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# Food Sovereignty in the Mississippi Delta

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Delta in Global Context



## **Hunger in the Land of Plenty**



**Discarded food from Grocery Stores and Restaurants and food left in the field to rot could feed 49 million a year**



# Food Insecurity

- USDA defines food insecurity as “limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.”
  - People in poverty are 3.5 times as likely to be food insecure
  - From 1995-1998 10.5 million households, 36 million people lived food insecure
  - 40% children

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/FoodSecurity/community/>

# Food Insecurity in the South

**Table 2**  
Food Insecurity and Hunger, 1995-1998

Percent of All Households								
	1995		1996		1997		1998	
<i>Census Region</i>	<i>Insecure</i>	<i>Insecure w/ Hunger</i>	<i>Insecure</i>	<i>Insecure w/ Hunger</i>	<i>Insecure</i>	<i>Insecure w/ Hunger</i>	<i>Insecure</i>	<i>Insecure w/ Hunger</i>
Northwest	8.7	3.3	7.7	3	7.8	2.9	9.1	3.2
Midwest	9.3	3.5	8.7	3.3	7.5	2.9	7.7	2.6
South	11.0	4.1	11.8	4.5	9.4	3.1	11.1	4.0
West	11.7	4.7	12.2	4.9	9.5	3.2	12.2	4.2
US	10.3	3.9	10.4	4.1	8.7	3.1	10.2	3.6

Source: Household Food Security in the United States, 1995-1998 (Advance Report).

**Table 3**  
Food Insecurity and Hunger in Southern Rural Development Center States, Average 1996-98

Percent of All Households					
	<i>Insecure</i>	<i>Margin of Error</i>		<i>w/ Hunger</i>	<i>Margin of Error</i>
Virginia	8.3	0.91	North Carolina	2.6	0.43
Kentucky	8.4	0.91	Virginia	2.9	0.75
North Carolina	8.8	1.07	Alabama	3.2	0.71
Georgia	9.7	1.65	Georgia	3.2	0.86
South Carolina	10.2	1.59	Kentucky	3.2	0.61
Tennessee	10.9	1.32	South Carolina	3.4	0.89
Alabama	11.3	1.58	Florida	4.2	0.52
Florida	11.5	0.87	Mississippi	4.2	0.91
Oklahoma	11.9	1.47	Oklahoma	4.2	0.79
Arkansas	12.6	1.34	Tennessee	4.3	1.08
Louisiana	12.8	1.88	Louisiana	4.4	1.13
Texas	12.9	0.81	Arkansas	4.6	0.58
Mississippi	14.0	1.82	Texas	5.0	0.59
US	9.7	0.18	US	3.5	0.14

Source: Nord., et al. 1999.

# Insufficient Indicators

- However, in one USDA food security assessment it was noted that food insufficiency, like obesity, affects both the poor and the non poor. The paper points out that 40% of the households that reported food insufficiency were above the poverty thresholds. It further emphasizes that in order to assess the likelihood of food insufficiency [\[1\]](#) and malnutrition we need to look at other socio-economic indicators than income alone.
- Indicators such as race-ethnicity, region, education, household structure, and age. It is important to note that food stamp programs will continue to miss many needy recipients using governmental guidelines (Rose et. al, 1998).

Rose, D., Gunderson, C., & V. Oliveira. 1998. Socio-Economic Determinant of Food Insecurity in the United States: Evidence from the SIPP and CSFII Datasets. Food and Rural Economics Division, Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Technical Bulletin No. 1869.

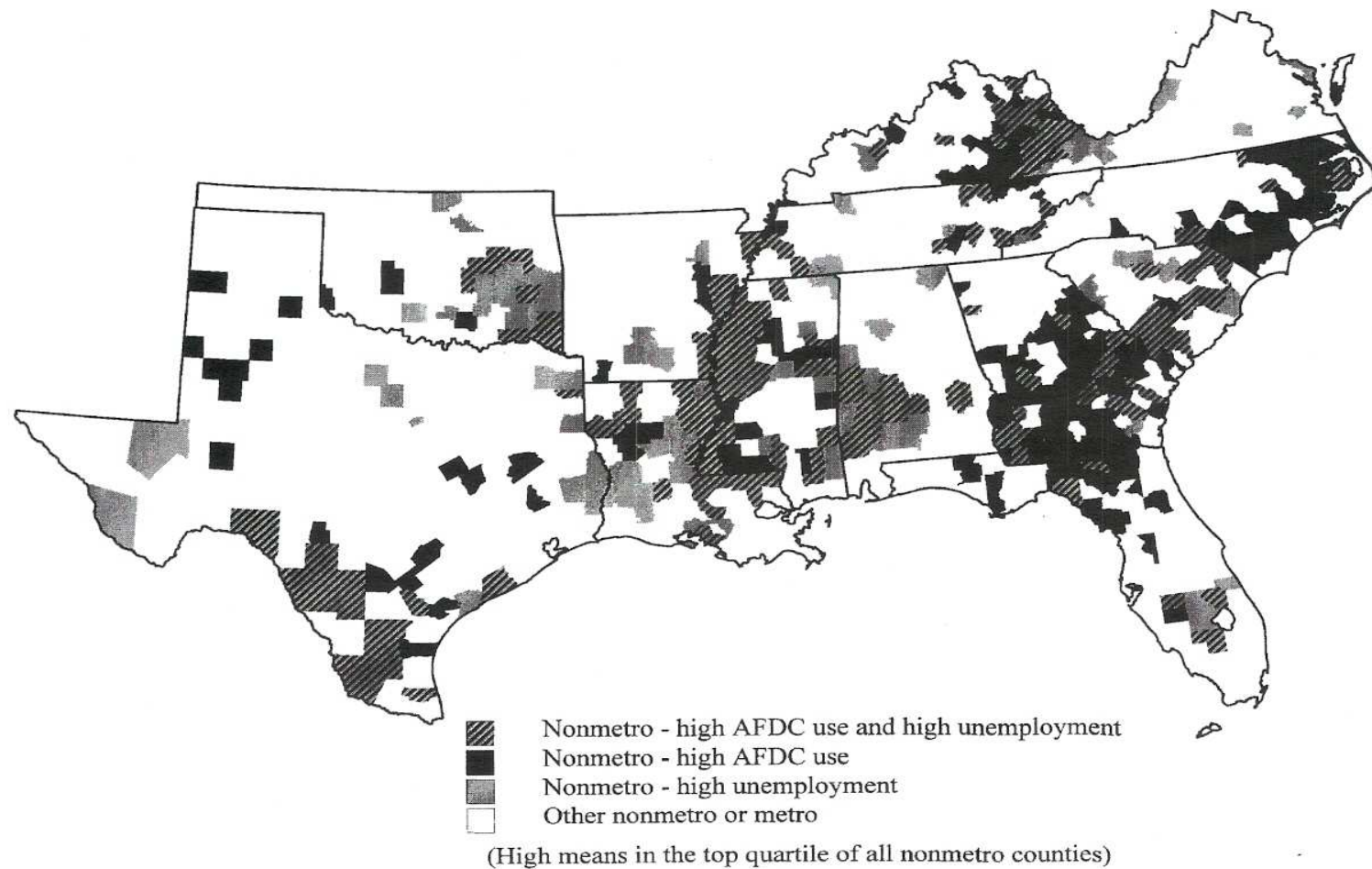
[\[1\]](#) Food insufficiency and food insecurity as measured in this paper was referred to as those households reporting sometimes or often do not get enough to eat.



# Employment as an insufficient indicator

**Figure 2**

Overlap of High AFDC Dependence and High Unemployment  
in Southern Rural Development Region Nonmetro Counties, 1994.



# From Welfare Reform to Food Insecure

- Former welfare recipients struggle with food insecure more greatly than those on welfare.
  - “According to Duffy et al., while 60% of food insecure households are poor, only 10 percent of poor households are food insecure.”

Duffy, P., J Molnar, L. Claxton, G. Grayson, and C. Bailey. “Private Food Assistance in East Alabama: Issues of Access and Need,” Final report submitted to the Southern Rural Development Center, 1999.



# Effects of Welfare Reform on Food Security

- “Decreases in transfer payments to poor families will have significant effects on food production, consumption, and nutrition. Lower transfer payments will lead to reduced expenditures on food, changes in the kinds of food consumed, and reduced expenditures on other goods by low-income households.”

Kuhn, B., M. LeBlanc, and C. Gundersen. “The Food Stamp Program, Welfare Reform, and the Aggregate Economy,” *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 79(5):1595-99, 1997.

# Food Sovereignty

- Global Conferences through the past decade have given rise to a Social Food Movement.
- Food Sovereignty is
  - “the right of people to ***define their own food and agriculture***; to ***protect and regulate domestic agricultural*** production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives; to determine the extent to which they want to be self reliant; ***to restrict the dumping of products*** in their markets; and to provide local fisheries-based communities the priority in managing the use of and the rights to aquatic resources. Food Sovereignty does not negate trade, but rather it ***promotes the formulations of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of people*** to food and to safe, healthy and ecologically sustainable production”  
Peoples Food Sovereignty Network (2002)

# USDA Food Security

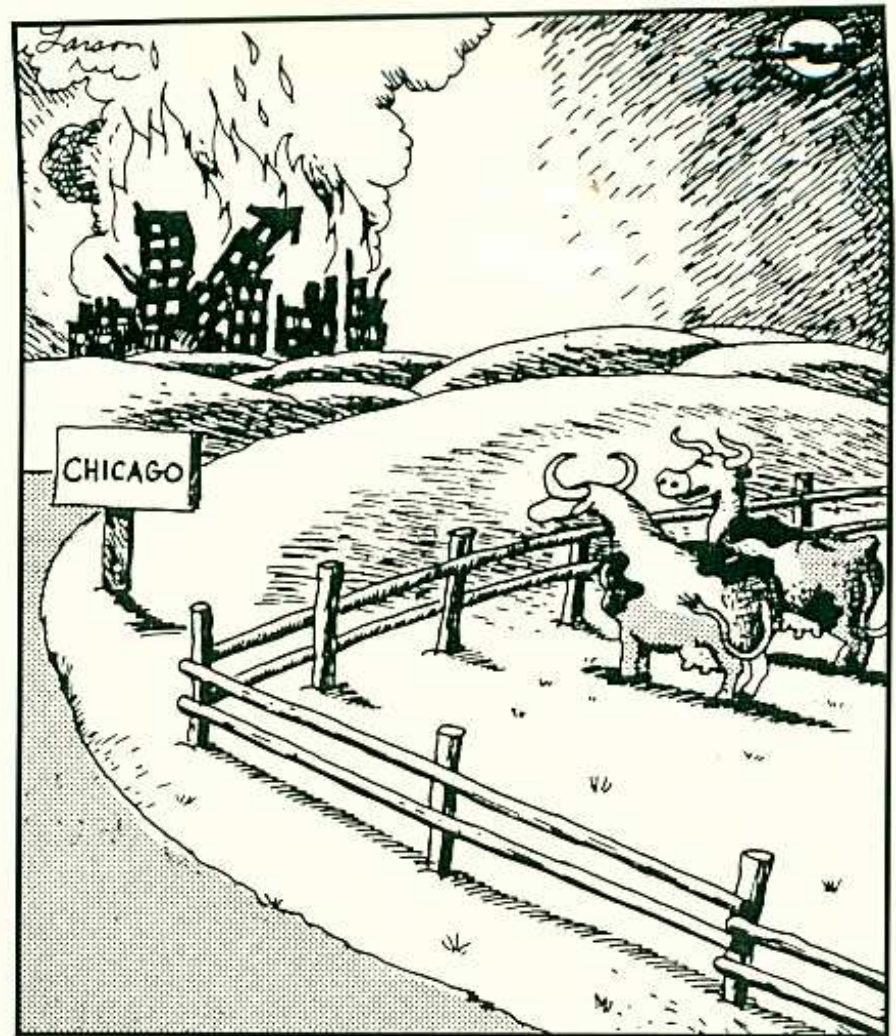
- In the broadest terms, community food security can be described as a ***prevention-oriented concept*** that supports the development and enhancement of ***sustainable, community-based strategies*** to improve ***access of low-income households to healthful nutritious food supplies***, to ***increase the self-reliance of communities*** in providing for their own food needs, and to promote ***comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues***.

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/FoodSecurity/community/>



# Land Tenure/Ownership

- Micro Credit loan system for Beginner Farmers
- Implement sustainable pasture management practices.
- Develop youth projects that keep youth on family farms
- Organize training program for leadership development



**"It seems that agent 6373 has accomplished her mission"**

# Training

- Demonstration Farms/ Training Centers
- Farm Beginning Programs.
- Farmer-Farmer
- Develop training programs around project partner intermediaries



“Yes...I believe there’s a question in the back.”



# Markets

- Alternative Markets (fruits, vegetables, nuts, honey, meats, eggs, flowers, specialty crops, Christmas trees, plants, herbs, and spices)
- Direct Marketing/ Farmers Markets/ Farm to School/ Cooperatives
- Value added processing for increased farmer profit (cane syrup, candies, cider, canned fruits and vegetables, preserves and firewood)





# Heifer International Delta Initiatives

- **Initiate a Direct Marketing Focus Group with a comprehensive plan, including a series of seminars that will outline programmatic strategies for creating and expanding vegetable and animal marketing in the Delta.**
- **Work and collaborate with NGO's and federal, state and local agencies to set up training sites where farmers are taught to grow alternative agricultural crops and small animals as a means to boost their economical and nutritional needs.**

# Initiatives cont...

- Create more farmer-to-farmer demonstration visits and project-to-project visits. To do this farmers will require assistance in creating and setting up demonstration farms.
- Establish a micro-credit loan system for small-scale farmers to get into family farming.

# Initiatives cont...

- Develop a training program for managers of farmers' markets and marketing information programs for small farmers, which will be available electronically through distance-learning facilities.
- Implement long-range initiatives for creating and expanding the marketing of vegetables to schools and governmental agencies as a means of having a reliable market for small-scale farmers.



# **Initiatives cont...**

- **Develop four regional markets for farmers to sell their products directly to consumers.**
- **Initiate and develop community gardens throughout the Delta region with emphasis on nutritious food preservation and marketing of surplus.**