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Excerpts and Summary of the 52th Community Hunger and Nutrition Forum

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**52nd Hunger and Nutrition Forum
Wednesday, February 9, 2005**

Compiled by Carey Berend and Edie Jessup

Edie Jessup, Fresno Metro Ministry: I want to welcome you to the 52nd Hunger and Nutrition Forum. Today's agenda is very exciting. We have breaking news on hunger and food insecurity here in the Fresno area. I want to call your attention to the packet that is in front of you. At the bottom of the agenda are some dates to save and to let you know that the Growing Health and Wealth Food Stamp Outreach Participation Report by the U.S. Congressional Hunger Fellows is available on our website www.fresnometroministry.org. We also have in the upcoming months some extraordinary events for you to participate in besides our regular work with the forum and the task groups. In March we have an advocacy training with Nancy Amidei. She will be working with the New Leaders for Better Health and also all of you will be preparing to talk to our legislators on May 10, at Hunger Action Day in Sacramento. In April there will be a Community Garden Summit. We have a large Community Garden Coalition that is working very hard to make Fresno beautiful and produce food for people who are hungry. This will be in conjunction with the American Community Gardening Association. In May, for the fourth year, we will go to Sacramento for Hunger Action Day. Notice on your tables information from the California Hunger Action Coalition. I am pleased to be co-chair this year of the CHAC statewide organization. Also on your tables are a few applications for nominations for Hunger Fighter Awards. We have had two Hunger Fighter Awards from Fresno in the last years. Sequoia Middle School has gotten an award and also Gary Joseph from EOC. EOC is our caterer today and Gary provides food for Head Start, Senior Nutrition, Summer Lunch, and a wide variety of other programs and has expanded access to food here in Fresno. I want to call your attention to the activity of the Fresno Unified School District Healthy School Environment Policy Committee. We are very close to having a comprehensive policy on physical activity and

nutrition for Fresno Unified. We have a number of meetings this month and we hope that we will have a very final draft policy to begin to take forward to the school board. Then I would like to introduce Souk Phonthaphone who is an intern with Fresno Metro Ministry, and she will present the rest of the packet. Thank you.

Souk Phonthaphone, Fresno Metro Ministry Intern: Hello everyone. My name is Souk. I'm interning at Fresno Metro Ministry and I'm a Fresno State student. This is my first time getting up here and speaking. On your Citrus Saturday paper it says that Plant a Row for the Hungry is working on rescuing food that's available in our community. They're collecting citrus. This is their fifth annual event. Citrus is going to be collected on Saturday, February 12th. If you can't make it to that one you can go to the next one, which is March 12th. If you have citrus trees at your house and you just let the fruit drop you can pick it up and take it to the Community Food Bank or to the donation site on February 12th.

Jeremy Hofer, Fresno Metro Ministry: On February 22nd we will have a Food Stamp EBT workshop for managers of flea markets and farmers' markets that are interested in bringing a point-of-sale device into their market so that food stamp recipients can use their cards at these markets to buy vegetables. If you know of farmers' markets or flea markets, pass the word along. The movie, 'The Future of Food' is coming to Fresno on February 17th, this next Thursday. The special guest is Debra Koons-Garcia. A lot of people may know her better as the widow of Jerry Garcia, who played with the Grateful Dead; she wrote, produced, and directed this film which is about what's going on in our food system and how that affects small farmers and the rest of us.

Participants Introduced themselves.

Eddie Jessup: Thank you. Jeremy has a big article on sustainable farms, healthy communities, and building a local food network that is in the latest edition of the Community Alliance.

I am very pleased to introduce Dr. Virginia Rondero Hernandez from California State University, Fresno with the Children's Institute. I am very excited that this is the place where they are announcing this policy brief that they have completed. She is going to tell you about it. It's very significant in how it fits with our concern for our food system here in Fresno County. It's important to have policy information that relates directly to our local area.

Dr. Virginia Rondero Hernandez: Thank you very much for coming today. **This is a premier of some research that has been conducted through the Central California Children's Institute. The institute is actually housed in the Center for Health and Human Services,** which is an ancillary organization to **California State University, Fresno.** I'm going to present today on a topic that I think many of you already intuitively know exists, and that is about **hunger and food insufficiency among children who live in immigrant households.** The research actually is not restricted to Fresno. It's for all of San Joaquin Valley. What I'm going to present to you today is basically an overview of how we approached the study and then we will look at some of the findings. I have it both in print and graphic form. You should have a copy of the brief at your tables, so you're welcome to follow along with me and if you have any questions then at the end of the presentation I'll be more than happy to answer them.

There are several objectives of the study. First of all, the data that we used for this study comes from the **California Health Interview Survey (CHIS)**. **It's a California state health survey that's conducted out of UCLA.** It's a phone survey. Certain numbers of households were called, and they use the results of the data to develop what are called estimates of a certain health condition, for example. In this case we were looking at a couple of questions that were asked of households in terms of **how secure they felt in terms of having enough food available to them and if the family and the household experienced any type of hunger.** Those were the questions. **The objectives of this research were to estimate the extent of hunger and what we call food insecurity among children in immigrant households in the valley,** and we'll talk about those terms in a little bit. Another objective of the study was **to examine this condition in relationship to two other things. One is income level and the other is poverty among the lowest of lowest incomes and also to identify recommendations to reduce the prevalence of hunger and food insecurity among this vulnerable population.** So again, we're focusing on children who live in immigrant households in the San Joaquin Valley.

I know that many of you already know this, but I thought you wouldn't mind reviewing the dimensions of food insecurity. There are sources that exist that have written and defined what these terms mean. **When we say food insecurity we're actually talking about two forms of food insecurity. One is without hunger, meaning that there are concerns about food not lasting in a household for a given period of time, not having enough groceries on the shelf. There also are concerns in food insecurity without hunger about not having enough money to buy food, being restricted to a certain number of dollars for a period of time. Another aspect of food insecurity without hunger is that *you would consider yourself at risk for hunger.* In other words, you might have groceries on the shelf, you have some money to buy some groceries, but you worry about not having enough food for a certain period of time. The other dimension of food insecurity is a form of food insecurity with hunger, meaning that you may have those concerns listed above and you also report that you and your household experience food insecurity in an extreme manner, meaning it probably happens on a *regular basis and also that the hunger affects all members of the household.* So again, there are two dimensions of food insecurity.**

There is a table on page 3 where you can see how we organized this data that we collected through the California Health Interview Survey. Right now we are saying that approximately, at least based on the 2001 collection of the CHIS data, **457,000 San Joaquin Valley children that are living in low-income immigrant households are affected by food insecurity.** In addition, the incomes that we looked at or the groupings of people that we concentrated on, and you'll be able to detect these two in the table, were those households where **incomes were below 200% of the federal poverty level.** In terms of how we organized it and why we approached it this way, there actually was another report that was published through UCLA where they did already look at immigrant households and put them in specific categories, so we thought that would be a good way to begin organizing our data. **We actually studied five groups of children and we defined those five groups based on immigration status.** You can see listed that the five groups that we looked at when we did this research were the following categories: *U.S.-born children of U.S.-born parents, U.S.-born children of documented immigrant parents, U.S.-born children with at least one undocumented immigrant parent in the household, immigrant children of documented immigrant parents, and undocumented immigrant children living in households where the parents were not documented.*

Here is the beginning of the findings. After we looked at this data and we looked at these categories of immigrant status we started looking more closely at income levels. At the bottom of page 4 you'll see in that table where we actually define people who were at 300% federal poverty level, 200%, and below. The findings, though, that we're coming up with through this research is that **if you were to look at all the numbers of children that are considered low-income immigrant households that we're looking at, a good number of children who are somehow experiencing food insecurity.** I think if you were to look at the light color, 12.8%, those are children who come from households that are considered food insecure with hunger, and looking above that, the next portion, the medium brown color, those are households where the members are food insecure without hunger but they're at risk for hunger. If you were to add those two percentages together you're looking at about **47.3% of immigrant children who live in households where there is low income that are either hungry or at risk for hunger**, where those concerns about not having enough food exist, which is very frightening when you stop and think about that.

Here is another way that we looked at the food insecurity issue in these same low-income households. What we did here is we collapsed all the categories of immigrant status and looked at the numbers of children and the percentages of children in immigrant households where there is food insecurity without hunger and food insecurity with hunger, and what's good to compare in this particular graph is that the left column represents kids that have U.S.-born parents, meaning that they have citizenship, and if you look over to the right that particular column represents children from immigrant families, and you can see again if you were to add the percentages of the brown and the tan color there you see in a different way that **more kids who come from immigrant households experience food insecurity and hunger compared to kids who are born here.**

This is another bar chart that kind of pieces out the proportions of being at risk for hunger and hunger for each of the immigrant status categories that we looked at. What I want to call your attention to is group 5 on the very far right because these are the children who are undocumented immigrant children living in households where the parents are undocumented also. If you look at the percentages where there is food insecurity with hunger reported you'll see that proportionately those children are affected along with the next group. About half of them are in this situation. The same thing is true with immigrant children where both parents are documented except that the report about food insecurity with hunger is less. **You see more hunger, in other words, in the households where the children's parents are undocumented.**

What are some of the other findings? We also discussed in the report information on the **importance of balanced meals.** I think many of you folks are of my generation, the baby boom generation, and it got drummed into our heads that you have to have balanced meals. We continue to talk about the food guide pyramid and now we're talking about Five-a-Day, but what we're seeing here, at least **in this research, is that about half of low-income immigrant households can't afford to eat a balanced meal.** They can't necessarily reach those goals compared to a third of low-income households of children born in the U.S. Also, **the highest percentage of children who cannot afford to eat balanced meals occurs among the children who are undocumented and live in households where their parents are undocumented also. *It's not just the idea of not having enough, but even if you have it you don't necessarily have balanced meals.*** Now, you and I know that there are some ideas about why people might be wrapped up in food choices, the kinds of choices that they make regarding food. **But what this research is saying is that people don't have the resources to buy enough food to begin with**

and to balance out their meals nutritionally. We showed this in graphic form also, and once again, if you look at the different classes, the four immigrant classes are 2, 3, 4, and 5, if you look again over to group 5 you'll see that on **the question that asks if you can afford to eat a balanced meal, among undocumented children of undocumented immigrant parents at least 45.8% say that it's never true that they can eat a balanced meal.** Look at those percentages. It's very telling. The same thing is true for the other immigrant categories if you look over to the left except that in group 2 you see that it's a little different for the U.S.-born children of immigrant parents. But the focus is on the undocumented.

What are some other issues that we talk about in this report? Well, we know that right now this research is **estimate research. We're estimating about the amount of hunger and food insecurity that takes place, but we really don't have an accurate number in terms of how prevalent it is.** It would take a different kind of research to do that, go out and collect information directly on specific areas or neighborhoods. There is, though, an instrument that might have some pertinence, might have something very telling for us in the future. **There is a standardized scale now available called the USDA Children's Food Security Scale. That's the kind of scale that you could interview families about and we could get more exact information about the extent of hunger that might exist.** Another related issue has to do with what we know about already, which is **under-utilization of food assistance programs, primarily food stamps, and second to that the National School Breakfast and Lunch Programs. We already know based on the figures that we have more kids eating in the lunch program, 8 out of 10, than children who are utilizing the school breakfast program. That might sound like not so good news, but it actually is good news in the sense that we can do something about this.** If we know that 8 out of 10 are enrolled for lunch and there is need then maybe **we just need to be more aggressive about enrolling in the school breakfast program.**

There are a number of recommendations from this Policy Brief. These are the kinds of recommendations that we hope will influence policy out in the community and schools and other entities.

One of the things that we have to do, of course, is **heighten public awareness about food insecurity and hunger.** It's an issue that you folks are all sensitized to, but maybe not everyone understands the extent of the importance of **food insecurity and hunger.** It's here in our own backyard and it's pretty evident, at least **based on these estimates, that it's extensive, especially among the poorest of the poor.**

Another recommendation is to **increase the participation of low-income immigrant families in food assistance programs.** The reform of the Personal Responsibility Act has lifted the barriers of undocumented people to take advantage of the Food Stamp Program but a lot of people don't know that.

The third point is to **expand public health surveillance of food insecurity and hunger, and of course, using something like the child food security scale would be helpful to promote collaborations such as this in the schools, communities, and faith-based organizations on this issue.** Are there any comments or questions about what's presented?

Julie Hornback, Director, Fresno County Employment and Temporary Assistance: In response to your statement, **undocumented aliens are not now nor have they been in the past eligible for food stamps. Undocumented children are not eligible and undocumented adults are not eligible. Only legal immigrants and U.S. citizens are**

eligible for food stamps and other public assistance programs. *I also need to caution you on your statement that you made about immigration status. We are finding through word of mouth that there continues to be an issue with immigration where they come in and they want to sponsor one of their relatives to come into this country and they're here legally and there continues to be concern in that community that being on food stamps negatively impacts their ability to sponsor their family to come into this country. We pass out at all of our outreach what we receive from legal services in response to that, but I do need to state that **we continue to be told that the question continues to be asked and then when they're turned down for whatever reason they believe that it has to do with receipt of food stamps even though they're legally entitled to receive them,** so perhaps you could add that to one of your issues to be resolved because we do pass out something from legal services that says clearly that it should not.*

Dr. Virginia Rondero Hernandez: Good. Thank you.

Sharon Todd: In my view we're pushing foods on kids who come from low-income groups and have various problems that most of us do not have. I think some of the direction should go towards the quality of the food that we're encouraging, the services that are providing foods to the folks as to quality. Milk, for example, used to be years ago one of the five food groups, and it no longer stands. Some of the kids who are O blood types cannot have milk. I think we need to educate some of the nutritionists as well as some of the families about the food that we're giving. They would be better off not to have some of the food than to encourage them to eat some kinds of foods, and I think that's where the problem is being created. We're not looking at the root problems of some of the kids. **We're just saying, "Oh, they don't have food," when in essence if they had the certain quality of foods they would be better off versus some of the junk that's being fed to them and we're giving them.** We have problems down the road, medical care and all those kinds of situations. I think we could cut that in the bud just by **examining the kind of food that we're encouraging these folks to eat as well as educating them about food and food intake.** Again, that old knowledge about the five food groups doesn't stand today and it's been proven. It's a fact.

Eddie Jessup: I want to thank you, Virginia, for really putting this material together in a way that we have the factual foundation. It's something that a lot of us as advocates have understood and have seen anecdotally. This Policy Brief on Immigrant Children and Food Insecurity is very helpful. I want to get to our second presentation and then take questions, if I may. Please write down your questions.

Part of the followup to Virginia's report is an on-the-ground study that is being done with farm worker families, many of whom may be coping with immigration status. This study is not completed yet, but knowing that we are following up with that and that Metro is doing their Community Food Assessment is bolstered by the research that the Children's Institute has done and that we can deliver to people who wonder why it is that we are doing these studies.

I'd like to introduce **Cathy Wirth, and she is with the California Institute for Rural Studies.** One of the exciting things about the farm worker study that she is going to tell you about locally is that in the CHIS study, because it was done by a very extensive phone interview, means that people had to have phones. It was conducted in English which meant that people had to be able to speak English to give the information. So this followup study

that Cathy is going to tell us about addresses some of those issues. And again, it addresses them as local issues.

Cathy Wirth, California Institute for Rural Studies: Good afternoon. I am a graduate student at UC Davis and I'm working with the California Institute for Rural Studies on this project, which is a study on farm worker food security here in Fresno County. Unfortunately, none of the other project folks were able to be here today, but I just want to tell you a bit about who's working on the project, as I think some of you may know them. Ron Strohlic from California Institute for Rural Studies is one of the project leaders. CIRS has been conducting applied research in California on a number of issues affecting rural farmers and farm workers since 1997 and they have a particular focus on farm worker health and well-being. University of California Cooperative Extension is also involved through professor Christy Getz at Berkeley and Centro La Familia here in Fresno is one of our partners. Margarita Rocha is working with us and her team of health promotoras are the ones who are actually going to be conducting the survey. Then we also have great **advisory groups, local groups that do outreach with farm workers and that includes Fresno Metro Ministry**, which has been a great source of support and information, and then a **number of other groups**, a couple of which are represented here today.

A little bit of background on the project. **I think Dr. Hernandez already did a great job of defining food security for you, and as she said, it includes the question of both access to enough food and then access to healthy food, so there are two levels to food security and varying degrees of food security that can include moderate or severe hunger.** As all of you folks interested in food issues know, there has been a growing interest and awareness of food security issues in this country for a number of reasons, partly because of **skyrocketing rates of diet-related disease**. I think a lot of you are probably familiar with the Center for Disease Control report that placed obesity just behind smoking now as one of the leading causes of diet-related death in the country, so issues like that have gotten a lot of attention. There is also an increasing, but still not perhaps as high as we'd like, **awareness of the levels of hunger and food security that exist in this country**, and certainly the numbers that Dr. Hernandez presented are disturbingly high. **Right now there are approximately 20 community food assessments going on in California in urban and rural areas all throughout the state, and as Edie said, this particular survey is going to focus on farm worker populations.**

The reason we decided to do that is **because farm worker populations, as she said, are particularly understudied populations because the challenges of reaching farm worker populations make it difficult to get information on the issues that they're facing.** *As poverty is also one of the key causes of food insecurity, farm worker populations are particularly at risk for food insecurity, and unfortunately, farm worker incomes have not increased much over the past several decades and in fact have gone down in real dollars.* Some of the most recent **national figures say that individual farm worker incomes are still less than \$7,500 per year and family incomes less than \$10,000 per year, which, as you can imagine, makes food security challenges quite an issue.** Other factors that can also contribute to high levels of food insecurity among farm worker populations include **legal and documentation status**. Certainly, as we just heard, **there is a lot of misinformation and lack of information about what that entails in terms of access to food assistance programs.** The migratory nature of farm work makes it hard for people to get established in communities and get to know community resources. **Poor housing conditions might not include stoves or kitchen facilities. Language**

barriers, seasonal income, there are a whole lot of issues that come up for farm worker populations.

There is also a very limited amount of data on farm worker food insecurity at the moment. Some of the studies that do exist and which we've drawn on include the **CIRS Suffering In Silence study, which some of you may be familiar with, which addresses farm worker health issues in California**. It found, rather surprisingly, **that the farm workers they looked at had much higher than average rates of obesity and diet-related disease, which might not be what you'd expect as farm work by nature is rather active, so it was higher than national averages and even higher than comparable low-income Latino statistics**. The impact study on behavioral risk factors in Monterey County also found that **farm workers tended to have a worse diet than other Latino populations** in that county.

We decided to focus on Fresno for a couple of reasons. First of all, according to the California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) data **Fresno has the second highest levels of food insecurity in the state. That's just for the general population**. The only county above it is Tulare County, which is what we're hoping to find out because it has a large immigrant and farm worker population. **It's also the number one agricultural county in the whole country and produces almost \$4 billion worth of agricultural products each year**.

As Cesar Chavez said some time ago, 'It's ironic that those who till the soil, cultivate and harvest the fruits, vegetables, and other foods that fill your tables with abundance have nothing left for themselves'. Unfortunately, that irony still continues today.

Another very important reason that *we decided to work in Fresno is that groups like Fresno Metro Ministry and the other groups on our advisory committee represent a really strong base of community action already addressing issues of farm worker food security and food security in general*. **One of the important goals of this project is to produce results that can actually be used in a practical way by existing groups to improve programs that are already on the ground and to generate new program and policy options**. So CIRS is really committed to an **action-based research model** in that sense.

The survey is going to look at a number of things **including access to both enough food and healthy food**. It's going to look at some of the **barriers in access to food assistance programs that exist among farm worker populations**. It's going to look at some of the **other barriers to food security including income, accessibility, lack of cooking facilities**, things like that. It's going to look at some of the **assets in food security coping strategies that farm worker populations are making use of right now and look at also seasonal variation in food security**.

One of the things that we've found is that there's a big difference in some of the issues that come up in the summer and winter. *In the summertime people have much higher incomes because that's when the peak working season is, but they have much less time to prepare particularly homemade or more healthy foods. In the winter income is much lower but people have more time, so there are different challenges at different times of the year*.

Last but not least, we're also going to be **looking at how food security varies among different subpopulations so by age, gender, documentation status, length of time in the states, and we're also going to look hopefully at some of the non-Spanish-speaking indigenous farm worker populations which are particularly hard to reach out to and also particularly understudied**.

Some of the **outcomes** that we're hoping for is to come up with a **data set that can be used by groups in Fresno to develop program and policy recommendations and hopefully to get some funding at the state level to implement those programs and policies.** We're also planning to **disseminate the findings to other counties in the state that have large farm worker populations.** The survey is going to be administered to **450 households and we're going to hopefully get data from 225 households in the winter and 225 in the summer.** We're going to be starting the winter run of the survey actually in a few weeks at the end of **February and March**, which is a rather low period for farm work. In the summer the first one will be in **July and August.** **We'll be conducting the survey in urban and rural areas and labor camps and apartment complexes to try and get a mix of housing situations.** We're going to have some indigenous language speakers also go out and conduct the survey.

There are five parts to the survey. It includes the **USDA household food security questions** that Dr. Hernandez mentioned. It includes the **Block diet nutrition screener to get at fat and fruit and fiber consumption.** It includes a **section on food assistance programs**, a section on **assets and barriers to food security**, and then **demographic data.**

This fall we met with our advisory group and got a lot of really helpful feedback on issues that we need to address in the survey, important things that we need to keep in mind in administering the survey. Based on that we went out and **organized focus groups in Fresno and Reedley.** **CRLA and the WIC clinic in Reedley** were very helpful in bringing together people for that. We talked to a **group of women head of households and single male farm workers and got some really helpful information on what they saw as major issues, and actually we have those focus group transcripts available if anybody is interested.**

Based on that information and the feedback we've gotten from the advisory committee we've been working on the survey. **We just started piloting it this past few weeks, actually, so we're hoping next week to start working with the promotoras at Centro La Familia and begin administering at the end of this month.** We should hopefully have some data from the winter version of it in the spring and then by the fall be able to start comparing the winter and summer data. **As this is still in the beginning stages, we certainly welcome questions, comments, and participation.** I know there are a lot of people here with a lot of expertise, so if this is something you're really interested in we'd be happy to welcome you onto the advisory committee as well and we'll certainly be sharing and disseminating the results as we get them. Thank you very much.

Eddie Jessup: Let's take questions for both Virginia and for Cathy. Please say your name.

Sharon Todd, Jahmai Ministries: I'd be interested to know if the farmers practice what is talked about in Leviticus where it says **do not harvest the corners of your fields but leave the edges and the corners for strangers and passersby and people who are hungry.** It would be interesting to know how many of these farmers who employ the migrant workers are supposed to be Christians and how many follow that practice. I think that would curb a lot of the problems right there. It's not necessary to have places to cook fruits and vegetables because they're better for you uncooked. This is a very simple thing that can address these issues, especially for people who don't have food stamps and can't go to whole foods markets and things of this nature. For praying people this just doesn't make sense to me for this to be a situation in this valley.

Edie Jessup: Thank you, and I would invite folks to **talk to Jeremy Hofer** about the Metro Food Resources Task Group because **there is no organized gleaning organization here in Fresno County and there is a tremendous amount of food that is being lost.**

Vicky Hoyle, EOC Rural Initiative: I'm with the EOC and I do serve on that advisory committee. **I did notice the survey that you just mentioned that was given to male workers and to WIC clients. To pinpoint two audiences like that is going to skew your results. What was your intent instead of making it random? Obviously WIC clients are going to have a higher level of knowledge and information about nutrition, and conversely, male farm worker probably have just the opposite.**

Cathy Wirth, CRIC: That's a good question. **The reason we chose to focus on those two groups for the focus groups was to get some sort of spectrum of feedback on what kinds of response categories we should have in the survey.** We found, as you said, that there were very different perspectives from those two groups, so that was helpful for us to generate some of the things that we should be looking for in the survey and then to come up with specific response categories that the promotoras can use as probes in the survey. It was very interesting. There were very **different perspectives. The women were the ones who did a lot of the shopping and cooking so they had a very different view on what their families were eating than some of the men. The men living on their own and living in groups with unrelated roommates also had some different issues in terms of people stealing food and things like that that the women who lived in family settings didn't face. The 450 person interview will be a completely random sample, so the focus group was just to get some of the subpopulations that we expect to see in the random survey.**

Tony Gonzales, Health Net: I have two questions regarding methodology. You mentioned subpopulations and random sampling. **Are you going to have stratified random sampling to account for rural versus urban populations? There are farm workers who live in the urban setting. What is your method so that you will not introduce bias in working with subpopulations since you are going to be working with one standard tool?**

Cathy Wirth: We are doing **stratified sampling to get at both urban and rural populations.** To be completely honest, I don't know since I haven't been working on the non-Spanish version of the survey on that issue how they're going to be making sure that that part of the sampling is random. If you have any feedback on that we'd love to get it from you.

Ali Shabaz, Jahmai Ministries: From surveys I've seen there are a number of migrant farmers who send millions of dollars back home and choose to live a certain way and choose to lead a certain lifestyle and I don't personally think we should interrupt that. You mentioned that the number of farm workers in the Tulare area, which is considered one of the premier areas agriculturally, there is a lot of need, but **I was just curious if your survey took into account that some folks are not really at that income level. There are statistical facts that show that millions of dollars are being sent home from folks who have very, very low income. If they can figure out a way to do that they can figure out**

a way to eat better if we could educate them in terms of food value, that sort of thing. I think we can help on that end versus siphoning off resources that could go to some of our populations here. I think the best we can do is to educate folks. To me, based on your survey it's a food factor, and again, it's not a matter of dollars. Folks have dollars to spend. There's a lot of beer and other things that dollars are being spent on, but if we could get to those folks and show them statistics as to what kinds of foods are healthy and let them choose as to where they would like to live and what kinds of foods they would like to eat I think we can best serve them by doing those kinds of things. I would like to suggest that you include that in your program.

Cathy Wirth: You're certainly right. **Farm workers like everyone else make tough choices about how they're going to allocate their monies in terms of sending money to family and buying their own food. We do have a question on the survey on how much people are sending back to their country of origin if they are at all, and that certainly figures into budgeting. There is also an educational component at the end of the survey. We'll be giving out educational information, information on some of the food assistance programs, as well as an incentive that offers a gift certificate for food purchases.**

Edie Jessup: Just as a followup to that, **Virginia, could you speak, because your research is showing that the amount of money that there is to deal with in the first place is very minimal.**

Dr. Virginia Rondero Hernandez: What was your question again?

Ali Shabaz, Jahmai Ministries: I really believe that when doing some surveys or research quite a bit has been duplicated. When you're trying to get information and trying to get some information on the farm worker population in urban areas I think that's been done. **When you do surveys they go where it's easiest. They go to organizations like WIC that already have a population that's been educated. If we really want to deal with farm worker issues we have to be in rural communities and those who are detached because that's the majority, that's the mean.**

Dr. Virginia Rondero Hernandez: You have to remember that people self-report on income so we are taking their word for it in terms of what they're reporting their annual income might be, so the estimate, though, is that there is that amount of poverty that exists, especially in these categories that we were looking at of immigrant children.

Steve Rodriguez, Deputy Director, Fresno County Employment and Temporary Assistance: Just a followup question on this same point. One of your comments for the survey was that you showed, **especially under the undocumented parents and children, that they couldn't afford to eat a balanced meal or couldn't afford to prepare balanced meals.** My question tied into that is **how did you drill down to know that the difference between that category and a category that had a higher percentage that could eat a balanced meal was a cost factor rather than a cultural issue dealing with what they were used to preparing for meals and whether or not it was really an affordability issue or an educational issue?**

Dr. Virginia Rondero Hernandez: I don't think you can rule out those possibilities that you just mentioned such as level of education or some other kind of bias. The responses to the California Health Interview Survey are responses to questions that are created and **one of the questions is do you have enough money to have a balanced meal. Now, the definition of a balanced meal may be given to them but it might not be highly specified and so therefore they're going to give a response based on their knowledge of what they think a balanced meal is.** In that sense it's a limitation of the data, and again, it's a phone survey. It's not a face-to-face interview that you would conduct where people have an opportunity to maybe offer a definition or the respondents have an opportunity to ask questions about the meaning of some of the survey questions. **It's a limitation of the research, and as far as being able to drill down, we didn't drill down except to report what the frequency of responses were for these immigrant populations on that particular question.**

Rev. Walt Parry, Fresno Metro Ministry: My assumption is that single men that are working here by themselves probably send much more money back to Mexico than people that are here with their families. At least that would be my assumption. **Are their practical ways that you can think of that farm workers can utilize some of the food that they're working with on the farms? I know there are transportation issues. Also the grower would want some money for that food and things of that sort, but are there ways to make that immediate connection between food and the farm worker so they can have better food?**

Cathy Wirth: Actually, **one of our questions is whether the respondent is allowed to take food home from their work, and from the focus groups we've done so far it certainly appears that most are and don't have to pay for it as long as they just take relatively small quantities.** Then the issue is that that's **only during the summertime and usually is just for one crop**, so you can have all the tomatoes you want or all the peaches you want but that only goes so far. But it certainly can be the bulk of someone's fruit or vegetable consumption during the summertime.

Jeremy Hofer, Fresno Metro Ministry: I'm familiar with some farmers that plant hedge rows that give up a portion of their hedge row to the farm worker to plant corn or whatever.

Tony Gonzales, Health Net: I'll comment on Walt's assumption. **Remember that the numbers that you hear in the newspaper regarding immigrant monies going to other countries is an aggregate number, not just Fresno County or Tulare County. It's an aggregate number on a national basis**, so that's a small drop in the bucket compared to what stays in the states.

My question is how many questions is the survey?

Cathy Wirth: Right now we have close to **80 questions and we're trying to trim it down a little bit because it takes about 30 or 40 minutes to administer**, which is more time than we'd like.

Participant comment: You were talking about the farm worker and the relationship with the farmer making food available to them. All I know is that for me I remember

taking an accounting class for agriculture and they said that the farm workers were underpaid but they were compensated because the farm owners usually allowed them to get a little piece of the lot and plant a little garden. That does not sustain a balanced meal. If you have citrus and that's all you have there's something lacking. If there's broccoli there's something lacking. If it's onions there's something lacking. That does not address the balance requirements.

Participant question: Is there a reason you don't have a recommendation about addressing the nutrition issue in your recommendations?

Dr. Virginia Rondero Hernandez: You mean in terms of food assistance programs or just the idea of teaching people about nutrition?

Participant question: Well, my perception is that this is about nutrition and the health ramifications of poor nutrition so I just was hoping to see in the recommendations something about addressing nutritional needs, not just where to go.

Dr. Virginia Rondero Hernandez: **The study primarily is about people's understanding and reporting about feeling food insecure and experiencing hunger and certainly nutrition is an issue that's related to that.** So we don't have it specified the way that you're asking and this actually is a summary of the comments. *Part of the report has to do with importance of knowing nutrition for the purpose of a balanced meal, so we know that is a need and that certainly is something that could be incorporated in an intervention in community. People do need to know what nutrition is. It's a good way to marry efforts like Five-a-Day into education for populations. This report focuses more on access to food.*

Tony Gonzales: **Dr. Hernandez, did your research look at populations in rural versus urban in the Central Valley?**

Dr. Virginia Rondero Hernandez: **No. We looked at all of the San Joaquin Valley,** so the assumption is that there is a high representation depending on what the county might be.

Edie Jessup: I want to thank Dr. Hernandez and Cathy for their presentations and I'm very excited that **the large data research that Dr. Hernandez has presented is getting followed through with, then, on some of the specifics by the study that Cathy is doing and that will tie into a study that Fresno Metro Ministry has been working on.** Jeremy is going to give you an update on that. We have been working for the last year and a half on a Community Food Assessment, and one of the largest ones that has been done in California and in the United States, as a matter of fact. Jeremy is going to be on his way to New Orleans this weekend to work with the national groups who are doing food assessments on development of evaluation tools for community food assessments.

Jeremy Hofer: I got involved with the food assessment in June of this year. Phoua Moua was working on the food assessment for the previous year. Essentially it's both an urban and a rural assessment involving two short surveys. I have found it to be a great tool to

mobilize people. When it comes down to it what we're doing is we're **training community people** that are monolingual Hmong or monolingual Spanish to go into their neighborhoods, to look at the situation in their neighborhoods, and **think about the food system by talking to their neighbors, friends, and families and then come back together and discuss what they found.** However, this is one piece of our assessment, there are five other pieces. The Food Stamp Advocates Group feeds us information from the county about what's going on in the food stamp world. We have a Community Gardens Group, (Jahmai Ministries has started a Kearney Villa Community Garden on the west side) so we're getting information about use of community gardens as a tool in the urban setting to increase access to fresh produce. We have the Senior Nutrition and Child Nutrition Taskforces and finally a Food Resources task force. The Community Food Assessment is pulling together an overall look at the food situation in regards to where the retail stores are, where are they located, in what neighborhoods, where there are high concentrations, low concentrations, and even how they relate to the bus lines? There are transportation issues related to how accessible stores are to people. There is also an educational piece as part of the trainings. There is a leadership development piece that is part of the trainings.

We're finding with regard to this issue of food insecurity, which includes food insecurity with and without hunger, **that almost 50% of people in this county are food insecure. What we're finding is very real. We're talking to the people that have never thought of it in those terms but they think of it as, "After my check runs out after two weeks or a month by the end of the month we're really scraping things together because we have to pay utilities first." It's becoming very real in focus groups with stories and anecdotal information.** The picture is becoming very real to us and we're using this to build the next stage of the Community Food Assessment, which is to **develop a food policy council that is Fresno-wide** and it will contain all of these different pieces that we're looking at. With the food assessment now we have close to **400 consumer surveys finished and over 100 retail surveys. We're actually going into the retail stores all over town looking at what's available, how much does it cost here versus there.** We hear a lot of questions like, "What about the liquor store at my corner?" so definitely, go in there and check out what's available there because to a lot of people that don't have transportation, a liquor store can be their line to a next meal; and that's where they can get the Top Ramen for their next meal. These issues are very real and we're seeing it through our New Leaders for Better Health group, which is a group of English as a second language learners that meets once a month. We have a group of them working with us on the food assessment as well. I applaud these efforts that are bringing it to the next level and we can keep supporting each other.

Edie Jessup: I want to thank you all for being here.