

6th Global Healthcare, Nutritionists & Dietician Annual Conference

December 05-07, 2016 Philadelphia, USA

An evaluation of the nutritional content of supermarket and grocery foods in Trinidad and Tobago

Shabana Smith, Nichols S, Prout P and Roche K

The University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago

The food environment remains an important factor in determining disease rates. Trinidad and Tobago leads the English-speaking Caribbean in spending on imported foods with an annual food import bill of 1 billion TT dollars. These imported foods may outweigh local production in contributing to nutrient intake from diets. Given the importance of diet quality to overall health and ultimately human development, there is a need for a robust investigation into the local food environment. In this survey we analyze the quality of food products available from a random sample of 30% of supermarkets and groceries locally. These organizations were visited by field interviewers over a two month period. Lists of the names, brands, weight and cost of all food items for sale were recorded. These were classified as unprocessed/minimally, processed, ultra processed, nutrient dense, energy dense, high sugar, high salt and high fat. 4062 food items were listed. The prevalence of the items in the various categories were as follows: unprocessed/minimally (14.3%), processed (2.6%), ultra processed (83.2%). In addition, 40.8% of foods were high in sugar; 53.1% high in energy; 38% high in salt and 48% nutrient dense. The food environment at supermarkets and groceries locally suggests one predominated by processed and ultra processed foods and an overall nutrient profile which, without proper shopper nutrition, awareness and education may promote the development of diet related diseases.

Biography

Shabana Smith completed her BS (Honors) majoring in Nutritional Sciences with a minor in Sports Nutrition from University of West Indies, St. Augustine. She is currently a Research Assistant at University of West Indies, St Augustine Campus Trinidad where she participates in research projects looking at the local food environment. As a part-time Nutritionist with the local branch of Nestlé, she lectures on nutritional issues at health fairs and is actively involved in the Nestlé Healthy Kids Project which seeks to improve nutrition awareness and promote physical activity among young kids in Trinidad and Tobago.

shabanasmith23@gmail.com

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