

## OVERVIEW

The 2020 pandemic has revealed incredible food security gaps for the most vulnerable populations in northern Baja. From March to August 2020, the ICF team increased access to food and collected data to better understand the state of food insecurity in Tijuana, Mexicali, Ensenada and the northern Baja California region. A survey, 1:1 interviews, and several convenings provided information from nearly 80 civil society organizations.

## WHAT IS FOOD SECURITY?

“All people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life.” – United Nations, FAO

## STATE OF BAJA CALIFORNIA

The northern half of the Baja California Peninsula is the State of Baja California, with an estimated population of 3.65 million and over 75% living in Tijuana, Mexicali, and Ensenada. Most jobs depend on tourism, maquiladoras, food processing, and agriculture. These border communities are incredibly dynamic, making it difficult to pinpoint the exact number of families in need. Compounding factors from COVID 19 such as loss of wages, lost childcare, and evictions have severely impacted an already heavily-impacted region.



## FOOD INSECURITY IN BAJA CALIFORNIA AND COVID 19

- A 2018 study conducted by Centro de Estudios de las Finanzas Publicas in Baja California, reports **prior to COVID 19, more than 17% of individuals from Ensenada lacked access to food supplies; meanwhile, in Tijuana and Mexicali around 15% did not have food security**<sup>1</sup>. 75% of ICF’s grantees in Tijuana identified food security as an issue before COVID-19.
- Over 35% of individuals lost their job due to the COVID 19 regulations; most of them began to rely on “despensas” or food boxes provided by their communities, local nonprofits, churches, and food banks.
- Based on a 2020 survey ICF implemented to nonprofits, associations, and community shelters, **over 95% of respondents stipulated that their major concern right now is food security and food access for their community.**
- The Tijuana Food Bank is experiencing a 30-50% increase in clients since March. Access to fresh and diet appropriate food (for existing health conditions like diabetes) continues to be a challenge.
- Respondents are providing between 1-3 meals/day to community members. 25% are providing 3 meals/day to between 25-100 people/day. But almost 20% are serving meals to over 500 people/day.
- 75% of respondents are cobbling options together from various sources – there is no consistent food pipeline

<sup>1</sup> Centro de Estudios de las Finanzas Publicas, “Medicion de la Pobreza Multidimensional y Gasto en Ramo 33 <https://www.cefp.gob.mx/publicaciones/presentaciones/2018/pbr/BajaCalifornia.pdf>

## ICF's NORTHERN BAJA FOOD SECURITY INITIATIVES

The International Community Foundation is committed to increasing food security for the most vulnerable in Northern Baja and the entire Baja Peninsula. In the next 2-3 years, the ICF team will work on the following:

### IMMEDIATE FOOD RELIEF

- Rapid response grants to nonprofits working to provide immediate food relief, dispensas, and food cards.
- Connect the three major food banks in Northern Baja to other nonprofits, community shelters and kitchens for relationship building and collaborations that increase access to food.
- Connect with the local and state government to secure despensas for the most vulnerable individuals and communities that do not have food access.

### SECURING LONGER-TERM ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD

- Improve food rescue logistics and connections to feeding kitchens/food banks throughout the peninsula.
- Improve financial gains for small producers in the export markets throughout the Baja California peninsula and work with large producers throughout the peninsula to redistribute and rescue food from the fields.

Support Fresh Food for Schools – a state proposal funding kitchen communities to bring food plates to children with low food access.

### NONPROFIT INNOVATION AND PERFORMANCE

- Help nonprofits work more collaboratively and increase food security awareness amongst regional leaders.
- Amplify our networks by connecting members to resources that can pilot, expand, and replicate successful initiatives.
- Nutrition and wellness training opportunities to increase community interest/commitment through education, practice, dynamic social events.



Donations can be made to the Northern Baja California Food Security Fund

<http://bit.ly/FoodSecurityBorder>

By Check: Payable to "International Community Foundation"  
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