



NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Social Services

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More Than 26 Million Pounds of Healthy Bonus Food Will Be Filling Plates Across California

Sacramento – California Department of Social Services' Director Will Lightbourne is pleased to announce the receipt of more than 26 million pounds of food which will be used to help feed needy low-income residents across the state. Studies report individuals are struggling with food security in this challenging economy.

"This food is a welcome bonus to California families who use the Emergency Food Assistance Program to help maintain a healthy diet," said Director Lightbourne. "We are grateful to the USDA and our partners in communities across the state who work very hard to bring these much needed commodities to the people of California."

Beginning November of 2011, the first of more than 600 truckloads of commodities from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) will be arriving at food banks for distribution to household sites and soup kitchens throughout California.

The distribution of bonus commodities from USDA includes eight million pounds of chicken, and more than 18 million pounds of various healthy food items such as peaches, fruit juice, figs, roasted pistachios, and dried plums. The food will be delivered to California's 49 food banks for distribution to more than 1.5 million needy individuals and households as part of the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP).

"This is especially welcome news for food banks at a time when resources are shrinking, but the need is not," said Sue Sigler, Executive Director of the California Association of Food Banks. "Our food insecurity rates in California remain at an all-time high, and USDA bonus commodities are an important source of food to help address this issue."

According to the non-profit California Food Policy Advocate, there were nearly three million California households that were food insecure in 2010. And the USDA reports that about one out of every six Americans had trouble coming up with enough money to buy food at some point last year.

To qualify for EFAP, individuals self-certify that they have income at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level and are a resident of the county in which they are seeking assistance. For example, a family of three can earn up to \$27,795 in annual income to qualify for food assistance.

The USDA provides the bulk of the food that is distributed by the EFAP to individuals and families in need. In FFY 2010, the USDA allocated approximately 51.8 million pounds in entitlement (grant funded) commodities and approximately 56.8 million pounds of free bonus commodities to California. The USDA obtains this food by purchasing surplus commodities throughout the nation to provide price stability in the agricultural marketplace.

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