

## **ABSTRACT**

Globally countries have over the past 2-3 years been severely adversely affected due to various international factors by large increases in food prices. Food prices tend to have a direct impact on households due to the large share of total household consumption that comprises food. Trinidad & Tobago is no exception. This country relies heavily on the consumption of imported food however local food prices are not only affected by global food prices but includes a number of domestic factors. In this context, the objective of this research project is to provide some insight from the household perspective on how food prices have affected their real income, expenditure, purchasing & eating patterns & seek their views on the causes behind this increase & opinions on what can be done by both consumers & government to alleviate this critical issue.

A survey of 50 households was conducted in the Cumuto community utilizing questionnaires covering a range of fact & opinion finding questions. Analysis was undertaken using the statistical programme SPSS. The findings showed that while among income groups, percentage of income spent on food varied, views & opinions on the impact of increased food prices across income groups tended to be similar. Price increases in imported basic foods which cannot be easily substituted (flour, dairy products, rice & oil) were found to have impacted the most in the views of the surveyed households however only 62% indicated that they were purchasing less food & had changed their eating patterns. The major solution suggested was increased focus by the government on the agricultural sector with increased investment, subsidization of inputs & increase land distribution for agriculture. Trinidad & Tobago's strong economic situation due to high oil prices may have impacted on household income & their ability to buffer rising food prices however this is cognizant of the fact that since the undertaking of this study, this situation is now faced with uncertainty due to major decreases in the price of oil & gas on the worldwide market as well as decreases in some food commodities which can impact on the present views & opinions of households.