



**United States
Department of
Agriculture**



StrikeForce Initiative for Rural Growth and Opportunity

www.usda.gov/strikeforce

VIRGINIA

Virginia Fast Facts - 2014

State's Child Poverty Rate:	14.5%
State's Overall Poverty Rate:	10.9%
StrikeForce State Since:	2013
Number of StrikeForce Counties:	51
Total Outreach Events:	265
Number of Community Partners:	15
Total USDA Projects:	2,974
Total USDA Investments:	\$373 million

Contacts

Contact us to be a partner, or to learn more about StrikeForce opportunities:

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Some of Our StrikeForce Community Partners

Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Virginia Department of Agriculture
Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District
Virginia Cooperative Extension Service
Virginia Department of Forestry
Virginia Department of Health
Virginia State University Small Farm Outreach, Training & Technical Assistance Program
Virginia Association of School Business Officials (VASBO)

Currently, 85 percent of our country's persistent poverty counties are in rural America. More than one third of rural Americans, and one in four rural children live in poverty. Kids growing up in families earning twice the poverty threshold are nearly three times as likely as other children to have poor health, are more likely to finish two fewer years of school, and are more likely to earn half as much money in their adult lives.

Growing the economy by investing in rural communities and increasing opportunities for families is key to our Nation's future. In 2010, Secretary Vilsack established USDA's StrikeForce Initiative for Rural Growth and Opportunity to address the specific challenges associated with rural poverty. Since then, StrikeForce teams have collaborated with more than 500 community partners and public entities to bring targeted assistance to rural areas experiencing chronic poverty.

These efforts have invested more than \$16.5 billion to create jobs, build homes, feed kids, assist farmers and conserve natural resources across twenty states. In 2015, StrikeForce expanded to include Oklahoma and Puerto Rico. Now, USDA StrikeForce teams will operate in 880 counties in 21 states and Puerto Rico. Each StrikeForce project is a commitment to America's economic future.

StrikeForce At Work

In Virginia, increasing food security and addressing childhood hunger is a StrikeForce priority. USDA StrikeForce teams are partnering with the Virginia Department of Social Services, the Virginia Department of Agriculture, Virginia State University (VSU) and Virginia Tech to develop community based strategies to reduce hunger. For instance, StrikeForce teams have expanded the number of farmers markets equipped to accept SNAP (formerly known as food stamps), and are working with local partners to bring the Summer Food Service Feeding program directly to families and children in need.

In 2014 alone, the number of Virginia's farmers markets accepting SNAP rose 42 percent and SNAP redemptions at farmers markets went up over 7 percent. USDA has also identified 40 housing complexes interested in becoming summer food service feeding locations and is working with churches and libraries to increase healthy food access for Virginia's most vulnerable families.

In March 2015, the Virginia Department of Education was awarded a USDA grant to test creative interventions to end childhood hunger including expanding school-based food service to three meals a day; providing food to low-income students on weekends and during school breaks; and bringing more resources to low-income families to purchase healthy food when school is out of session. These strategies will continue to address childhood hunger in the Commonwealth.

