

New figures released today by UK food charity FareShare show a sharp rise in demand on charities for food as people all over Britain struggle to put dinner on the table. 42% of charities surveyed reported an increase in demand for food in the past year as food prices soar and the recession bites, putting additional strain on families and people on low incomes.

An additional 1 in 3 of the charities surveyed are facing government funding cuts, with 65% of these charities are slashing food budgets in an effort to stay afloat.

FareShare is helping to take some of this strain by providing surplus, good quality food from the food industry to a network of grassroots community organisations all over the UK, saving them almost £8 million a year in food and other costs. This food is now reaching 35,000 people a day, up from 29,000 last year - following the largest ever yearly increase in the number of charities desperate for FareShare food, up from 600 to 700.

Lindsay Boswell, Chief Executive of FareShare says: "At a time of unprecedented demand we want the food industry and the general public to increase their support."

Last year, the food industry redirected 3,600 tonnes of surplus food to FareShare enabling the charity to provide 8.6 million meals for vulnerable people. The food is distributed to community organisations providing not only food, but other essential support services. FareShare distributes daily to organisations such as homeless hostels, day centres, breakfast clubs, and women's refuges.

One organisation receiving food from FareShare is the Fresh Start Community Association in Brighton, who run several community initiatives working with marginalised groups, such as a day centre, drop in service and out of school club. Mabelle Joseph, Project Manager, says: "When families are struggling to cover bills and mortgage repayments, food is last on their agenda. We help and we have become the main safety net for many families and individuals." FareShare's survey found that 41% of respondents are unable to buy food on a regular basis, meaning that they are more reliant on charities for help.

Boswell continues: "This research supports the growing anecdotal evidence we've seen in recent months – more people are getting in touch with FareShare asking for help to access food. We're committed to working with grassroots charities to make a significant difference to

the diets of people in communities all over the UK but we need more food to meet this increased demand. We're asking anyone who works in the food industry in any capacity to look at what is happening to their surplus food and to ask themselves a simple question, 'Could this food stop someone going hungry?'"