Problem

The number of people experiencing food insecurity – lacking access to enough food to provide the minimum number of calories to maintain health in adults or to provide healthy growth and development in children.

Summary:

For my project, I have chosen to work for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. In 1918, the Smith-Lever Act provided funds for the USDA and state land grant colleges to increase farm productivity and improve rural lives through education thereby creating the Cooperative Extension Service. Formerly the Cooperative State Research and Education Extension Service, the organization was renamed in 2008 by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act to reflect changes in the organizations goals. Specifically, I will work in the area of Community Food Security, a subsection of Food, Nutrition, and Health focus on Hunger and Food Security. (http://www.csrees.usda.gov/ProgViewOverview.cfm?prnum=14429)

Food insecurity is the lack of access and inability to obtain enough nutritious food to consume the minimum number of calories needed to maintain health in adults or to provide for growth and development in children (Nord, Andrews, & Carlson, 2009). People experiencing food insecurity are either experiencing hunger or are at risk of experiencing hunger.

Food insecurity in the United States is a growing issue. According to the most recent data from the USDA, 14.6% of U.S households were food insecure in 2008. As shown in the following chart, the prevalence of food insecurity is greater for households with children. From 2007 to 2008, the percentage of US households experiencing food insecurity increased by 25%.

The increase in food insecurity between 2007 and 2008 was the largest increase in the number of food insecure households on record since 1995 (Andrews & Nord, 2009). This means that from 2007 to 2008, 4 million additional people, 17.1 million in 2008 compared to 13 million in 2007, were unable to get the minimal nutrition for health and growth.

The rise in food insecure households is linked to: 1) global prices of foods, a multifaceted problem with connections to fuel oil prices, diversion of crops for biofuel production, market investment and speculation moved from financial institutions to raw foods (Singh, 2009); and 2) household income below 185 percent of the national poverty line (Nord, Andrews, & Carlson, 2009); and 3) access to nutritious food due to

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lack of transportation and/or lack of availability of healthy nutritious food options in lower-income communities (Pinstrup-Andersen & Herforth, 2008).

Food insecurity influences child development, prenatal development, and adult health. Further, the lack of appropriate minimal nutrition leads to chronic illness, anxiety and depression, and behavior problems among multiple other negative health effects (Wilensky & Satcher, 2009). Low-income households are particularly vulnerable to experiencing long-term effects of food insecurity (Morton, et al., 2008). If the U.S. is to continue to cut health-care costs, compete in a global economy, and produce active, educated citizens; at a minimum all citizens should receive adequate nutrition.

US Food Insecure Households, 1999 to 2008

References


