



**United States
Department of
Agriculture**



StrikeForce Initiative for Rural Growth and Opportunity

www.usda.gov/strikeforce

TEXAS

Texas Fast Facts - 2014

State's Child Poverty Rate:	25.6%
State's Overall Poverty Rate:	17.2%
StrikeForce State Since:	2012
Number of StrikeForce Counties:	96
Total Outreach Events:	390
Number of Community Partners:	32
Total USDA Projects:	3,703
Total USDA Investments:	\$352.5 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

Casa del Llano
Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley
IDEA Public Charter Schools
Latinos in Agriculture Organization
National Center of Appropriate Technology
Rio Bravo Resource Conservation & Development Area
Texas Agri-Life Extension
Texas Hunger Initiative
Texas Mexico Border Coalition
Texas Rural Cooperative Center
Texas Small Farmers & Ranchers

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

The adult obesity rate in Texas is nearly 31 percent, among the highest in the nation. The 2012 Gallup-Healthways poll reported that in the McAllen, Edinburg and Mission area, which includes the StrikeForce County of Hidalgo, obesity is over 38 percent. With these statistics and the associated health risks, residents of the poverty-stricken community have been in desperate need of improved access to healthy foods at affordable prices.

The Food Bank of Rio Grande Valley partnered with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), USDA Rural Development, the University of Texas – Pan American Texas Rural Cooperative Center (TRCC), and the South Texas Rural Producer Assistance Project (STRAP) to build a community garden. NRCS provided a small grant to purchase the needed tools and supplies. TRCC and STRAP, with funding support through Rural Development's Rural Cooperative Development Grant program, provided training and technical assistance to help gardeners maximize production.

Working together, the partnership has assisted 26 families farming more than 60 raised beds. In addition to enjoying healthy vegetables at home, the families sell excess produce at the food bank's farmers market. Families that have relied on the food pantry are now growing, consuming and selling their own healthy, fresh vegetables. In addition, the food bank is currently working with churches, apartment complexes and public housing facilities to develop more on-site community gardens that will allow families who cannot travel to the pantry or existing community garden to also grow their own food and learn about healthy eating.



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