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Background. Household food insecurity is defined as “whenever the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or the ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways is limited or uncertain. A “food secure” community is one in which “all people in a community have access to a nutritionally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through non-emergent food sources at all times.” The Hawai‘i Department of Health’s baseline report on food security in Hawai‘i reports that during 1999-2000:

- x 221,834 individuals (19.2% of Hawai‘i residents) lived in food insecure households;
- x High-risk communities were distributed throughout the State; and
- x Food insecurity affects physical and mental health, specifically rates of obesity

As depicted in Figure 1, food insecurity is a complex, multi-dimensional public health problem interrelated with the economy, the food system, education, health access and programs, the nutrition safety, and government policies. While over \$250 million in federal dollars is spent annually in Hawai‘i to support a nutrition safety net, many needy households do not meet income criteria and in turn must rely on an overburdened, under-funded emergency food assistance system. However, reliance on the emergency food system (food banks, pantries and soup kitchens) while helpful in alleviating hunger, perpetuates food insecurity. The U.S. Government’s objective is to reduce the rate of food insecurity of the Nation’s households to half its 1995 level by 2010 (Healthy People 2010 Objective 19-8). Notably, Hawai‘i has no State, county or local food policies or bodies to guide or coordinate food security initiatives.

Summary. The problem of food insecurity is multi-faceted and must be addressed at many levels, not just by more food or short-term funding. Information gathered indicates the fundamental causes of community food insecurity are economic and political. While economic solutions transcend the scope of this Task Force, significant progress can be made with appropriate State policy, funding and political action.

Recommendations. The Task Force recommends three interrelated actions as paramount to providing the necessary policy and programmatic framework to enhance household and community food security in Hawai‘i, as follows:

- x Create State food policy and objectives that outline the State’s desire to enhance food security so that “no one in our ‘ohana goes hungry” to assure the continuing adequacy of the nutrition safety net, and to be in line with the national Healthy People 2010 objective.
- x Create a Food Security Council (FSC) consisting of key food security stakeholders and food assistance programs charged with developing an integrated food security strategy facilitating its implementation, and assisting public and private efforts to improve food security in Hawai‘i.
- x Provide \$92,000 a year to fund FSC operations, to include a FSC Coordinator and provide required match funds to leverage federal dollars for projects to enhance food security in Hawai‘i.

## **Report to the Legislature on SCR 75, SD1, HD1 (2002) Food Security Task Force**

### **Purpose and Process**

This report addresses the charge of Senate Concurrent Resolution 75, SD1, HD1 (2002), that requested the Department of Business Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) Office of Planning to convene a Food Security Task Force, "...to examine and develop an action plan that more effectively and reliably improves food security in Hawai`i" (Appendix 1). As documented in Appendices 2-5, this was accomplished with input and guidance from various representatives of State agencies and non-profit organizations, and with investigation of relevant local<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> and national information<sup>5,6,7</sup> and actions taken in other jurisdictions.<sup>8,9,10</sup> Task Force meetings commenced in early September 2002 and were completed in mid-December 2002, without any appropriated funds. Given staff, time and financial constraints, Task Force members agreed the investigation into systemic causal factors, i.e. local agricultural and economic issues were beyond the scope of inquiry at this time. As such, the purpose of this document is to concisely compile available existing information on the food security problem in Hawaii and outline recommendations for timely legislative actions to improve food security in Hawai`i.

This report begins with background information on the food system and food security, proceeds to outline key factors affecting food security and issues related to those factors that merit attention, and then finally to Task Force recommendations for action.

### **Background on the Food System and Food Insecurity.**

The Food System. Food, like potable water and oxygen, is one of our most basic needs necessary for survival. Without adequate nourishment, our bodies succumb to weakness and disease, and our ability to think and work is compromised. In Hawaii, our island life, customs and cultures revolve around the food we eat. Furthermore, the production, distribution, and consumption of food link all the elements of our community together.

The food system is comprised of a chain of activities connecting food production, processing, distribution, wholesaling and retailing, consumption, and waste management. It affects our local economy, our environment and land use, our public health, housing, and the quality of our communities. Nationally, agricultural and nutritional policies are designed to ensure the adequacy of food availability and promote the health and well being of U.S. citizens. Federally funded food assistance programs such as the Food Stamp Program (FSP), Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) are designed as a safety net, to ensure that no one goes hungry or is undernourished. However, in Hawaii, we have a public policy environment in which food, agriculture, and hunger issues are fragmented. This fragmentation is apparent in the health, economic development, and social policy fields. The result is what is now being called "food insecurity."

Definitions. The following definitions have been developed at the national level through research at Cornell University<sup>11</sup> and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.<sup>12, 13</sup>

***Food insecurity** exists whenever the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or the ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways is limited or uncertain.*

***Hunger** is the severe form of food insecurity where there is an uneasy or painful sensation caused by a lack of food, because of inadequate resources for foods.*

***Food security** is the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods and an assured ability to acquire them in socially acceptable ways (e.g. not needing to resort to emergency food sources, scavenging, and stealing.)*

***Community food security** is focused on the underlying social, economic, environmental, and institutional factors within a community that affects the quantity and quality of food available, and its affordability or price relative to the financial ability of people to acquire food.*

*A “**food secure**” community is one in which “all people in a community have access to a culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through non-emergency (or conventional) food sources at all times” (Community Food Security Coalition, 2001).*

Through extensive local research, the pattern of food insecurity among Hawai`i's residents has been documented to be similar to other food insecure households across the nation.<sup>14,15,16,17</sup> Food security status can be represented by a continuum ranging from households who are food secure to progressively more severe levels of food insecurity including hunger among adults and then children.

**Food Insecurity in Hawai`i.** The Hawai`i Department of Health's (DOH) report “Hunger and Food Insecurity in Hawai`i Baseline Estimates: Hawai`i Health Survey, 1999-2000” is the most recent and comprehensive report on food insecurity in Hawai`i. This report provides convincing evidence that hunger and food insecurity in Hawai`i was a public health problem before the economic fallout from the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks (Appendix 4).

- 221,834 individuals (19.2% of Hawai`i residents) lived in food insecure households; 53,384 in hungry households (Table 1);
- Hawaiians, Other Pacific Islanders, and Filipinos were disproportionately affected;
- High-risk communities were distributed throughout the State (Figure 2). The Wai`anae Coast (33.2%), Puna (32.8%), and Ka`a`awa to Wailua (32.0%), Waimanalo (36.2% but insufficient sample size) had the highest prevalence of food insecurity among household residents. Other areas such as Waimea-Kekaha, Waikiki, Kalihi, Ewa/Kapolei, the North Shore of O`ahu, Lahaina-Napili, and Hamakua were all high risk; as well as the islands of Moloka`i and Lana`i. Also, the high density areas of Makiki, Hilo, Kona, and Kahalui/Wailuku all exhibit high numbers of food insecure residents.

- High density areas of Makiki, Hilo, Kona, and Kahalui/Wailuku all exhibit high numbers of food insecure residents.
- Food insecurity is associated with poorer self-reported physical and mental health, higher levels of obesity, diabetes, arthritis, and generally to less nutritious food choices.
- Only 22% of food insecure households in 1999-2000 received food stamps.

**Table 1**  
**Household Food Security Status in Hawai'i in 1999-2000 (Baker et al, 2001)**

<b>Food Security Status</b>	<b>Households</b>	<b>Individuals</b>
Food Secure	342,010	932,169
Food Insecure	67,812	221,834
At-risk of hunger	50,444	168,450
Adult hunger	15,009	41,197
Child and Adult hunger	1,901	9,964
Child hunger only	458	2,223
Hawai'i Population Estimate	409,822	1,154,003

Source: Baker KK, et.al. "Hunger and Food Insecurity in Hawai'i: Baseline Estimates 1999-2000, Hawai'i Health Survey." State of Hawai'i, Department of Health, Office of Health Status Monitoring. Honolulu, Hawai'i. October 2001.

**Table 2**  
**Household Food Security Status in Hawai'i: 1995-2002**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1992<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>1995<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>1996-8<sup>c</sup></b>	<b>1999-00<sup>d</sup></b>
Food Secure	85.8%	90.8%	89.6%	83.5%
Food Insecure	14.2%	9.2%	10.4%	16.5%
At-risk (without) hunger		7.0%	7.6%	12.3%
With hunger		2.2%	2.8%	4.2%

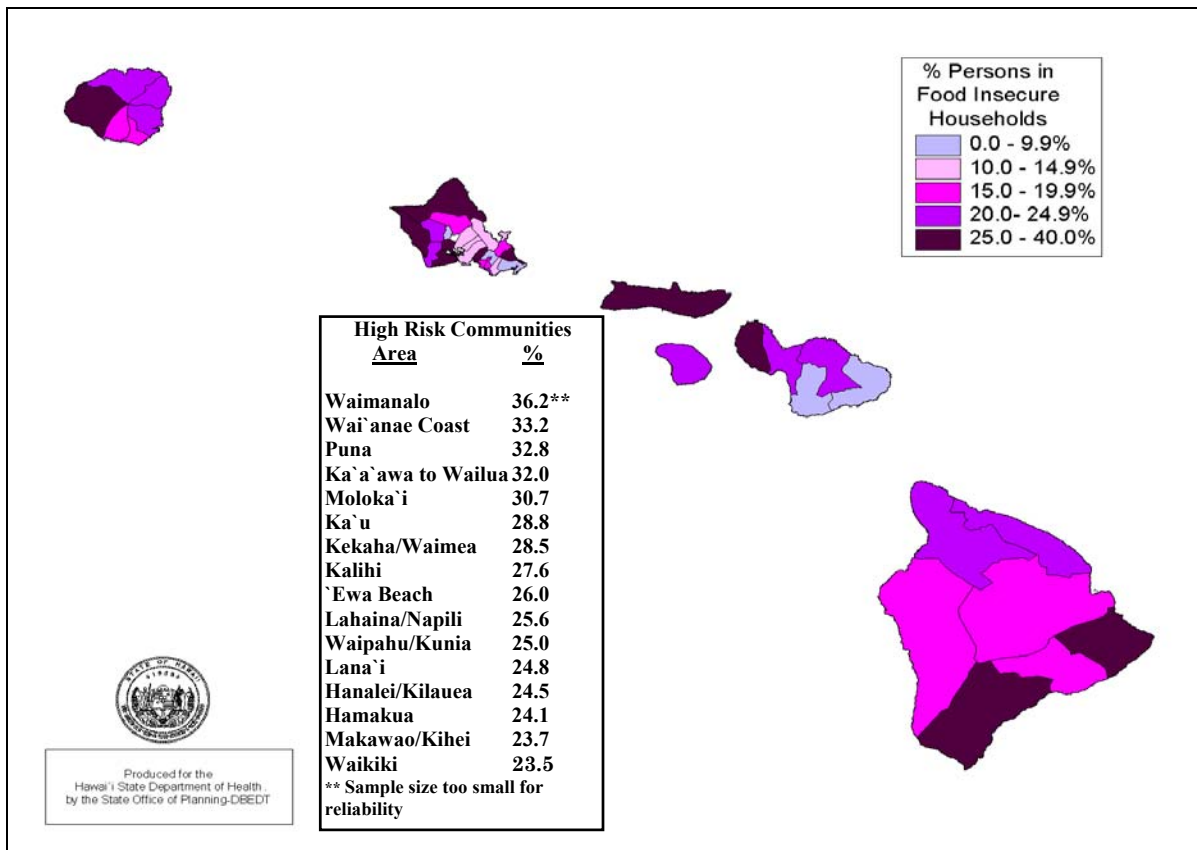
Sources:

- SMS, Homeless and Hunger Report, 1992 (Local survey using an adapted version of the Community Childhood Hunger Identification Project Measure; n = # of households)
- Hamilton et al. 1997. (First national food security measure, using 18 question national food security measure and Current Population Survey Sample: n = ~350 households)
- Nord et al, 1999. (Similar to above)
- Baker et al, 2001 (Baseline report of food security and hunger in Hawai'i collected through the Hawai'i Health Survey in 1999-2000, primarily via the telephone, using the Simple Food Security Monitoring Tool, (Derrickson et al, 1999); sample size = 10,233 households with 29,860 household members).

Notably, food insecurity without hunger (running out of food before you have money to buy more and/or being unable to provide nutritious meals because of not enough money for food) is a much larger problem than food insecurity with hunger. These estimates do not include an estimated 10,000-15,000 individuals who may be homeless during the year, institutionalized individuals, and households who do not have phone service.

Since various measures and methods have been used to assess household food security status in Hawaii in the last 10-15 years it is impossible to confidently confirm food security status over time. However, as outlined in Table 2, high levels of household food insecurity have plagued the islands since the early 1990's, and notably have not decreased despite a significant concurrent growth in the emergency food assistance system. Due to Hawai'i's long economic slowdown and increasing level of poverty, food insecurity has likely increased in 2002.

**Figure 2.**  
**Percent of Food Insecure Households by geographical area.**



## Key Elements of Community Food Security:

As illustrated in Figure 1 (see Executive Summary), food security is a complex, multi-dimensional issue that is most influenced by factors affecting household income, food accessibility and affordability, and personal choices. With the exception of characteristics of households and individual household members, these issues are encapsulated within the seven key elements of community food security. A brief summary of each issue as it relates to and affects food security is discussed in the following section. Although seven key elements of food security have been articulated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (Appendix 5), this report focuses on the four areas asterisked below.

**Table 3**  
**Key Elements of Community Food Security**

- |  |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Local Infrastructure and Policy Coordination *</li><li>2. Economic and Job Security</li><li>3. Nutrition Assistance Safety Net *</li><li>4. Supplemental Food Provided by Non-Profit Groups (referred to herein as Emergency Food Assistance System or EFAS) *</li><li>5. Community Food Production and Marketing</li><li>6. Education and Awareness</li><li>7. Research, Monitoring and Evaluation *</li></ol> |
|--|

### 1. Increased Economic and Job Security

For a decade, Hawai`i has struggled with a recessionary economy that was further weakened after the tragedy of Sept. 11<sup>th</sup>. This is evidenced by a large jump in the number of individuals living in poverty in Hawai`i between 1997 and 2001 (10.2% to 17.3%).<sup>18</sup> The large number of low paying jobs produced by Hawai`i's service-based economy makes it difficult for many to cover the high cost of housing, food, medical care and daycare. Many people who are "barely making it" in Hawai`i do not have incomes low enough to qualify for most federal nutrition assistance programs and therefore have become a "gap" group.<sup>19</sup>

Key Economic and Job Security Issues.

- General high cost of living
- Limited availability of "living wage" jobs that include medical benefits
- High cost of housing that limits availability of household funds for food.

### 2. Nutrition Assistance Safety Net

Social-acceptability of food acquisition is a key component of food security. In Hawai`i, social acceptability is understood as acquiring food through food retailers, by hunting, farming, fishing, or by sharing food with family and friends; but not from stealing, begging or going through the trash.<sup>16</sup> In the United States, in order to prevent hunger and a reliance on unacceptable forms of food acquisition, we have created a federally-funded food assistance network. In addition, an emergency food assistance system primarily financed by volunteers and non-profit agencies

formed to provide relief during short-term crisis or emergency situations. For some people, requesting food from federal assistance programs has and continues to carry a negative stigma, a “humbling of oneself” to ask for help, particularly for seniors and those food insecure for the first time.

The Federally-funded nutrition safety net includes various, sometimes complex, assistance programs with different objectives, target audiences and methods of administration. The ultimate purpose of these programs is to assure food security, the improved nutritional status of the citizens, and/or to support national food production through the use of federal surplus food commodities. With the exception of WIC these programs generally require income at or below 130% of the poverty level income guidelines for total benefit eligibility. Notably, many people who are “barely making it” in Hawai‘i, with incomes 130-200% of the poverty level guidelines, don’t have incomes low enough to qualify for most federal nutrition assistance programs and instead must turn to the emergency food assistance system, or family and friends to meet their food needs. Furthermore, programs such as Food Stamps and many Child Nutrition Programs are entitlement programs where the greater the number of eligible participants, the more federal dollars the State will receive to help feed island residents. Finally, at this time, with the exception of the federal surplus commodity program, The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), there appears to be minimal collaboration between federally-funded food assistance programs and charitable emergency food providers.

**Table 4.  
Federally Funded Food and Nutrition Assistance Programs**

Federal Program	Federal	State	Total
1. Food Stamps <sup>1</sup>	\$160 million	\$8.4 million	\$169 million
2. School Food Services <sup>2</sup>	\$30.5 million	\$24.6 million	\$72.6 million
3. WIC <sup>3</sup>	\$25.3 million	-----	\$25.3 million
4. Child and Adult Care <sup>3</sup>	\$3.9 million	?	?
5. TEFAP <sup>3</sup>	\$530,000 <sup>4</sup>	\$6,000	\$1.6 million <sup>5</sup>

Sources:

- 1 Data from State DHS representing FY 2002.
- 2 Data from State DOE – School Food Services representing FY 2001 with total figure derived from 42% (Federal), 5% (Federal commodities), 34% (State), and 19% (cash sales).
- 3 Data from Food Research Action Center (FRAC) State of the States report 2002; representing FY 2000 (WIC and CACFP) and FY 2001 (TEFAP).
- 4 Includes \$365,000 in federal food surplus commodities credit and separate USDA grant funds for administrative costs of \$165,000.
- 5 Includes value of bonus commodities which are variable each year.

As depicted in Table 4 and supplemented with additional data in Appendix 8 (FRAC), Federal assistance predominately comes from federal funds to support three main programs: The Food Stamp Program (FSP), The National School Lunch Program (NSLP), and The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infants and Children (WIC). However, programs such as the Child and Adult Care Food Program, The School Breakfast Program, Summer Food Service, The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), and Elderly Nutrition Programs all significantly contribute to meeting food needs of Hawai`i's most vulnerable populations. The State currently provides the Department of Education, School Food Services, funding to offset meal costs for all children served, provides required matching administrative funds for the Food Stamp program, and to our knowledge only indirectly supports the WIC program by covering medical insurance costs of federally funded employees.

Food Stamp Program (FSP). The FSP is the second most important counter-recessionary program after federal unemployment. It is a part of the Farm Bill, recently reauthorized in 2002. The FSP is an entitlement program designed to put more “food money” in the pockets of the needy, while still retaining their ability to make food choices and use the local food system. The greater the number of individuals receiving food stamps, the more federal funds that are available in the State to feed island residents and support the local food industry. Locally, the FSP is run by the State Department of Human Services (Benefit, Employment and Support Services Division) with a budget of \$169 million dollars in 2002, 95% for benefits issued. The State contributes ~ \$8.4 million to match federal administrative funds. In FY 2002, average monthly participation was 106,346; 2% less than in 2001, with an average benefit of \$118 per person, per month.

Despite local efforts, the program has become excessively complex to administer since Welfare Reform in 1996. DHS workers struggle to administer the program according to complex federal rules and little effort can be expended to expand outreach. Also, additional or inconsistent income from employment, requires a significant recipient reporting obligation and often decreases, if not eliminates, food stamp benefits. This means that when a recipient's monthly earnings exceeds income criteria, they will no longer qualify, and in turn their food budget decreases. Subsequently, caseloads have dropped in Hawai`i, decreasing funds available for food purchases and an increasing reliance on the emergency food assistance system. Federal grant funds are available to expand outreach and nutrition education, but require significant staff time and “matching funds” to secure. The trend on these types of grants has been for states to partner with local non-profits who can then put together and provide the actual outreach programs.

#### FSP Issues and Opportunities

- Limited outreach and nutrition education, both of which are not mandatory (requires more personnel time and matching funds to secure and administer “non-competitive” federal funds);
- Complex administrative requirements that appears to compromise achievement in program goals (primarily due to federal rules and regulations and minimal administrative funds); and
- Citizens of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands who immigrate to Hawaii are not eligible for food stamps (due to a loophole in federal law). See Senate Concurrent Resolution 35, 2002.

Child Nutrition Programs. Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) include a group of federally-funded food assistance programs designed to provide nutritious meals to high risk individuals and to offset the costs of meals through funding and federal commodity foods. This entire group of programs is administered by the State Department of Education, School Food Services (SFS) although a separate services division is being created to separate program administration from food service delivery. National School Lunch Program provides wholesome meals to all children and adults in public schools and to private schools that apply. Substantial evidence supports the benefit of school meals on school performance and nutritional health. In School Year 2001 it cost \$2.82 to produce a lunch, although regular cost for children was only \$1.00 and children eligible for reduced price lunches paid 45 cents. Each school day, on average, 62,257 children receive free or reduced price lunches and 22,476 receive free or reduced price breakfasts. Hawai'i has the highest percentage of schools participating in the school lunch program that also participate in the school breakfast program (94.3%); yet, lower rates of school breakfast participation and low rates of participation in summer feeding programs due to hurdles in program administration that SFS is currently working to overcome.

#### CNP Issues and Opportunities

- Administrative issues that have previously compromised participation in summer feeding programs (these appear to be in the process of being reconciled).
- Limited use of the school breakfast program.
- CNP is expected to be reauthorized in Congress in 2003.

WIC. The WIC program targets the nutritionally-vulnerable population of pregnant, breastfeeding and post-partum women and children under age five. Nationally, studies document that WIC is effective in minimizing Medicaid costs associated with high risk pregnancies and children who fail to thrive: every dollar spent on WIC saves an average of three dollars in Medicaid costs.<sup>5</sup> WIC, unlike the Food Stamp Program, is not an entitlement program, but rather a nutrition program offering education and a nutritious assortment of foods designed to prevent nutrition deficiencies common to the target audience. Unlike the FSP, WIC has funding and is encouraged to conduct outreach. Successful outreach and enhanced program administration have resulted in a 122% increase in the number of program participants from 30% of those eligible in the early 1990's. Nationally, WIC's distribution of infant formula has been criticized as decreasing rates of breastfeeding, which is commonly accepted as being the gold standard of infant feeding. To overcome this hurdle, the Hawai'i WIC program has successfully promoted the use of breast pumps in order to support more extensive breastfeeding.

#### WIC Issues and Opportunities

- WIC has been unable to secure "matching funds" necessary to support the WIC Farmer's Market Nutrition Program that would allow WIC participants to purchase \$20 a year of fresh produce from local vendors (Senate Bill 2133, in 2002).
- WIC faces challenges in balancing administration with client caseloads that causes some return of federal funds, that appear, in part to be related to state hiring practices.
- WIC is expected to be reauthorized in Congress in 2003 at the current level of funding.

Elderly Nutrition Program (ENP) Limited information has been compiled about the key nutrition programs targeting seniors over age 59. Approximately \$3 million in funding is provided through the Older Americans Act. P.L. 106-501. The program is administered locally through

the Executive and county offices on Aging, serving over 5,000 through congregate meals at community sites and over 4,000 in-home delivered meals each year.

#### ENP Issue and Opportunity

- By 2020, one-fourth of Hawaii's population will be over the age of 60, many will have limited incomes and will likely need food assistance.
- Older Americans Act expected to be reauthorized in Congress in 2004.

### **3. Charitable Food - Emergency Food Assistance System (EFAS)**

The emergency nature of EFAS is a misnomer. The EFAS and the agencies and organizations, of which it is comprised, no longer appear to function in an emergency capacity but have become institutionalized and depended on within the community. Federal programs operated through State agencies appear to provide the lion's share of food assistance through the nutrition safety net (about 90% nationally).<sup>6</sup> However, many needy households rely on non-profit, primarily faith-based organizations, to stretch their limited food resources. During the past 15 years, society's perception of the EFAS has changed dramatically. At first, policy makers and the general public saw these as emergency, short-term responses to a hunger problem that was supposed to be time-limited. However, now they are viewed implicitly, as a cornerstone of our nutrition safety net meaning for many island residents the EFAS provides needed ongoing food assistance, not temporary or crisis assistance.

The EFAS has evolved into a structured system in Hawai'i: involving island food banks or food rescue operations (Hawai'i Foodbank on O'ahu, Maui Foodbank, Kaua'i Foodbank, Big Island Foodbank, and Aloha Harvest), who secure salvage and warehouse foods from which a myriad of non-profit food pantries and emergency kitchens then provide food or meals directly to clients. Food is secured through donations, from the national America's Second Harvest network, through local retailers, farmers, the federal TEFAP (commodities), the federal Emergency and Shelter Program (EFSP)<sup>20</sup>, and occasionally through food purchases to improve the nutritional mix of product available. Within the last few years, the Hawai'i Foodbank has expanded its 'Ohana produce program to provide drop offs of salvaged produce in needy neighborhoods, a "food box" program consisting of 12-15 pound prepared assortments of nutritious foods, and administers a "Grant in Aid" program to minimize or eliminate an agency's food costs. In addition, a relatively new organization, Aloha Harvest, transports primarily perishable food from individuals, restaurants, hotels and special events directly to charitable food providers.

The EFAS in Hawai'i is comprised of about 350 non-profit agency providers statewide who directly distribute food or meals to needy individuals. Approximately 35% of these providers are currently listed with the State's sole social services referral network, Aloha United Way 211 (AUW 211), formerly ASK-2000. Nevertheless, the EFAS serves an estimated 118,022 different people each week, many of whom are working poor, elderly and disabled: only 64% of clients had an income below the official federal poverty guidelines.<sup>21</sup> Most charitable agencies are small, provide food assistance incidental to their primary missions, have limited storage and chill space, are staffed exclusively by volunteers, and are often highly dependent on a foodbank for food. Generally, although safe, the availability and nutritional adequacy of food provided through the EFAS is sometimes insufficient.

Most importantly, although vital to meeting the emergency needs of food insecure people, the network cannot be seen as a solution to ending hunger. In fact, Poppendieck after an extensive nationwide study of the EFAS (including Hawai`i), questions the effectiveness of the EFAS as the most effective response to hunger.<sup>22</sup> Her research revealed that federal policies related to food have led to a shrinking of the federal food assistance safety net and that the general public supports the EFAS to ease guilt over the idea that hunger exists among plenty. Further, she questions whether or not it is possible to concurrently promote emergency food assistance and work to secure the fundamental changes needed to assure an effective governmental policy response to achieve food security for all.

#### EFAS Issues and Opportunities

- Vulnerable, overburdened, under-funded.
- Limited leadership and collaboration among emergency food provider agencies and, between these same providers and federally funded programs.
- Requests for food assistance are the #1 referral AUW 211 provides, indicating a strong need to keep the database current and facilitate interagency communication on food availability.

#### **4. Local Food Production and Marketing**

Historically, Hawai`i had the capacity to grow all of its own food. Today, much of the food consumed in Hawai`i is imported from the mainland or abroad. Often, a candy bar is more readily available and affordable than a banana. Local producers face stiff competition, as well as the threat of market flooding, and in addition, must deal with the high costs of land, labor, and feed.

Total food self-sufficiency is no longer feasible, both economically and agriculturally. However, Hawai`i does have the potential to increase local production, as well as make use of local opportunities to market fresh and nutritionally beneficial foods to the public. Recently, we have seen significant gains by local farmers in replacing products that have been traditionally imported. Despite severe competitive disadvantages, Hawai`i's farmers have gained better than 50% of local market share for common crops such as tomatoes, bananas, green beans, and Italian squash.

#### Issues and Opportunities

- Hawai`i has organized farmers market programs on most islands but not all accept EBT (electronic benefit transfer) cards, many have limited days/hours, and have minimal support from government agencies.
- The chain of activities from cultivation to consumption in Hawai`i agricultural products does not include the systematic collection of culls or old products from the field, wholesaler, or retailer for the purpose of feeding those in need.

## 5. Research, Monitoring and Evaluation

Well conducted research helps define the causes and potential solutions for any problem. Monitoring or surveillance is designed to provide periodic estimates of the extent and duration of a problem over time, and its relationship to demographic variables. Evaluation can answer the question of whether or not an intervention has accomplished its goal, typically by alleviating or eradicating a problem.

Compared to other states that are dependent on national research and monitoring efforts lacking the sample size and level of detail to effectively guide policy; food insecurity in Hawai`i is well documented.<sup>1,4,14,15,16</sup>

### Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Issues and Opportunities

- No State department has the charge of monitoring statewide food security status. Without annual or biannual monitoring of food security, the State lacks the data to gage program or policy effectiveness or measure progress towards improving food security.
- There is currently little, if any, information on the effectiveness of food assistance programs in improving food security status in Hawai`i. Unquestionably, feeding programs (NSLP, SBP, SFP, Congregate meals, Meals on Wheels and soup kitchens) help meet nutritious needs; and programs like WIC, FSP and food pantries enhance resources and increase household access to food supplies. Insufficient data has been collected to complete cross program cost-benefit analysis due to the many “confounding” variables which affect a household’s food supply, income and food choices.

## 6. Education and Awareness

Education and awareness regarding food insecurity falls into two arenas: 1) general awareness of the problem and what can be done to remedy it, and 2) outreach and education to the food insecure that encourages appropriate use of assistance programs and maximization of their own food resources and food choices.

**General awareness.** As the America’s Second Harvest campaign slogan urges –

*“The sooner you believe it, the sooner we can end it.”*

People generally understand resource-constrained hunger as the rumbling that occurs in your stomach due to not enough money for food. Yet, the term food insecurity is a relatively new and complex term easily confused with national security or food safety. Many island residents, particularly those who are economically well-off, don’t believe food insecurity is a problem because it’s not within their experience. It also appears politically and economically unwise to advertise food insecurity in our island paradise.

The largest ongoing anti-hunger educational effort appears to be related to the annual Hawai`i Foodbank (HFB) food drive. While this annual marketing campaign is a remarkable volunteer effort; it’s purpose is to raise money and put food in the Hawai`i

Foodbank warehouse, not increase awareness of food insecurity as an issue or solve the complex, long-term food insecurity problem. Full Plate, a small local non-profit aiming to improve food security through education, research and community planning, hosted Hawai'i's first Hunger Summit in November 2000. While attendance was modest, the Summit did result in some legislative initiatives, one of which led to the creation of this food security task force. Educational, research and coordination efforts are time intensive endeavors that typically do not yield significant concrete benefits in the near-term, but often only with sustained long-term efforts. Food insecurity, unlike a child with a genetic condition like multiple sclerosis, is an embarrassment to society and therefore much harder to market than other health concerns. Consequently, food security awareness is chronically under funded.

**Outreach and Education.** Outreach is loosely defined as efforts to enhance program participation. It can include enhanced client participation in benefit programs like Food Stamp, WIC and CNP, and improved agency participation in offering federally-funded "entitlement" programs like School Breakfast, Summer Feeding and After School Snacks. Based on reports from Task Force members, it appears that limited client participation may be occurring in the Food Stamp program despite high levels of meeting those "statistically eligible." This likely occurs due to undercounting of the needy population. Currently, the Food Stamp Program has no funds for outreach or any mandate to maximize clients served. Complex program administration and minimal staffing can discourage clients from applying or reapplying for the Food Stamp benefits. Similarly, school breakfast and summer feeding are underutilized programs despite commendable efforts of the School Food Services to overcome administrative hurdles.

Education related to food insecurity includes: basic resource management to improve self-sufficiency; food education that includes the basics of maximizing use of limited food resources, safe food handling and meal preparation; and, nutrition education to promote food choices that improve health and protect against disease. The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), run out of the Cooperative Extension Service at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa is the primary educational program targeting "life skills" education for the food insecure. However, federal funding is limited and constrained, and allows only reaching to households with children; not singles, households without children (like disabled adults) or seniors. The Salvation Army of Hawai'i, Family Services Office offers a similar Hana Pono'i – Striving for self-sufficiency" educational program provided to any interested individual. Again, like EFNEP, it is continually plagued by insufficient funding and therefore its outreach is compromised as well.

There are federal funding sources to expand nutrition education, coordination, and Food Stamp outreach. Hawaii has had only limited success in securing available federal funds without a state government employee charged with overseeing project design, agency collaboration and grant-writing. Two examples are: the Food and Nutrition Service of U.S. Department of Agriculture offers funds for Food Stamp outreach that requires 50% matching funds ([http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/pdfs/Outreach\\_Plan\\_Guidance.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/pdfs/Outreach_Plan_Guidance.pdf)) and similar nutrition education funds (<http://www.nal.usda.gov/foodstamp/pdf/fspguidefy03.pdf>) for Community Food Projects from the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (<http://www.reeusda.gov/crgam/cfp/>).

## Education and Awareness Issues and Opportunities

- Adequate funding and state government staff time are needed to plan, secure funding for, implement and evaluate effective outreach and educational programs.
- Federal funds are available to expand Food Stamp outreach and nutrition education, as well as community food projects.
- Hawai'i's Center on the Family has received \$600,000 for Faith-Based Initiatives that may (<http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2002pres/20021003a.html>) potentially be used for projects that address food insecurity and hunger.
- Capitalize on existing broad education and outreach efforts in both the public and private sectors where the issue of food security might be addressed in concert with the primary program message.

## 7. Local Infrastructure and Policy Coordination

The USDA Community Food Security Initiative highlights “Local Infrastructure and Policy Coordination” as one of the seven action areas needed to improve community food security. Their action plan clarifies that “many communities lack an integrated strategy and approach to addressing hunger and food security.” Hawai'i is a community with no State, county or local food policy council to coordinate food security issues, nor any entity charged or funded by a policy making body to oversee food security activities. The efforts that have been made locally in an attempt to coordinate community food security have fallen to small non-profits, like Full Plate. It is not surprising that no government leadership has come forward, as the issue crosses the jurisdiction of many agencies where there have been significant budget cutbacks and staff attrition. Furthermore, a compelling case documenting the extent of the food insecurity problem was not made until the recent DOH food insecurity report in 2001.<sup>1</sup>

As established in numerous international documents and the 1995 report to the Hawai'i State Legislature on food assistance programs<sup>23</sup>, there is a growing international effort to assure the fundamental right to “adequate food and nutrition.” This doesn't mean the government must provide food or that only the federal government is responsible to assure the food security status of their population, but rather that absence of government leadership will serve to perpetuate food insecurity and continue to thwart efforts to truly enhance food security status in Hawai'i.

Other cities and states have created Food Policy Councils with the general mission of coordinating assistance programs, research and education, and helping local governments enhance community food security:

- The State of Connecticut provides a model of a state food policy council. The Connecticut Food Policy Council (CFPC)<sup>8</sup> was created in 1997 by legislation following the recommendations of a task force report. The CFPC is housed within the State Department of Agriculture and works to promote the development of a food policy for the State of Connecticut and the coordination of state agencies that affect food security. The CFPC's goals are to recommend and support legislation that promotes food security, to educate the public and policy makers about the food system, and to promote the preservation of local farming and farmland. Its council members, established by state

statute, include members from an agricultural organization, an anti-hunger organization, the Cooperative Extension Service, a food retailer, a produce wholesaler and representatives from the Departments of Agriculture, Administrative Services, Education, Transportation, and Health and Social Services.

- In May 2000, the Governor of Iowa created the Iowa Food Policy Council (IFPC)<sup>9</sup> by Executive Order. This 21-member council is appointed by the Governor and consists of 8 ex-officio members and 13 special advisors from both the public and private sectors. The charge of the body is "...to create a comprehensive food policy for the State." The expenses for the meetings and facilitation are covered by The Agricultural Law Center at Drake University.
- The City of Toronto Food Policy Council (TFPC)<sup>10</sup>, founded in 1991, operates as a sub-committee of the Toronto Board of Health. The TFPC's purpose is to "develop policies and programs promoting food security" and its goal is a food system that fosters equitable food access, nutrition, community development and environmental health. Members include city council members and non-profit agency volunteers. Although the TFPC has a modest staff and budget, it has an established track record of impressive interaction with decision-makers on issues of economic development, agriculture, health advocacy, community gardens and education. Another compelling aspect of this council is the research and technical expertise provided by Ryerson University's Centre on Studies on Food Security in support of local food policy.

### **Recommendations to Create a Food Secure Hawai`i.**

Food insecurity affects 1 in every 5 residents and 1 in every 4 children in Hawai`i.<sup>1</sup> Food insecurity is associated with in poor health, extreme stress, decreased work output and school performance, and may be related to violence or crime. As listed in the following table (Table 5) there are many reasons why food security is important to Hawai`i, yet there are few easy solutions.

As depicted in Figure 1 (see Executive Summary p. ii), food insecurity is a complex, multi-dimensional public health problem interrelated with the economy, the food system, education, health access and programs, the nutrition safety net, and government policies. Less skilled workers are particularly vulnerable due to our high cost of living coupled with insufficient living-wage job opportunities. While over \$250 million in federal dollars is spent annually in Hawai`i to support a nutrition safety net, many needy households do not meet income criteria and in turn must rely on an overburdened, under-funded emergency food assistance system. However, reliance on the emergency food system (food banks, pantries and soup kitchens) merely perpetuates food insecurity. Hawai`i has no State, county or local food policy council to coordinate or oversee food security activities. Without State policies, objectives, or goals to guide State actions, no organization can effectively coordinate assistance programs, conduct ongoing monitoring, or spearhead integrated planning programs. With an adequate State match (funds, personnel), on an on-going basis, the State could leverage available federal dollars for food security coordination, food stamp outreach and education, and farmers markets initiatives, which can then be used to enhance food security and put food dollars into the pockets of the needy, local farmers and food retailers thereby spurring our economy from the ground up.

**Table 5.**  
**Key Reasons Why Food Security is Important to Hawai`i**

- Improves Health - Adequate nourishment is fundamental to health, well being, school performance and work output.
- Decreases Medical Costs - Assuring adequate food availability to needy populations can minimize costs associated with medical insurance.
- Improves Economy - Influx of federal dollars helps the economy, particularly during a down cycle; current system of high degree of dependence on charitable providers is not cost-effective or efficient.
- Legal and Ethical Implications - Responsibilities to Hawai`i's people (constitutional, etc.). The existence of hunger and food insecurity amidst plenty questions how our society cares for its less well-off citizens.
- Improves Environment – Enhanced local food production will likely require key land and water policies that can promote environmental and natural resource protection.
- Enhances Homeland security – The Hawaiian islands, due to their relative isolation, are particularly vulnerable in times of war, national disasters, and as periodically demonstrated in times of supply disruptions (i.e. dock strikes).

The U.S. Government has set an objective of reducing the rate of food insecurity of the Nation's households to half of its 1995 level by 2010 (Healthy People 2010: Objective 19-8). Hawai`i now has an opportunity to set a similar goal. National experts believe that to achieve targeted improvements in national household food security rates by 2010 will require:

- Renewed economic growth—especially improved employment and income opportunities for less skilled workers.
- Improved employment opportunities and increased income of single mothers with children.
- Maintenance of a strong nutrition safety net.

The problem of food insecurity in Hawai`i is multi-faceted and complex. And therefore, must be addressed across many levels, both in the public and private sectors, not just by more food or short-term funding. As listed in Appendix 7, Task Force members discussed numerous ideas aimed at improving food assistance programs and collaboration. Further, they noted that the fundamental causes of food insecurity are economic and political. While economic solutions transcend the scope and expertise of this task force; significant progress can be made with sufficient political will and appropriate state policy.

The Task Force, therefore, recommends three interrelated actions as paramount to providing the necessary policy and programmatic framework to enhance household and community food security in Hawai`i, as follows:

1. Create State food policy and objectives that outline the State's desire and commitment to enhance the food security of Hawai`i's people - so that "no one in our `ohana goes hungry," to assure the continued adequacy of the nutrition safety net, and to be in line with the national Health People 2010 objective.
2. Create a Food Security Council (FSC) attached to the State Office of Planning. The FSC membership would consist of key food security stakeholders and food assistance programs. The FSC would be charged with developing an integrated food security plan, facilitating its implementation, and assisting both public and private efforts to improve food security in Hawai`i.
3. Provide \$192,000 a year to fund FSC operations, to include: a FSC coordinator, continued monitoring through the yearly DOH Hawai`i Health Survey, and key "matching funds" that can then be used as leverage to secure additional federal funds for food stamp outreach, nutrition education, promotion of farmers market initiatives, agricultural development, food security monitoring and evaluation, and other projects that serve to improve local food security.

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