

Food Insecurity

CFMS National Day of Action 2023

November 6, 2023



OVERVIEW

Over 1 in 6 Canadians currently struggle with food insecurity, which is defined as inadequate or insecure access to food. Socioeconomic factors such as low income, unemployment, inadequate social assistance, and high housing costs increase the risk of food insecurity. Consequently, Indigenous peoples and racialized communities are disproportionately impacted by food insecurity, due to systemic barriers and discrimination. Some of the downstream impacts of food insecurity include higher rates of chronic physical and mental health conditions, which not only prevent people from fully participating in their communities but also lead to an increased burden on the healthcare system.

The only policy interventions that have been shown to be effective in mitigating the risk of food insecurity are those that have improved the financial circumstances of households, such as federal and provincial child benefits and social assistance, or when households transition to more adequate and stable income support programs, like public pensions. Between 2007-2012, the Newfoundland Poverty Reduction Strategy successfully reduced the prevalence of food insecurity by 50% by increasing minimum wage and social assistance rates, in addition to other reforms.

Unfortunately, most policies addressing food insecurity in Canada have largely been focused on supporting food charity, such as the Emergency Food Security Fund. This approach fails to address the underlying cause of food insecurity. While food charity is undoubtedly appreciated by those who receive it, there is a lack of evidence of its long-term efficacy. Hence, federal and provincial governments should consider leveraging new and existing income support policies instead to reduce household food insecurity.

OUR ASKS

Addressing food insecurity requires a multi-sectoral approach that involves an effective collaboration between government bodies and community organizations. The focus of new and current policies must shift from food charity to more upstream causes of food insecurity.

The CFMS and its stakeholders call upon the Canadian federal government to:

- 1** Make food insecurity an explicit policy target, with concrete goals for reduction, instead of aiming to address it as a secondary goal of other policies, such as initiatives that support the charitable food sector, etc.
- 2** Work with Indigenous Peoples and Northerners to co-create a strategy to address the extreme vulnerability to food insecurity in the North.
- 3** Increase the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) for low-income families with children by redistributing the Benefit to provide more funds to the lowest income households or households with higher costs of living.
- 4** Establish an adequate and stable income floor for working-age adults and their families through a basic income program.

