

ABSTRACT

The Information Experience of Food Security among Decision-Makers in the CARICOM Region: A Study of Trinidad and Tobago, Belize and Barbados

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Food security is a complex problem, one that is not easily formulated and solutions are multitudinous, often having cascading and irreversible effects. In the last 25 years, the information revolution has brought a new paradigm to the availability and accessibility of information resulting in monumental issues of information overload. In this time of ubiquitous information availability, this study sought to investigate food security trends and understand how food security decision-makers in three Caribbean countries (Trinidad and Tobago, Belize and Barbados) conceptualise and prioritise food security; use information and data; and manage problems of information quality, access, appropriateness, availability and usage in making decisions to enhance levels of national food security. This thesis delved into the information behaviour of food security by decision-makers using an informational perspective. Adopting a multidisciplinary, qualitative methodological approach to explore the information experience, this thesis utilised mixed methods, such as reviewing secondary data, the Analytical Hierarchy Process, Point Score Analysis, semi-structured interviews and structured questionnaires. It was revealed that decision-makers do not have a consistent concept of food security, though it was found to be the most important objective of doing agriculture. Sustainability of the food supply, rather than external dependency as reflected in the high food import bill, was considered the most important criteria of the food supply. It was also determined that although decision-makers felt that electronic resources were very important, overall they did not use these resources regularly, even social media. Recommendations for new and revolutionary strategies for dealing with the problem of food security include using an information-based approach to the analysis, decision making and planning; CARICOM Governments' prioritising and willingness to fund the identification and monitoring of appropriate food security indicators; providing information literacy training relevant to the workplace; and using expert assistance from information professionals in managing information and data.

Keywords: Shamin Ali; Shamin Ali-Renwick Analytical Hierarchy Process; AHP; agriculture; agricultural information; Caribbean; dependency; food and nutrition security; food insecurity; food security goals; food supply; influencers; information use; information seeking; information behaviour; mixed methods research; planners; Point Score Analysis; PSA; policymakers; self-sufficiency; social media; sustainability; technocrats; trade-based food security; West Indies; workplace information literacy.