Alabama's families. Untaxing groceries would put more food on the table and create more jobs in the retail economy."

Visit www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/err125 to read the full USDA report.

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Arise Citizens' Policy Project is a nonprofit, nonpartisan statewide coalition comprising 150 congregations and organizations that promote public policies to improve the lives of low-income Alabamians.