



The Hearth Fire Series #80

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WHAT DOES FOOD SECURITY LOOK LIKE?

Developed and Written by:

Pamela McIntrye-Albaro, Program Coordinator

Kristin Walker, Public Policy Coordinator
National FCL Certified Trainer

What Does Food Security Look Like?

At some point in your daily life, you ask yourself the question “what am I going to eat?” in all its various forms:

- What am I going to eat for breakfast?
- What am I going to eat for lunch?
- What am I going to eat for dinner?
- What am I going to fix for lunch/dinner?

Then, you take a trip into your kitchen and open the cabinets or pantry and decide what to prepare for your meal.

Can you get enough *nutritious* food to feed every member of your family all the time? Without realizing it you are thinking about food security.

What is food security?

Do you know what food security is, how to measure your family’s ability to obtain food, or what a “food desert” is? Food security and its opposite food insecurity are quickly becoming issues facing the world today. They have been the subject of studies, world summits, and world economic assistance. Food security affects people of all ages and walks of life in every aspect of their daily lives including health and well-being.

“Food security is all people, at all times, having access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet dietary needs and food preferences for a healthy and active lifestyle “(World Food Summit, 1996). That means you and every member of your family not only has food to eat, but it is also healthy, and culturally appropriate. Food security and being active helps you to have a better outlook, feel better and to decrease the chances of certain health problems.

The flip side of food security is called food insecurity and is defined by the USDA/ERS as a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food.

Some facts and Figures

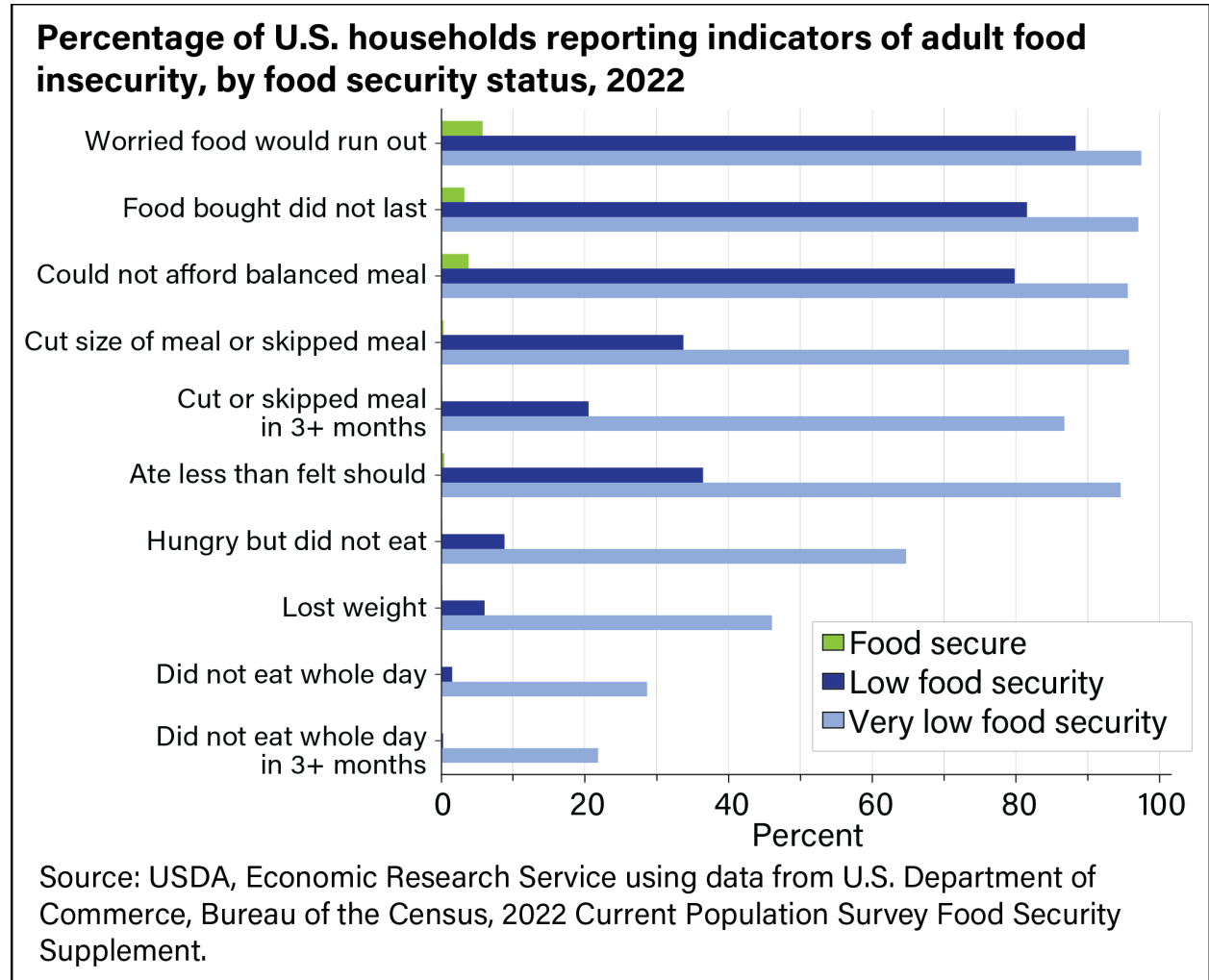
State of Food security and nutrition in the world

2022 – 9.2%

2019—7.9%

Between 691 and 783 million families worldwide are hungry. (FAO, 2023)

The USDA in 2022 published this chart with the numbers for food insecurity in the United States:



(published 2022USDA website)

Statistically low-income communities have lower levels of food security. These areas tend to be food deserts as well, making it harder for residents to access the nutritious foods required. Other statistics show that women tend to be slightly less food secure than men. Yet women are statistically more responsible for the nutritional needs of their family. (FAO 2021)

The four aspects or pillars of food security:

There are four pillars of food security that must be recognized and addressed simultaneously. The dimensions or pillars are: availability, access, utilization, and stability. They depend one upon the other. For a population to be food secure these need to be addressed and solved.

Availability ~

Is food available to you? Through markets, stores or growing your own? Availability is more the production side of your food. Growing enough food for the population is one part of this pillar, but it is also having the food on the shelves. Basically, does food exist? The way to address this issue is local food sources, the farther away the food is from you, the lower the availability.

Access ~

Can you access these markets, store or shops? Is there available transportation (either on your own or via public transport)? Can you afford to get to the market or store? When you get to the market or store, can you afford to buy the food? Having an adequate supply of food doesn't mean that you can purchase it?

A food desert occurs when low levels of access to retail outlets selling healthy and affordable foods exists. The distances can vary, but the most common are residents living within 1 mile in a city or urban area and 10 miles for people living in a rural or country setting. One defining factor is a lack of fresh produce.

Utilization ~

When you bring your food home do you know how to prepare it? Do you need cooking classes or recipes? Do you know how to prepare nutritious food for you and your loved ones? Do you know the guidelines for a healthy diet? Do you have the knowledge to provide a healthy diet? Are you getting enough food to help fuel an active lifestyle. What about diverse diet needs? Can you prepare food that is in line with your dietary or cultural needs?

Stability ~

Are your resources consistently and reliably available to you all the time? That means having all the other 3 pillars all of the time. Is the available food accessible to you and you have learned how to prepare it so that your healthy and active lifestyle can be maintained? If there is a downturn in your economic status (you lose your job or health reasons) you can maintain your level of food. Do you have food in your pantry?

What can you do to be food secure?

Let's look at the four previous pillars or dimensions of food security and see if we can come up with some solutions you as an individual can take to make you and your family more food secure. Since the dimensions need to be approached simultaneously, we will look at the

solutions first. By growing your own food (even in a small space) you potentially have made food available and accessible to you, while learning to cook and store your produce, you have the potential to utilize and stabilize your food supply.

Availability

Growing your own food can be challenging, but it is an activity that can involve the whole family. You don't need a large amount of space, and in some instances, there could be access to a community garden (check your local community for availability). If you are interested, container gardening can be a way for apartment dwellers or urban residents to grow food. There are a variety of containers ranging from plastic buckets to grow bags (how to make a grow bag is [handout #2](#)) that can be obtained for low costs.

Using drought and disease-free seeds can be a way to get started in growing vegetables. There are resources and literature available on choosing the right type of plants and gardening for your local area.

Access

With various brands of Dollar stores coming into communities at increasing rates and beginning to carry both frozen and packaged foods, the access to nutritious and varied foods has grown.

Growing your own produce could potentially increase your access to nutritious and varied foods.

Utilization

By learning to preserve your foods, you can utilize the different seasonal sales and fresh grown produce available at markets and stores as well as any potential vegetables you might grow. Insure you know how to prepare your food fits into your family's lifestyle and dietary needs. By accessing new recipes, you can have any number of meals to prepare for your family (vegetable salad recipe is [handout #2](#))

Freezing, dehydration and canning are just a few methods of food preservation. While canning uses specialized equipment, both dehydrating and freezing can be achieved relatively inexpensively. Freezing your leftovers for later use can also reduce food waste.

Stability

Stocking your cabinets or pantry can help you have a stable food supply. It doesn't have to be large quantities of food, but having extra items on your shelves will help you get through the "lean" times.

You can utilize the 1+2 method of buying to help create a stable pantry. This is buying one for use now plus two (if funds allow) to put away for future use. This is great if you find an item you need on sale.

LEADER GUIDE

What does Food Security Look Like?

AGENDA:

- 2 minutes Welcome and Introduction of speakers and their board position
- 8 minutes Bonding: Distribute blank 3x5 cards and pencils if needed.
Ask each participant to write their answer to the question: What does food security mean to me?
Give participants 2 minutes to write down the answer and then take 6 minutes for group sharing.
- 30 minutes Introduction to the lesson:

Some Facts and Figures

Give each person Handout #1, or pass one copy around, or have on a power point (depends, in part, how many in your audience which you choose)

The four aspects or pillars of food security

What can you do to be food secure?
- How to make inexpensive grow bags
 - Miss Rena's Recipe for Vegetable Salad
 - Homegrown Micro Green House
 - Pantry Challenge
- 17 minutes Activity (option 1) - Homegrown Micro Green House
Activity (option 2) - Pantry Challenge
Tip: you may use one or both activities – depending on presentation time
- 3 minutes Closing – Distribute Handout #2 and Handout #3

How to make inexpensive grow bags (makes approximately 3-4 bags)

You can scale this project up or down depending on the size of the fabric roll & desired bag size.

1 Roll of weed barrier fabric 18 inches tall x 82 feet long (or approximately).

For 1 bag cut a circle piece of fabric 18 inches in diameter (bag bottom) and 1 strip of fabric 57 inches in length by the height of the roll (bag side). Your fabric length will be determined by the size of your bag bottom's circle diameter (diameter x 3.14).

You will sew the fabric strip short ends together to make a tube then sew the long side circle to your bag bottom circle with 1/2-inch seam allowance.

Miss Rena's Recipe for Vegetable Salad

16 oz can of Shoe peg corn
16 oz can of small lima beans
16 oz can of black-eyed peas
4 oz jar of chopped pimentos
1 cup chopped celery
1 cup chopped green pepper
1 bunch chopped green onions
1 ¼ cup sugar
1 teaspoon of salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
3/4 cup oil
3/4 cup vinegar

Drain and combine all vegetables.

Combine all seasoning and liquids, add to vegetables and mix well.

*Recipe provided with the permission of Andrea Z. (a National FCE member)

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Activity (option 1) - Homegrown Micro Green House

Items needed: recycled clean plastic takeout containers
potting soil, packet micro green seeds

Steps:

- 1) In your clean takeout containers place approximately 1-2 cups potting soil (depending on container size).
- 2) Put 1/3 - 1/2 packet microgreen seeds into container.
- 3) When you take your greenhouse home place about 1/4 cup water in your green house.
- 4) Wait - soon you should see little sprouts.

Micro greens can be eaten by themselves, on salads, and on sandwiches.

Activity (option 2) - Pantry Challenge

- 1) Before presenting, create twenty to thirty (20-30) 3” x 5” cards, each containing one food item that can be found in someone’s pantry.
Example: green beans canned, ground beef, cheddar cheese, milk
- 2) Divide group into 4 or 5 teams. Distribute an equal number of cards to each team (if you have 4 teams then 5 ingredients each if you have 20 cards or 7 ingredients each if you have 30 cards). Base the number of cards on the number of attendees you have in your group and make it equal.
- 3) Give each team a paper with the “recipe generator website” address:
Myfridgefood.com
***Familiarize yourself with the website beforehand,
so, you understand how they work.
***There are any number of websites available as recipe
generators, however they are not all created equal, and
levels of difficulty may limit their use.
***The website is mobile friendly, and the activity can be
done on a smartphone.
- 4) Each team will choose someone to record their findings and then use the website to add the ingredients on the cards, enter them into the website and see what recipes are generated.
- 5) Some things to note: the site will give recipes that have “extra” ingredients not found on the team cards, so expect that to happen. The main idea is that it will generate ideas to cook with what is on hand. Also, the site will assume the visitor will have certain ingredients on hand (salt and pepper for example) so these may be added as a matter of course.
- 6) Give the team’s 5-7 minutes for the exercise. Each team will report on their recipes, the ‘Recorder’ for each group should start by giving the list of ingredients they were given and the website’s recommendations. Ask them what they thought about the recipes and just how easy or difficult it would be to prepare.

Resources

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. (n.d.). *Definitions of food security*. Retrieved March 10, 2022, from <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/definitions-of-food-security/>

<https://www.fao.org/3/cc0639en/online/sofi-2022/food-security-nutrition-indicators.html>

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/food-security-update/what-is-food-security>

<https://www.dollargeneral.com/about-us/corporate-social-responsibility.html>

<https://funcheaporfree.com/how-i-grocery-shop-and-stock-up-on-a-budget-my-best-grocery-shopping-tips/>

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National Association for Family and Community Education

73 Cavalier Blvd., Suite 106

Florence, KY 41042-5178

Phone: (859) 525-6401

Fax: (859) 525-6496

Email: nafcehq@fuse.net