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Adequate Food a Problem in 1 in 9 Iowa Households

IOWA CITY, Iowa (Nov. 16, 2010) — One in nine Iowa households had trouble at some point putting food on the table in 2007-09, according to a new report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

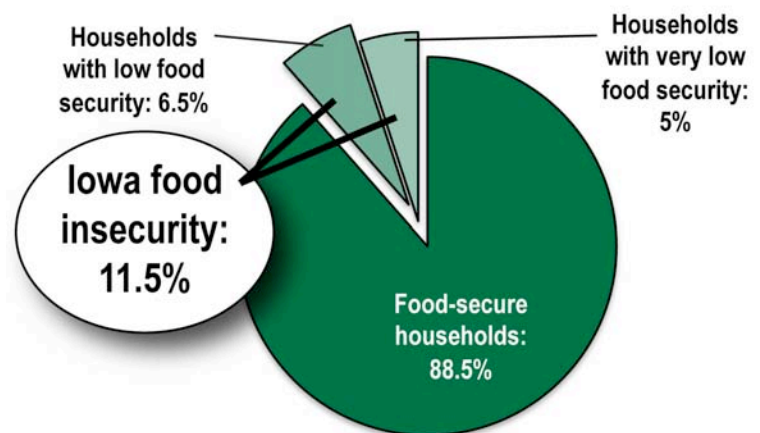
The new report indicates 11.5 percent of Iowa households, on average, experienced “food insecurity” during that three-year period, which was dominated by the recent recession. The estimate is essentially unchanged from the previous three-year average of 11.4 percent, for 2004-06 — but significantly higher when compared to estimates in the previous decade.

“As we approach Thanksgiving, we can recognize that as high as food insecurity has been in our state, Iowa households have remained better off than many of their Midwestern neighbors,” said Andrew Cannon, a research associate for the nonpartisan Iowa Policy Project, part of the Iowa Fiscal Partnership.

The report, “Household Food Security in the United States, 2009,” found 5 percent of Iowa households on average in 2007-09 to have “very low” food security, a jump from 3.9 percent in 2004-06. A “**food insecure**” household has difficulty at some time during a year providing adequate food for its members due to a lack of resources. “**Very low**” food security includes reduction of food intake and disruption of eating patterns.

“If children and adults don’t eat they miss out on basic nutrition; the human body cannot thrive. When we live in the heart of farm country and have critical food assistance support available, the idea of 5 percent of the households in our state facing this challenge of severe food insecurity is tragic and unacceptable,” Cannon said.

USDA found Midwestern states in 2007-09 to have food insecurity rates ranging from 10.5 percent in Minnesota to 15 percent in Missouri, but with all of Iowa’s neighboring states seeing significant increases from 2004-06.



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While Iowa remained statistically unchanged between the two comparison periods, nearby states during the recession years saw increases ranging from 1.7 percentage points for South Dakota and Kansas, to 2.7 points for Missouri and Nebraska.

The report uses three-year averages of Census data to present the state-by-state food insecurity estimates. Nationally, in 2009, food insecurity was estimated at 14.5 percent, but 13.5 percent when findings for 2007, 2008 and 2009 were averaged.

The Iowa Fiscal Partnership is a joint budget and tax policy initiative of IPP in Iowa City and another nonpartisan organization, the Child & Family Policy Center in Des Moines. IFP reports are at www.iowafiscal.org.

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