

FOOD BANKS RP p. 1 NOV 2 4 1993

Thanksgiving won't be so bountiful at many soup kitchens, food banks

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The cupboard is likely to be bare this Thanksgiving at many food banks and soup kitchens around the country.

"Normally in November, there's spontaneous giving, but this year it's not like it has been in the past," said Dana Irribarren, head of a hunger task force for the Interchurch Council, of Greater Cleveland. "The only thing I can think of is people just don't have it to give, or they are afraid to give it away."

From Honolulu to Boston, food bank officials who had hoped the improved economy would mean more donations are facing shortages.

In some places, corporate food donations are down because companies are increasing efficiency and producing less of the surplus that once went to charity. Other food banks miss a bonus they got last year — government food left

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over from the Persian Gulf War.

But mostly, it's a lack of donations from individuals that has the food banks concerned. Some officials say relief efforts for Midwestern flood victims last summer may have drained many Americans' generosity.

Second Harvest, a Chicago-based organization that operates 187 food banks nationwide, said Tuesday its food donations are up by 10 percent to 15 percent over

last year, but demand for the food is up 37 percent.

"The economy is soft and people are fearful," Second Harvest president Christine Vladimiroff said.

She cited timber industry cutbacks in the Northwest and continuing woes in New England's high-tech industries as regional problems contributing to the demand for food.

Some other hungry spots:

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● Food supplies are down from last year by about 40 percent at the Gleaners Food Bank of Indiana, 15 percent at the Greater Boston Food Bank, 8 percent at the Gleaners Community Food Bank in Detroit, and 14 percent at the San Antonio Food Bank in Texas.

● In Cleveland, Irribarren said food shortages may force some of the task force's 22 pantries and 10 soup kitchens to close by Christmas.

● In Hawaii, cash donations from individuals are below projections and food-bank inventories still haven't recovered from the 1992 hurricane that devastated Kauai, said Hawaii Foodbank president John White.

● In West Virginia, a six-month strike by coal miners has swelled the rolls of the needy with many families who ordinarily would be

donors. "Our food pantry is slowly but surely going down," said Margaret Decola, a Salvation Army spokeswoman in Moundsville.

● South Florida is "dismal," said Dave Krepcho, director of the Daily Bread Food Bank in Miami. Food poured in last year after Hurricane Andrew, but that help has dried up even though the need has not.

There are some bright spots. The Houston Food Bank, which distributes food to 466 Texas charities, said food donations in October were up 27 percent over October 1992.

And in Utah, about 5,000 turkeys have been donated since word got out last week that the Utah Food Bank had only one turkey in its freezer. So many donors showed up, in fact, that a traffic jam formed outside the building in Salt Lake City.

"We're unloading as fast as we can, and we're all exhausted. It's wonderful," director Brenda Thompson said Tuesday.